

Homily
Solemnity of All Saints
Friday, November 1, 2024

We are all children of God. We are all members of the Body of Christ. We are one body, one family, one Church. But, the Church lives in three separate groups. We are the Church Militant, still struggling with our concupiscence, our tendency to sin, striving to do good and avoid evil. Tomorrow, we remember the Church Suffering, those who have died in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, yet destined for heaven. Today we celebrate the Church Triumphant, those who have reached their heavenly reward, all the saints. What is a saint? The word saint comes from the Latin word *sanctus*, which means 'holy.' Saints are models of virtue: they are examples of the four cardinal virtues (prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice) and the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity). We often think of saints as those the Church has canonized. But everyone in heaven is a saint, whether officially recognized or not. And everyone in heaven, who are all members of the Body of Christ, are in the presence of God, talk to God and intercede for us.

Who enjoyed Halloween yesterday? Did you dress up? Did you go to a party or Trick-or-Treating? Did you stay at home and enjoy the parade of superheroes, movie stars, first responders? My granddaughter dressed as a firefighter. My grandson dressed like a dalmatian, but he didn't have any choice; he's only 9 months old. A popular costume is that of a ghost. Did you see anyone dressed like a ghost?

What did the ghost do at the red light? He came to a dead stop.
Why did the ghost starch his sheet? He wanted everyone scared stiff.
Why does a ghost hate getting caught in the rain? It dampens his spirits.

Except for Casper the friendly ghost, we often think of ghosts as scary, evil, demonic. The reality is that a ghost is a disembodied spirit. The saints are disembodied spirits. And they are all around us, just like all the angels. While we are in the world, but not meant for this world, all the angels and saints are pulling for us, praying for us, interceding for us. Just as we are battling for our salvation, trying to be perfect in an imperfect world, so all the angels and saints are fighting for us. And we have recourse with the saints – we can ask any saint to help us with a particular need and that saint will intercede, will pray on our behalf. The saints are close to God. This strengthens all the Church in holiness.

Today's Gospel message is from the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are the eight declarations of blessedness spoken by Jesus. The end of His message states that our reward will be great in heaven when we seek and live by these virtues. It's not easy, but it is rewarding. Just ask the saints. The Beatitudes sums up the teaching of Jesus and gives us a model by which to live our lives. They are the foundation for Christian discipleship by which we follow Christ. They are the essence of how we must treat ourselves and our brothers and sisters. The saints are great examples of the results of living a life by the Beatitudes. And since they have already accomplished what we are striving for, they are the best role models and best helpers on how to do it. They want us to succeed. We just have to take advantage of their offer. They are offering us a hand; we just need to grab hold.

Jesus loves us more than we can imagine. God's command to love Him and each other is manifest in the saints' love for us. Just as God's love is infinite and perfect, all the angels and saints love us with a perfect love. Today is a new day; today we start over; today we remember and celebrate our brothers and sisters who have gone before us to their heavenly reward and pray that they help us on our journey to our heavenly reward.