

Homily of All Saints, 2025

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14; Psalm 24:16, 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12

The Catholic Church holds and teaches that the Church exists simultaneously in heaven, on earth, and in purgatory. The Church in heaven is called Church Triumphant, the Church on earth is called Church Militant, and the Church in purgatory is called Church Suffering. The unity of the Church in heaven and the Church on earth is called the Communion of Saints. The celebration of All Saints is based on this unity. The unity and communion continue with the special commemoration of All Souls, the Church Suffering.

Today, in a special way, we celebrate with the Church in heaven. The saints were close to God while on earth. Being in heaven with God, the Catholic Church teaches that they intercede for us. That is why Catholics pray through their intercession.

In the first reading, St. John saw “a vision of heaven, and of a great multitude, which no one can count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue” (Revelation 7:9). Only a few saints out of the multitude of saints in heaven are canonized and celebrated. Today, we celebrate all saints. Indeed, our loved ones who have gone before us and our ancestors who are in heaven are included. Therefore, it is not out of place to plead with our departed loved ones and our ancestors who lived a godly life to intercede for us.

There are people who do not believe in communion with the saints or the power of the saints to intercede for us. There is no way we can imagine that the saints in heaven, which St. John gives us a tiny picture in his vision, have nothing to do with us on earth. How do those who do not believe in the power of the saints to intercede for us explain the mystery behind the countless prayers answered by God through the intercession of the saints? Ordinarily, we believe in the power of prayer by human being, which is why we ask for prayers from one another. If God hears the prayer of sinners on earth, even more he hears the prayers of the saint in his presence.

The belief in the power of intercession of the ancestors (known as “Ndichie” among the Igbos of Nigeria) existed among many African peoples before the coming of Christianity. Such belief system cannot be dismissed as pagan practice and meaningless. When the Catholic missionaries taught the people about the intercession of the saints, the Igbo converts understood their teaching without much difficulty. “Ndichie” means the ancestors who lived exemplary lives.

It is for this reason that the Catholic Church teaches that we take or include saints’ names for Baptism and Confirmation. Those saints become our patron saints who intercede for us. We are also encouraged to imitate the lives of our patron saints. While it is a good thing to choose native names for Sacraments, it is spiritually beneficial to include saints’ names.

The Church Militant is a Pilgrim Church. Our destination is the Church Triumphant. We are pilgrims of hope. Therefore, while on earth, we need to live lives that can enable us to join the

Church Triumphant in heaven. The second reading says, “Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself [herself] pure, as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

In the gospel, Jesus gives us the beatitudes (blessings) that can guide us on our faith and life journey. How wonderful our world can become if our leaders and our rulers and everyone are guided by the beatitudes?

- “Blessed are the poor in spirit;” *is an invitation to be humble.*
- “Blessed are they who mourn;” *is an invitation to grieve/regret over sin and evil and make efforts to stop them or distance from them.*
- “Blessed are the meek;” *is an invitation to be gentle and agreeable.*
- “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness;” *is an invitation to stand for truth and justice.*
- “Blessed are the merciful;” *is an invitation to be kind and compassionate.*
- “Blessed are the clean of heart;” *is an invitation to be honest.*
- “Blessed are the peacemakers;” *is an invitation to be peaceful and to become an instrument of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation.*
- “Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely;” *is an invitation to remain steadfast during opposition and persecution.*

St. Theresa of Lisieux advises that to become a saint, or to go to heaven, is not only achieved by doing extraordinary and mighty deeds, but also by doing small things with great love. She calls this “the simple way: a simple and direct path to heaven.” St. Joseph Marengo is attributed to have said, “Saints do ordinary things in extraordinary ways.”

Also, Miriam C. Hunter writes, “Why are the saints, saints? Because they were cheerful when it was difficult to be cheerful; patient when it was difficult to be patient. And because they pushed on when they wanted to stand still and kept silent when they wanted to talk. And because they were agreeable when they wanted to be disagreeable...”

Saints are saints because they forgave when it was difficult to forgive. And they lived their life in total surrender to God.

Oh, when the saints are matching in

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