

Homily of All Saints, 2024

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. Our celebration today is based on this unity. The unity and communion continue tomorrow, November 2, with the special commemoration of All Souls, the Church Suffering.

In today's celebration, we pray that the saints in heaven intercede for us. They were close to God while on earth. Now, they are with God in heaven; 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 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. Also, 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 meaningless or a pagan practice.

It is for this reason that the Catholic Church teaches that we take or include saints' names for Baptism and Confirmation, and name places after the saints so that those saints we hold dear as patrons may intercede for us, and we strive to imitate the life they lived. It is more spiritually benefiting to choose saints' names for the sacraments and for patronage.

The Church Militant is a pilgrim church. Our destination is the Church Triumphant. Therefore, while on earth, we need to live lives that will enable us to join the Church Triumphant in heaven. The second reading says, "Everyone who has this hope based on him [strives to make himself/herself] pure, as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

In the gospel, Jesus gives us the beatitudes that can guide us in our striving on our journey on earth and enable us to join the Church Triumphant. How wonderful our world becomes 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 to 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 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.

“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 Marelllo is attributed as saying, “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...”

We can add that 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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