

## Homily for the Solemnity of All Saints

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How many of you are saints in our own time? Yet as Pope Francis reminds us, “To be saints is not a privilege for a few, but a vocation for everyone.”

Those whom we are commemorating today are men and women who walked the lands in this world were just like us.....sinners, who strived for holiness. They lived out their vocation.

“A great multitude,” we heard, “those countless women and men from every nation, people and language” who have lived a life of heroic virtue and now live in the presence of the Lamb. These countless men, women and children have lived out their call to holiness – as *companions on the journey to share the love of Jesus Christ*. This was their mission. But it is also our mission. In fact, whether you know it or not, this is part of the mission statement of the Diocese of Saginaw.

*Trusting in the Holy Spirit and nourished by the Eucharist, we the faithful of the Diocese of Saginaw are companions on the journey to share the love of Jesus Christ.*

So, we too are part of All Saints. By our baptism we have been sanctified, made holy, deep down, in grace. We are in God, all of us together, because we are in Christ Jesus. As Pope Francis wrote in *Gaudete et Exsultate - The Call To Holiness In Today's World*, “*Let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness. Let everything be open to God; turn to him in every situation. Do not be dismayed, for the power of the Holy Spirit enables you to do this, and holiness, in the end, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life.*”

If we really think about it, they were really no different than us. They had no advantages to saintliness different than we have. They were ordinary people with jobs just like us, with families just like us, with the struggles just like us. The world in which they lived, was just as chaotic and messed up as our present day world. Yet they constantly struggled and persevered to live lives of virtue and humility. Remember, they were canonized saints long after their deaths. In other words, they were not born this way; they were not born saints.

What sets them apart perhaps is that they realized that the Christian message was in direct contrast with that of the world. They knew that they did not belong to the world, but they willingly accepted the challenge to try to make the world holy through their lifestyles and their commitment to their faith and to Jesus Christ.

The Beatitudes which we just heard in the Gospel are seen as the reflection of the Life of Christ. The lives of the saints are seen too, as a reflection of that life. They did their best in trying to live the Beatitudes. At first, they don't seem very attractive. Yet, Jesus says that we will be blessed if we have them in our lives.

*“In the Beatitudes, we find a portrait of the Master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives. The Beatitudes are in no way trite or undemanding, quite the opposite. We can only practice them if the Holy Spirit fills us with his power and frees us from our weakness, our selfishness, our complacency and our pride.”* This is the challenge of the disciple of Jesus of every place and time.

We may think that we could never live lives like the saints because we are not holy enough. The great saints made their share of mistakes, giving in to impatience, to pride and greed, to laziness and lust, and many of them sinned gravely. Read the Confessions of St. Augustine, about the life of one of the greatest saints in the history of the Church. But they recognized their sinfulness, repented, received the Lord's forgiveness through Confession, picked themselves up and started all over again. They kept striving for holiness as they lived a life committed to Christ. It is always important to remember – **We are not the sum of our weaknesses. We are the sum of the Father's love for us.** In the words of Oscar Wilde, “Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future.”

*“The saints are also distinguished by a spirit of prayer and a need **and desire** for communion with God. They long for God, losing themselves in praise and contemplation of the Lord.”* In other words, their prayer led them to long for holiness. “Prayer is most precious, for it nourishes a daily commitment to love. Our worship becomes pleasing to God when we devote ourselves to living generously, and allow God's gift, granted in prayer, to be shown in our concern for our brothers and sisters.”

Saint Teresa of Calcutta clearly realized this: *“Yes, I have many human faults and failures... But God bends down and uses us, you and me, to be his love and his compassion in the world; he bears our sins, our troubles and our faults. He depends on us to love the world and to show how much he loves it. If we are too concerned with*

*ourselves, we will have no time left for others”.*

So growth in holiness is a journey living in community, living side by side with others. In caring for one another, an open and evangelizing environment is created. This then becomes a place where the risen Lord Jesus becomes present, sanctifying it according to God’s plan.

I don’t know who said it, but this puts ‘saintliness’ into a simple statement. *“A saint is someone whose life makes it easier for others to believe in God.”* Are we that person?

We heard from St. John, “See what love the Father has bestowed in letting us be called children of God. Yet that in fact is what we are.”

Children of God are led to holiness, to saintliness, as we respond to the grace of God, the love of God offered us through the sacramental life of the Church, and through reflecting the Beatitudes in our lives. We are led to holiness as Christ become more the center of our daily lives in all that we do.

This feast of All Saints should inspire us with tremendous hope. These saints of yesterday challenge us to take notice of our own lives and reflect upon our own call to saintliness.

As we approach this altar of sacrifice today, united with the saints in the Mystical Body of Christ, we ask their intercession to give us the desire to live and walk more and more each day in union with Jesus so that we will become the saints of our own time.