

All Saints' Day

Twenty-Second Sunday After Pentecost, Proper 26

November 1, 2020

Year A RCL

Revelation 7:9-17; Psalm 34:1-10, 22; Matthew 5:1-12

“He will guide them to springs of the water of life”

By: The Rev. Fr. Fabian Villalobos

Today we celebrate the holiness of God manifested and incarnated in people from different cultures, lifestyles, social status, religious traditions, etc..

People that throughout the times have lived their Christian life in virtuous and in a godly manner to the point of becoming examples for other Christians.

Holiness and sainthood are not a new doctrine, these were requirements from God to the people of Israel. For example, last week in the first lesson from the book of Leviticus we hear, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”

This petition of being “holy” needs to be interpreted as a desire and invitation to enter in a deeper and more perfect communion with God to the point of experiencing His sanctity and perfection. On All Saints Day, we remember those who preceded us in the faith, both those well-known to us and those

known only to God. What these two groups of believers had in common is their faithfulness and commitment to put God first in their lives all the time. Each saint is recognized for the extreme love and loyal relationship they had with the Holy Trinity.

The saints we celebrate and recognize today are imitators of Jesus and lived their humanity to the fullness with the capacity to allow the grace of God to transform their lives into living tabernacles and carriers of the Presence of Jesus to others.

Sainthood is an invitation that God extends to all his children without exception. We received this call on the day of our Baptism; the grace of God is at work since that moment and works throughout all our life, but like any other invitation it requires acceptance and participation.

In celebrating the saints, we commemorate men and women from the past, present, and future who answer God's invitation. They were, they are, and they will be all different. The liturgical book "Holy Men and Woman" from our Episcopal Church refers of them in this manner:

"They are expression to the many and diverse ways in which Christ, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, has been present in the lives of men and women across the ages, just as Christ continues to be present in our own day.

"Holy Men and Woman, Foreword VII

The "communion of saints" that we profess in the Creeds includes equally the saints and the faithful departed. They both are in the presence of God in a different dimension from our physicality and contingency. Today in celebrating their presence, we enter the communion of saints and understand that we are united and connected with them in one family with God as Father of both the living and dead.

This communion of saints is a numerous and well diverse fellowship of servants that give priority to God. As we hear in the first lesson from Revelation, they are part of the "great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands."

This group of people, were normal people like you and me, what make them special is that they loved God so much that they chose to live their lives faithfully according with the Gospel and its values. They chose obedience imitating Jesus; they were generous in their living in love and giving of themselves for others. They trusted God in all circumstances and lived their Christian life to the fullest all the time.

The perfection of their Christian life today is an example and stimulus for us and other believers. The holiness and sanctity in which God calls us is then possible and the result of carrying the cross to the end of life on earth. We, like any other believer need to undergo and pass the “great ordeal.” It is only when we wash our baptismal robe in the blood of the Lamb and make it white again that we can be counted in the great multitude of heavenly hosts.

In the meantime, each one of us need to seriously accept and receive the countercultural and unique invitation to participate in the holiness of God knowing that in the beatitudes we hear in today’s Gospel from the Sermon on the Mount Jesus outlines a clear path to fully partake a place in the communion of saints. While you continue in your Christian journey, please remember that in your baptism you received an invitation that requires a daily answer to God. Take the saints for companions and examples, make every effort in your power to be faithful to God, and allow His grace and love to transform you every day of your life. Amen.