

ALL SAINTS' DAY 2014
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBERG
MATTHEW 5.1 REVELATION 7.2 HYMN 243

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CLANGING AS A FIRE ALARM SEEMED THE URGENT TONE OF MY TELEPHONE...“WHAT IS THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS..?” The caller was a close friend of several decades who regularly participates in a Bible study/adult education program in his Presbyterian church. The class was studying the Apostles Creed...*I believe...in the Communion of Saints...*they were stuck!

Knowing it would evoke more questions, “it means I believe in All Saints’ Day” said I...the response was predictable...“**WHAT** kind of Catholic thing are you talking about...?” responded my friend.

The discussion was lengthy...by the end of the day I had faxed him a copy of the hymn *I Sing a Song of the Saints of God*, last year’s All Saints Day sermon and an article from a theological journal.

*The saints of God are just folk like me, and I mean to be one too...*words we just sang!

All Saints is one of the most important days of the Church Year and it’s no secret by now the hymn is one of my favorites because it is so instructive. I generally do well with things written for children!

Today we need to consider where **WE** to fit into the hymn...what are we doing with our lives that puts **US** in the picture so poignantly defined by Hymn 243...***I SING A SONG OF THE SAINTS OF GOD...***

How **does** one become one of the Saints of God...? Most of us don’t realistically consider the possibility...it’s simply too abstract...the requirements seem obscure, people the Church identifies were famous, performed incredible feats seemingly beyond our capability...and they are all dead!

All true...but consider more fully the hymn...“*There are hundreds of thousands still...and I mean to be one too...*” Seriously-?

Assuredly All Saints Day is about many whose deeds are known...those with their own day, their own statue, their own published story, perhaps their own hymn!

More importantly, All Saints’ Day is particularly about those whose identity is NOT known and may never be...countless people, like the Unknown Soldier, known only to God. Or...right in this parish church is the relic of an unknown saint sealed in the altar stone...

Is there an application form for sainthood...? Well, not one of which I am aware...but on the other hand one WAS filed at the time of our baptism when we promised, or our God-parents promised for us, to do what Jesus asked...fight back against the evils in the world...to do the right thing.

The hymn calls us to do just that and teaches that the Saints of God are plain, common ordinary people we meet every day in all walks of our life.

The Communion of Saints...All Saints Day...why is it such a major day in the life of the Church...? It’s because it is about people we actually know, crowds we’ve been in...today’s lesson for the Epistle...“*I looked, and there was an enormous crowd-no one could count all the people! They were from very race, tribe, nation and language...(Rev 7.9) these are the Saints of God...it’s the ‘heaven crowd’ of which we are called to be a part!*

The Communion of Saints...ALL SAINTS, are those who say YES to their baptismal vows and spend their lives conforming with what Jesus taught. They give us an example to which we can aspire...to be like them.

Were they all perfect...never...everyone has made mistakes...even Mother Theresa! And that’s just the point...being a saint does NOT mean a perfect life has been led. It means a life of doing God’s will has been undertaken and when things did not go so well, corrections were made and, through God’s grace, the pieces were picked up, dusted off, blemish and tarnish repaired, and the work restarted.

So who are they? The qualifications are on a plaque of which I have spoken many times...**THE SAINTS OF GOD ARE THOSE WHO WENT QUIETLY ABOUT THE BUSINESS OF DOING WHAT GOD ASKED, ASKED NOTHING IN RETURN, AND DID NOT COMPLAIN.”**

Thanks be to God for All the Saints...**WE** can be one too...!

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