

**ALL SAINTS' DAY 2016**  
**SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**REVELATION 7.2 ST MATTHEW 5.1**



What does it take to become a Saint? Nothing we can do can make us Saints...God does the work for us...by bringing us together...as the Collect teaches us so perfectly...in "one communion and fellowship".

We have a tendency to distinguish between those whom the Church has given the honorific title "Saint"...like our patron Saint Joseph...and ordinary people like you and me. In Scripture the word "saint" refers to all of God's people...not to personal character...and not only to those who knew Jesus.

The English word "saint" comes from the Latin "sanctus"...translated from the Greek "hagios"...meaning "to set apart" or "to make holy". God himself makes us saints by the power of the Holy Spirit. We become Saints of God when we are baptized.

All Saints' Day is certainly the time we honor the people we read about in Scripture...Mary, Joseph, the Apostles and Evangelists who helped spread the Good News about Jesus. We honor other Saints of God like King Charles I...he died defending the *Book of Common Prayer* and the Apostolic Succession...important to all of Catholic Christianity. We also honor more recent Saints of God like Mother Theresa of Calcutta...who spent her life working among the poorest of the poor.

The Saints of God we read about in Scripture are so believable because they were ordinary people like you...like me...who followed Jesus and loved him. Peter was a not-so-bright and impulsive fisherman. James and John were hotheads with booming voices...Jesus called them the Thunder Boys. Mary quite simply said "yes" when she was asked to be the *Theotokos...the God-bearer*. And Joseph...Scripture doesn't record him saying a single word...he quietly went about doing his work.

All Saints' Day takes on a deeply personal meaning for us because we are remembering today the Saints of God we know personally...those who have died and those who are still alive today. They are the Saints

of God who have helped shape our lives and made us who we are today: our parents and grandparents; teachers; priests and nuns; employers and coworkers; doctors and nurses; police officers and firefighters; family and friends and all of us here today. They are the Saints of God like us and we want to be like them too.

The best sermon ever written about the Saints of God is the hymn we just sang. *I Sing a Song of the Saints of God*, was written in 1929 by Lesbia Scott (1898-1986), especially for her children. It is more than a quaint children's song from a bygone era. A friend of mine came to my ordination to the priesthood and told me after the Mass they never sing songs like this in his church. We do sing songs like this here because they talk about people just like us...people we can emulate.

All Saints' Day is about all of the Saints of God...living and dead. Together we form a wonderful fellowship of believers called the Communion of Saints. The love our parents and grandparents and friends who have died had for us while they were alive remains alive in our hearts to this day. Saint Paul tells us of the three greatest gifts of the Holy Spirit...Faith, Hope and Love...Love is the greatest because it never dies!

Sainthood is not a reward from God for being a good person but a gift that sets us apart and empowers us to be examples for others. That empowerment comes with the explicit requirement to always work for the good of others. Sainthood does not glorify us...it glorifies God.

When we invoke the names of the saints during the Mass or in one of the collects in the *Book of Common Prayer*...we are recognizing the special work they accomplished. In the Prayer for the Church we ask God to give us grace to follow the good examples of all of the Saints of God...especially those we knew.

The Saints of God...well they're just folk like you and me...and we want to be just like them too.

