

## All Saints' Day/XXI Trinity 2020

### Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Rev. 7.2-16 St. Matt. 5.1-12 Hymn #243

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They lived not only long ago...they live today...millions of Saints of God around the world still...and we are like them...we love to do Jesus' will.

Hymn # 243 (Hymnal 1940) has become something of the "National Anthem" for Saint Joseph Parish. We have sung the hymn at ordinations and funerals and feast days. Were it not for Covid-19 restrictions on singing in church...we would be singing it today. It is a hymn about us...the Saints of God.

Just what does it take to become a Saint of God? Is there a form we fill out or a test to complete? What qualifications does it take to have Sainthood conferred? Is there a waiting period? What makes Peter and Paul of Bible times long ago, or John Paul II and Mother Teresa of more recent times, different from us? Are they more Saints of God than we are?

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 at our baptisms. God does the work for us...bringing us as the Collect teaches us into "one communion and fellowship". In Scripture the word "saint" refers to all of God's people...not to the character of those who knew Jesus personally.

There is no question Peter and Paul of Bible times long ago, or John Paul II and Mother Teresa of more recent times...were exceptional people who spread the Good News about Jesus Christ in unique ways. The Roman Catholic Church has conferred on them the honorific title "Saint"...**they are different from us only in the gifts God gave them to do his work.**

One such recent Saint of God was a young boy named Carlo Acutis. He was born in London in May 1991. He was especially skilled at computers and the Internet and created a website encouraging devotion to the Eucharist several months before his death in Italy in October 2006 at Age 15 from Leukemia. On October 10, 2020 he was beatified. His resting place is the Church of

Santa Maria Maggiore in Assisi, Italy. Carlo was a Millennial Saint of God who used his computer skills to reach out to a world, especially to other young people, desperate to hear about God's love and compassion and encourage them to regularly receive the Blessed Sacrament.

All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, which follows tomorrow, are days we remember the Saints of God we knew and who have died and those who are still alive today. We remember our parents and grandparents; teachers; priests and nuns; employers and coworkers; first responders; family and friends who helped shape us into the Saint of God we are today.

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!

All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day are about all of the Saints of God...living and dead. Together we form a wonderful fellowship of believers called the Communion of Saints. Fellowship and Communion have the same meaning. Through our Baptism into the Body of Christ...we have been called into the wider Church throughout the World...and this Parish Community under the Patronage of Saint Joseph.

We shouldn't think of Sainthood as a reward from God for being a good person but a gift that empowers us to do Jesus' will. 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 at Mass or in one of the collects in the *Book of Common Prayer*...we are recognizing the special work they accomplished. We also ask God in the Prayer for the Church (that's us) to give us grace to follow the good examples of all of the Saints of God...especially those we knew.

All of those Saints of God...they are just like us...and we want to be just like them too!

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