

## All Saints' Day 2021 (Observed)

### Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

*Revelation 7.2-4, 9-17 St. Matthew 5.1-12*



Who are the Saints of God? What are the qualifications for becoming a Saint of God? What does it mean to be part of the Communion of Saints?

The word *saint* comes from the Latin word *sanctus* and means both *holy person* and *holy thing*. We are made *holy...whole and complete and presentable to God our Father...by Jesus' sacrificial death on the Cross*. The *holy* thing we belong to is what we say about ourselves and all of the Saints of God in the Apostles' Creed...we believe in ***the communion of saints***.

Sainthood can't be earned...it is a gift from God. The Church sets aside days in the *Book of Common Prayer* and Anglican Missal on which we remember the lives and work of those who have done extraordinary work. We honor Saints of God like Peter, Paul, John, Mary, Francis of Assisi, and our Patron Joseph. We try to emulate them in our own lives with the special gifts God has blessed us with to do his work.

All of us are bound together, as the Collect tells us, in a fellowship that includes all Christians living and dead. Saint Paul calls the Church a mystical body with Jesus as its head. We become part of that mystical body and are made holy when we are baptized. Our fellowship is strengthened when we pray and worship and receive Holy Communion together. And at every Mass we join with all of the Angels and Saints in heaven to sing "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory".

All Saints' Day is about all of the Saints of God, living and dead. Death doesn't separate us from those we love. At every Mass we remember by name those who have died and ask that God will bless us too so we can follow their examples. At tomorrow evening's All Souls' Day Mass, we will remember by name our family and friends, and all other Christians known and unknown, who have died and ask God that they "*may go from strength to strength in the life of perfect service*".

All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day give us the opportunity think about our family and friends who have been role models and have had positive effects on our lives. We remember and thank God for those who have helped us in unexpected ways. We remember those who have helped shape our lives, especially those who have made our faith in God and love of others stronger.

In the Collect we ask God to help us follow the examples of the many saints who happily have done his work, and get ready for the "unspeakable" joy that awaits us in heaven...unspeakable because there are no words which can adequately describe that joy. Jesus tells us he has gone to make room for us in heaven. We believe what Jesus said. The joy that awaits us there is what the writer of Hebrews calls the hope we have but have not yet experienced.

There is no better description of the fellowship of All Saints and what awaits us in heaven than what Saint John wrote in today's Lesson from Revelation...

*...“He who sits on the throne will protect them with his presence. Never again will they hunger or thirst: neither sun nor any scorching heat will burn them, because the Lamb, who is in the center of the throne, will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes”.*

John tells us in his vision of heaven he saw an enormous crowd standing in front of the throne and the Lamb...and no one could count all the people. They were all dressed in white robes, made pure by the blood of the Lamb. They are those who have gone through every trial and tribulation known to man. They are those who rejoice...because their reward is in heaven.

On this All Saints' Day...we celebrate the lives and work of all of the Saints of God...those who have died...those who are alive still. And we thank God for making us part of the One Communion and Fellowship we have through Jesus.

Happy All Saints' Day!

