

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS (2020)

A) UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS

- When we celebrate the Feast of All Saints, we are celebrating our own vocation.
- What God wants most of all for each one of us is that we should become holy.
- Being holy simply means being close to God.
- He calls us not only to be close to him but to be united to him in the deepest possible way.
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B) MEANS TO HOLINESS: PRAYER

- How do we grow in holiness?
- The Church offers us three chief means: prayer, the virtues and the life of grace.
- Being close to someone means being friends with them, being in love with them.
- If we want to be friends with God, we must be in a loving relationship with him; in a relationship which is deep and personal and growing all the time.
- The best way to begin that relationship, to sustain it and nurture it is through **a life of prayer.**
- St Teresa of Avila tells us that prayer is an intimate conversation with one whom we know loves us.
- God is the one who enables us to grow in holiness, but we have to do our part; we have to be faithful and persevering, day in, day out.
- Prayer should become as natural to us as breathing or eating.
- Our intimacy with God is expressed in our personal prayer each day, but it is celebrated and strengthened each week, when we come together to pray as Christ's Body, united to Christ our Head.
- Our weekly Mass, the Holy Eucharist, is the source and summit of our life as Christians.
- except, of course, in a time of pandemic, which imposes its own restrictions

C) MEANS TO HOLINESS: THE VIRTUES

- The second way in which we grow in holiness is by the practice of the virtues.
- The virtues are a real determination to do the good, and we strengthen them and grow in them by repeated good choices.
- At our baptism, we make a basic choice about the direction of our life when we promise to turn away from evil and turn towards the good.
- We renounce Satan and all his works and all his empty promises, and then commit ourselves in faith and hope and love to God, who is Father, Son and Spirit.
- We see that basic disposition in the life of Jesus who came, not do his own will, but the will of the One who sent him.
- We see it in the life of Our Lady, who told the Angel of the Annunciation, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; let what you have said be done to me."
- We see it in what Jesus expected of those who were to be his followers:
- "It is not those who say to me "Lord, Lord" who will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father in heaven."
- "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother."

- The saints are those who have tried to be faithful to God always, those who have tried consistently to make good choices, those who have practised virtue to a heroic degree.
- They have had to battle with exterior persecutions or interior trials.
- And where have they done that? - wherever they happen to be, in whatever state of life they find themselves.

Here are some words from Pope Francis:

- “Are you consecrated? Be holy by living your gift and your ministry with joy.
- Are you married? Be holy by loving and taking care of your husband or your wife, as Christ did with the Church.
- Are you a baptized person who is not married? Be holy by performing your work with honesty and competence and giving time to the service of others.
- Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by passionately teaching your children or grandchildren to know and follow Jesus.
- Are you a catechist, educator or volunteer? Be holy by becoming a visible sign of God's love and His presence beside us.”

D) MEANS TO HOLINESS: THE LIFE OF GRACE

- And the third means by which we grow in holiness is by living the life of grace.
 - Pope Francis reminds us that holiness is not something that we can procure for ourselves or obtain with our quality and our skills.
- Holiness is gifted to us by the Lord Jesus, when He takes us up with Him and clothes us in Himself, making us like Him.
- Everything that we have, everything that we are, everything that we do or achieve is only possible because of what God has given to us and continues to give us.
 - He gives us his life, he gives us his love, he gives us his strength, he gives us his forgiveness, he gives us his grace.
 - He has given us these things through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.
 - He continues to give them to us through the Holy Eucharist, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
 - Through his Holy Spirit, God gives us those promptings, those nudges, those inspirations to help us to make right choices, to be faithful to God's will by loving him and by loving our neighbour, with a love that is real and active.
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- Today we celebrate all those people who have gone before us
 - People who have led lives of deep prayer
 - People who have tried to be faithful to all that God has asked of them
 - People who have responded to God's grace each day and each moment
 - People who pray for us, encourage us and long to see us numbered one day among them.