

HOMILY – ALL SAINTS DAY – YEAR B (Homily 01)
(Rev 7:2-4, 9-14; Psalm 24; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12)

Help people be fully human, than help them become Christian, and finally help them to become saints.

These words of advice from St. Eugene de Mazenod, founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, still hold true today, especially on this feast of All Saint’s Day, which this year replaces the 31st Sunday of Ordinary Time.

Our task as followers of Jesus is to live fully human, saintly lives and to help others to do the same.

Unfortunately, an all too common misconception is that saints are rare, extraordinary and eccentric. These words of St Eugene remind us that we are all called to be saints, to be holy, to live life to the full.

According to Pope Benedict, the solemnity of All Saints “was gradually affirmed over the course of the first Christian millennium as a collective celebration of the martyrs. Already in 609, in Rome, Pope Boniface IV had consecrated the Pantheon, dedicating it to the Virgin Mary and all the martyrs. This martyrdom, on the other hand, can be understood in a broad sense, that is, as love for Christ without reserve, love that is expressed in the total gift of oneself to God and to neighbor.”

Father Thomas Rosica, of Salt and Light Television, states that “holiness is a way of life that involves commitment and activity. It is not a passive endeavor, but rather a continuous choice to deepen one's relationship with God and to then allow this relationship to guide all of one’s actions in the world. Holiness requires a radical change in mindset and attitude. The acceptance of the call to holiness places God as our final goal in every aspect of our lives.”

He goes on to quote Pope JP II on the occasion of the World Youth Day in Rome in the year 2000: “Young people of every continent, do not be afraid to be the saints of the new millennium! Be contemplative, love prayer; be coherent with your faith and generous in the service of your brothers and sisters, be active members of the Church and builders of peace.”

The gospel today offers us a blueprint for holiness, for wholeness. The Beatitudes are a succinct presentation of the highest values that followers of Jesus are called to live. To live them is to live a holy life, one that will challenge the values of the world we live in.

To be poor in spirit is to be humble, to live out of the truth, to be free from pretense, to actually live within the reign of God already here and now. To be meek and gentle is to be at peace with all of God's creation, in a sense to be at home anywhere and everywhere.

To be able to mourn and be compassionate is to experience the comforting presence of God's Spirit in one's life. To seek justice and fairness is to strive for a right relationship with God and with others, helping build up the reign of God here on earth.

To be merciful is to be able to forgive, to live free of anger and resentment, and to seek to be reconciled with all others. It is to be God like, for God is forgiveness.

To be a peacemaker is to strive to overcome conflict with communication and understanding and to truly be a child of God.

To be pure of heart is to be single-minded in one's daily life, focused only on the goodness of God and doing God's will. This person will be able to see God working in his or her life as well as the lives of others.

To be able to continue serving others and loving God in spite of obstacles and ridicule from others is to actually be affirmed in one's stance as a follower of Christ, and that is a source of joy.

The second reading simply affirms the beatitude to be pure in heart. Those who hope to see God must purify themselves, for God is pure. The first reading honoring the martyrs, bears out the words of Pope Benedict, that this feast was first of all one that celebrated the lives of all those who gave their lives for Christ.

In a sense we are all called to live martyrdom in slow motion, for that is what living a life given over to loving God and loving others as we love ourselves will entail. That selfless love will manifest itself in our lives in countless different ways.

Fr. John Corapi, a popular speaker on Christian life, shares an example of a James, a fellow seminarian, who became terminally ill. All who knew him questioned why this should happen to someone so gifted, athletic and planning to be a priest. That question intensified as they journeyed with him and watched him wasting away with the disease. One day, Fr. John Corapi came into his room to witness what to him was another Pieta. His mother was holding him in her arms and wiping away the sweat that poured from his brow in his suffering. When James saw him enter, he motioned him to come closer. Putting his ear close to his mouth, he heard him whisper the words, “You can never imagine such joy” into his ear. He slipped into a coma some days later. A priest came in with communion and decided to bless him with the host, saying loudly, “Behold the Lamb of God.” At those words, James abruptly sat up, was able to swallow a portion of the host, and said, “Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia” before expiring.

The Eucharist that we celebrate today is food for saints and sinners. We are forgiven, healed and sent out to make the world a better place, to make it the reign of God here on earth.

So today, as we celebrate the feast of All Saints, let us pray for the faith to be fully human, to be Christians, to become saints and to help others do the same.