

All Saints' Day/XX Trinity 2025

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

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



Happy All Saints' Day. Today we celebrate one of the major festivals of the Church. Our 1928 Prayer Book dignifies All Saints' Day with a Proper Preface said before the Sanctus and an Octave. The rubric (the italicized words) below the Collect direct us to say the Collect every day throughout the Octave.

The Collect for All Saints' Day was composed for the seminal 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*. Father Massey Shepherd, author of the Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary, writes, *"It is one of the most characteristic expressions of the doctrine of the Church, both visible and invisible, in all of the Prayer Book."*

Father Shepherd goes on to say the Collect is inspired by Saint Paul's conception of the Church as the "Body of Christ". The phrase "mystical body of thy Son" occurs only two other times in the Prayer Book...in the Thanksgiving after Communion it is defined as "the blessed company of all faithful people"...and in the final prayer in the Burial Office in which the concluding words are, *"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."*

What do we have to do to become a Saint of God? The word **saint** comes from the Latin word **sanctus** and means both **holy person** and **holy thing**. We can't earn sainthood...we aren't made holy by any action we take. 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 in the Apostles' Creed...**the Communion of Saints**.

All of us are bound together, as the Collect tells us, in a fellowship that includes all Christians living and dead. We become part of that mystical body and are made holy when we are baptized in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 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 and say, "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 the love of Jesus or from the communion of saints. It is fitting and proper 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'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" in heaven. They remain in God's care until we meet them again in heaven.

In the Collect we ask God our Father 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. Jesus tells us he has gone to make room for us in heaven. We believe what Jesus said is true. The writer of Hebrews expresses that joy this way...

... "As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses around us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end."

There is no better description of the fellowship of All Saints and the unspeakable joy that awaits us in heaven than what Saint John writes in the today's reading 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."

Who are the Saints of God? They are those we read about in the Bible, like our Patron Saint, Joseph, who were given extraordinary gifts from God to do His work. They are men and women who spread the Good News about God's love revealed to us by his Son, Jesus. They are people we meet everyday who go about doing God's work quietly. We are the Saints of God, called to be His Church.

Let me say again, Happy All Saints' Day!

