

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

This weekend we celebrate All Saints Day. At the heart of this Feast Day is *relationship*. Remember, at the core and heart of who we are as Catholics, as Christians, is *children of God*. This happens at our Baptism: at Baptism, what happened to Jesus happens now to us. At Jesus' Baptism the Holy Spirit descended upon Him – and so the Holy Spirit comes to live in our souls (have you thought about this? As a Christian, you are the dwelling place of GOD!). Jesus heard the voice of the Father from the heavens, “**You are my Son, my beloved; with you I am well pleased**” (Mark 1:11). So too at our Baptisms, the Father looks at us and claims us as His beloved sons and daughters. *He is pleased with you!*

At the heart of Baptism is the truth that we become God's children. This is the basic relationship that forms everything else we do and every other relationship in our lives. When we sin, we go to Confession as children of God, reconciling our relationship with our Father whom we hurt. In Communion, we receive the God who has called us into His family. (In an extreme case) If someone is possessed, the Rite of Exorcism constantly refers back to this key relationship. We ARE God's kids! This means, then, that we are brothers and sisters in Christ. These are not just fancy words, or a nice way of thinking of things. We are not brothers and sisters in Christ because we happen to have the same beliefs or because we're part of the same “club”. No, we are BLOOD-brothers and sisters... in the Blood of Christ! This is more real and stronger than biological blood relations ... we have been given a Divine Blood transfusion to become family – not only for a period of time on earth, but for eternity!

What does this have to do with All Saints Day? The Saints are our older brothers and sisters in Christ. They have lived out the Faith on this earth, and are now sharing in the Eternal Banquet. While there are certain Saints that the Church has canonized (they have been declared Saints), the criteria, by nature, is restrictive: they must have demonstrated heroic virtue in their lives; they have to have a certain number of miracles attributed to their intercession after their death; there has to be a popular following; etc.. When we look at the calendar of the Saints, while there are a lot of them, we know that there must be loads more in heaven. Therefore, the Church gives us this Feast of All Saints for all the many Saints that have NOT been canonized. It's like a giant Family Reunion!

Why is it important to celebrate Saints Feast Days, and All Saints Day? Because we ARE family. We celebrate the joys of our older brothers and sisters – it's like how we celebrate birthdays and anniversaries in our families. We also look to them for guidance, help, and intercession (meaning, their prayers for us to God – remember, they are in heaven which means that they are soooo close to God that they can whisper into His ear!).

Another very important reason for celebrating All Saints Day is that it beckons us to be holy – it reminds us that we, too, are called to be Saints. This call is not for the extraordinary, but for ALL the Baptized. This means you, too. Each of us is called to be a Saint, which means God is giving us the Grace necessary to do this impossible task. We have but to beg for the Grace, cling to it, and work for God's glory.

I encourage you to read some of the lives of the Saints. Often their example can inspire us, and lead us beyond ourselves. We also get to see that the lives of the Saints were anything but boring! We hear too much that people don't want to do the Church thing *because it's boring*. Saints live out their uniqueness in adventurous ways. Some were missionaries to distant lands (like **St. Francis Xavier**), and others were spouses in the working world (like **Sts. Louis and Zelig Martin**). Some were laypeople who died young (like **St. Pier Giorgio**), and others were religious who gave decades upon decades of their lives for Christ (like **Bl. Teresa of Calcutta**). Their lives can inspire us to live out our calling to holiness each day.

Maybe you will be canonized someday, and have your own Feast Day, but even if you don't, All Saints Day is meant to be your Feast Day and mine!