

*Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church*

The Solemnity of All Saints

November 1, 2009

Readings:

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

1 John 3:1-3

Matthew 5:1-12a

We are here today because of the grace of God, and the most obvious way that Christ has chosen to make his presence felt in the world: through the fidelity, and through the example of people of faith. The strong witness of one person can make a difference in so many lives. It is on the basis of their fidelity and sacrifice that we gather here in freedom and peace. Many of the named and unnamed saints found persecution in their time. Many of us are very cautious when it comes to pain, so all we can hope and pray for is that, given a similar context, we may have the grace to witness to our faith in whatever way is demanded of us. It remains true that when most of us hear about the faith of modern-day martyrs we are still deeply affected, our own faith is challenged and our values are shaken up. Mothers and fathers are still dying for the faith which we so often take for granted.

All Saints Day has its roots in the early Church's "Martyrs Day," attested to by a hymn written in 359 by St. Ephraim. It was called All Saints Day in the seventh century. A Saint is someone who the Church believes is in heaven with God. Wrongly, we often think Saints are perfect. But you don't have to look far in our history to see that it's just not true. The saints were not perfect. They had flaws and weaknesses. They had fears and doubts. They had moments of confusion, wondering what they should do next. And most of the named saints felt unworthy. They would have been surprised when the church gave them that title of saint. But they all hold something in common. In different ways they were called on to witness to their faith. For some, it was indeed dramatic and cost them their lives. But in fact, for most their greatest witness is how they coped with the ordinary difficulties of life and how they reflected in a variety of ways the love of God.

For most of us sanctity and martyrdom will not come in dramatic ways. The daily routine of looking after a sick child, spouse or parent, of living with a mental, physical, emotional or spiritual illness, the scourge of being unemployed, homeless or addicted, and the feel that we are unlovable brings with it the reality of sharing in the lot of the martyrs and saints. All Saints Day is the feast which commemorates all those we know who may never be publicly proclaimed in the canon or list of saints, but who nonetheless are in heaven. Some of them may only be known to God. Others are people whose love, sacrifice, and fidelity we have seen for ourselves and who have inspired us. Sometimes they can be our own mothers and fathers. These, too, we believe belong to the great multitude of witnesses who went through their own persecutions and found the blessings within their daily lives. They saw God in this world and are now fully alive to him in the next.

In this Mass may we have the grace to live a holy life that, in ordinary ways, demonstrates the extraordinary power of God working in us. In doing so, in our sacrifices, forgiveness, and love may we remain faithful to the women and men who are our saintly heroes and pray that we remain faithful to the Gospel of Christ as they did.