

Solemnity of All Saints ~ November 1, 2015

By the marvelous power of God's love we have been made into Children of God. Who are we right now? Beloved Children of our Heavenly Father. Baptism makes this truth clear, it makes it an indelible reality in our lives. God, the Father of All Creation, has claimed us as His own beloved sons and daughters. In those water of baptism, we are forever joined to the beloved Child of God, Jesus himself. He reveals to us what our beloved Father is like by teaching us to pray "Abba!" ("Father!") Yes, remarkable as it may seem, we are to understand our relationship with the God who has created the universe out of nothing, who has power and might beyond belief, we are to relate to this God as a child does in tenderness to his "Papa", to his "Daddy", whatever term of tenderness a child may use for his or her father who they know will provide them whatever they need.

And then, by the gift of the Holy Spirit poured into our lives as love and baptism, the very love of God, we have been strengthened to live out of this identity as Children of God. It is by this gift of the Spirit that we can cry out "Abba!" ("Father!") and, as Jesus does, trust that in God, His Father, all things will be provided to us, all good things will be provided to us.

So our Heavenly Father rejoices whenever we turn to Him with whatever need we have, no matter how big nor how small. It is something like this: My dad is a carpenter. I grew up not having much interest in carpentry, very active in sports in school, extracurricular activities. I never really learned much about making things or fixing things. But, any time I needed something fixed or needed help with making something I would go to my Daddy, my father. And he would drop what he was doing, and he would help me, joyful, excited to do so. It is just a small smidgen of what God's love for us as father is like: Always ready, always ready to respond to His children's needs. But we so quickly forget who we are: Beloved children of God.

The key to sanctity, the key to growth in holiness, and the saints teach us this: To grow into our identity as God's Beloved Children and to recognize everything we have comes from the hand of God.

So, the Father claims us as His own Beloved Children. He sends us His Beloved Son, Jesus, to teach us how to live as a Child of God and they gift us with their life-giving Spirit as divine energy to live in this way. The Divine Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – does everything to make our way home to God easy. The Tempter wants to tempt us to believe that it is very difficult, that sanctity – holiness of life – it's impossible. But the Trinity, out of love for us, makes it easy and always gives us more and more to lead us on our journey home. In fact, with God, there is always more – more joy, more peace, more love. It is the very nature of God to keep giving gifts. And today, we celebrate some of the greatest gifts of God – those men and women of every age and race and background who are with God, who we believe and know are with God and enjoying right now the fullness of life and glory – the saints of God, human like us in all things, who struggled in life as we do with trusting in God's goodness, and somehow lived out of their identity as beloved Children of God and were able to grow in love of God and of their neighbor in all things.

And they want to help us. They want to help us to be where they are. And so, they assist us at every moment with their prayers. And they delight when we turn to them, as our brother or sister on this earth, that's when we turn to them and ask for their help in prayer. And so, when we are looking for a parking place, and there is not one single space in sight, we pray, "Mother Cabrini, Mother Cabrini, find me a space for my little machiney." It works! I was just at OU Medical Center this past week, needing to see someone quickly, not a space in sight, turned to Mother Cabrini and immediately the car right in front of me pulls out, so thank you. Or perhaps one more common to many Catholics who lose their keys or other things: "Tony, Tony, come around. Something's lost, gotta be found." Saint Anthony, always there to aid us in our time of need. Or, perhaps, in more serious times, a saint for impossible causes, a saint I know from working with the Latino people of our land who are far from home, who face such challenging situations, Saint Jude. To turn to Jude and to ask him in the face of something seemingly impossible for the help of God.

All the saints go before our God on behalf of us, praying that we might know God's love and God's help, and they assist us with their prayers on our journey home to Heaven. So, their prayers give us strength

and the example of their life gives us courage. Their lives encourage us that the life of holiness is possible for they were sinners, broken and weak, just like us. But they understood that in their simpleness, in their brokenness, in their weakness, they could always turn to God, who would make them whole, who would strengthen them, and who would aid them in their time of need. And they show us, these holy men and women of God, how to live out the blueprint of holiness which is the Beatitudes. In fact, that first Beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit theirs is the Kingdom of God", it's the foundation for all the other Beatitudes.

Every saint in his or her unique way shows us what it means to be poor in spirit, what it means to understand that life and the source of life does not come from us, it comes from outside of us as a gift, and Divine Life comes from outside of us as a gift through the power of the Spirit. They show us what it means to depend upon God in all things and to trust that God will provide. And so, they could live out those other Beatitudes as well – injustice causing them to mourn, and then to turn to find consolation in the God of All Hope, their desire for righteousness, to make right their relationship with God and right their relationship with others, as strong as a deep hunger or an aching thirst, hearts fully devoted to God, leading them to act with mercy and sow the seeds of peace. And their way of living like that of Jesus himself, challenging those in power, and thus like the preacher of the Beatitudes, they, too, will suffer because of it.

The saints by their lives poured out in love of God and others, they show us holiness is not complicated, it's not just something out there for men and women in monasteries or convents, but holiness is rooted in the very stuff of our daily lives, in the messiness of our lives, as we struggle to love more fully our neighbor, to give our lives more fully to God, it is right there that we are being fired, shaped into who we truly are—saints of God.

At each and every Eucharist the saints join us in singing praise to God, or rather, more correctly, we join them in their endless hymn of praise to God. It is as if Earth is joined to Heaven and a veil is removed and we see how around this table we are joined to the saints in these songs of joy and gratitude to God.

I was this past week at a clergy education day at the Pastoral Center and we had Mass in the chapel there. If you have every been there, you've noticed the beautiful stained glass windows along each side and they are arranged so that as Mass is being celebrated, the reflections of those saints are kind of carved into the marble behind the altar so that you can see them right there around the altar praying with us. And so it is that the eyes of faith recognize the presence of the saints here joining us in prayer and with the eyes of faith, we recognize that we are never alone, that they are with us every day, urging us on in this journey of faith, cheering us on in this race of faith, reminding us our destiny—every one of us!—our destiny is life with God forever.