

Homily - All Saints Day 2023 (St. Jude)

“Beloved, we are God's children now;
what we shall be has not yet been revealed.
We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him,
for we shall see him as he is.”

So, I know we all just celebrated Halloween, but I'd be willing to bet that there's another holiday that's probably already on our minds.

Several weeks from now, many of us will gather with friends and family for a distinctly American celebration - Thanksgiving.

For my family, Thanksgiving was the one time when my mother's entire side of the family would travel from across the country to be together for a massive celebration.

And like any good family party, especially when I was younger, it was always a time for everyone to hear updates on what we were doing with our lives.

What were we studying? Where did we want to go to college? What did we want to be when we grew up?

It's a common human experience to want to think about our futures and our dreams.

And in our life of faith, that meditation takes us even beyond the end of this life and into the next - into our life in eternity itself.

We hear the apostle John speak of a future which is both beautiful and yet mysterious.

“What we shall be,” he says, “has not yet been revealed.”

That’s an interesting statement.

I think most people would imagine that one of the appealing things about the teachings of religion in general, and Christianity, is the promise of some kind of knowledge in what the future holds for us after our deaths - some kind of clarity.

And, of course, there are many things we *can* say about Heaven, and eternity - but St. John also makes it clear that there are parts of this experience of eternal life that we won’t truly understand until we get there.

But what do we know? We can say some things for certain.

We’ll resemble God, as he says because we’ll be perfected from all our sins and weakness that we have in this life.

We’ll have the joy of finally actually seeing him in his full glory, face to face - what the Church speaks of as the beatific vision, where we finally experience the fulfillment of the deepest desires of our hearts.

And, gratefully, we’ll experience total freedom from everything that weighs us down in this life.

I honestly think that’s something we should really look forward to.

Beyond even those questions about who we want to be and what we want to do, we know there are many, many more pressures and concerns in this life that keep our hearts bound up in anxiety.

That freedom and joy is, in a very real way, what we have to look forward to in heaven.

It's the same joy that all of the saints who have gone before us are living even now.

It's a real thing - that's part of our belief if you're Catholic or any other kind of Christian.

It's a real place, not an ideal that we're meant to live up to.

That's what today's feast is all about, because when we celebrate, as the name says, all the saints, we're not just talking about everyone who's been officially *named* a saint and given a feast day in the Catholic Church, we're talking about everyone who has even gone before us into heaven - God willing, including anyone we've known in this life.

Family members who have gone ahead of us.

Holy souls, men and women who lived in ordinary places with extraordinary virtue, who will be resplendent in glory as the truth of their holiness is revealed.

And yes, every one of the Saints whose names we know and whose patronages we celebrate, waiting and rejoicing to welcome us into their number.

And that's the biggest reason we should celebrate this feast day, after all - that, someday, we hope, it'll be our feast day too.

We can be standing alongside all the other souls and the saints and angels and someday, God willing, future generations of holy souls will be standing here and praying for *your* intercession.

Ever think about that?

But that future is not here yet.

First we have to live and prepare for that future life.

We spend so much time working and preparing to live our earthly dreams.

But we need to ask ourselves, have we put as much - or, ideally, even more - into our preparation for eternity?

Some of us might not be good at planning ahead.

Some of us are procrastinators at heart.

But when it comes to living like the saints... procrastinate tomorrow!

Now is the time for holiness.

Today is the day to live the dreams the Lord has for your life, and to embrace your vocation.

And in time, what the fullness of that eternal destiny will look like will be revealed.

As we continue this Mass, let's ask God to give us that desire for what he has promised us, and All the Saints, in the life of heavenly glory, if we choose it.

Because, honestly, out of everything we could ever want or choose to be, nothing else even comes close.