

**HOMILY BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE**  
**APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**  
**HOLY MASS FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS**  
**BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
**NOVEMBER 1, 2023**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the personal representative of Pope Francis to the United States of America, it is my honor and privilege to convey to you the Holy Father’s spiritual closeness and paternal affection, and to wish you a happy All Saints Day!

The Solemnity of All Saints is a celebration of the universal call to holiness. Each person is called by God, and equipped by the grace of Baptism and Confirmation, to become a “holy one” of God, both in this life and in the life to come. We celebrate today the countless women and men – children too! – throughout history who have achieved this call to holiness in a heroic way, and whose names we honor at the altar. But we also celebrate the many ones whose names are not universally known, and yet whose lives of faith, hope, and love have surely taken them to their eternal reward. Furthermore, we rejoice in the hope that we too will join the saints in heaven, by being and becoming people of love today.

Today’s readings teach us what it means to be saints, what it means to respond to the universal call to holiness – a call that is “universal”, not only because each individual is called, but because we are called to become holy *together* with people who are part of the whole diverse human family. **So, what does it mean to be a saint? The readings give us three aspects: an identity as God’s beloved, a life that is blessed, and an experience of belonging.**

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**First: our identity as beloved.** In the second reading, Saint John addresses the Christian community with a single word: “Beloved.” This word speaks directly to the heart of who we are: “See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God” (1 Jn 3:1). My brothers and sisters, do you hear this? *You* are a child of God. So often we ask, *How will I get to heaven? What do I need to do to become a saint?* And these are good questions. However, we can’t address those questions unless we first have a deep sense of what Saint John tells us: *I am the beloved child of God... now*. The possibility of “becoming a saint” only exists because God wants me for his own. Becoming a saint means choosing God, and choosing to follow his way, but this only matters because God first chose us. To be God’s child, to be loved by him, is our core identity. It is *who* we are.

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**The second aspect of being a saint: to be blessed.**

Pope Francis has warned of something he calls “spiritual worldliness”, which he says is like carrying a “false identity card”. It means that we make ourselves look religious or holy on the outside, but inside we are seeking something worldly, such as a good reputation or a sense of control. It’s what Jesus accuses some of the religious leaders of when he calls them hypocrites. The Beatitudes are the opposite of spiritual worldliness. The person who lives the Beatitudes is showing their most authentic self. But to live the Beatitudes requires trust, because it contradicts the logic of the world. Poverty in spirit... instead

of self-promotion. Mourning... instead of taking refuge in every material comfort. Practicing mercy... instead of hatred and contempt. Making peace... instead of vengeance. And as the fruit of it all, we gain a happiness that this world cannot give.

To live this “blessed” life, which Jesus not only teaches but models, it is absolutely necessary to know our true identity as God’s beloved. Only if I know that I am the beloved child of God will I resist putting on a false identity in order to gain what the world can give me. Because in God’s love, I already possess something greater than the world can give.

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To be beloved, and to live blessed, leads to the **third aspect of being a saint, which is to belong to a holy people**. In the first reading from Revelation, John saw “a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue”, who were praising and worshipping the Lamb of God together with the angels (CF. *REV* 7:9-12). This is a vision of the belonging that is enjoyed by the saints: with all their diversity, they are united as one people.

It reminds me of the Pope’s homily at the consistory one month ago for the creation of new Cardinals. Noting that the Cardinals “are from all parts of the world, from the most diverse nations”, he told us that “the College of Cardinals is called to resemble a symphony orchestra, representing the harmony and synodality of the Church.” Indeed, what he said about the Cardinals also applies to the whole Church of God. “A symphony,” said Pope Francis, “thrives on the skillful composition of the timbres of different instruments: each one makes its contribution, sometimes alone, sometimes united with someone else, sometimes with the whole ensemble. Diversity is necessary; it is indispensable. However, each sound must contribute to the common design.” The Pope emphasized how important it is, in the Church as in a symphony, for each person to listen to the others so that the playing produces a true harmony. And it is the Holy Spirit who makes this possible. The Holy Spirit is the protagonist of the entire work of the Church.<sup>1</sup> He is the one who makes saints of us all.

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My dear brothers and sisters, as we look to that “great multitude” of saints in heaven, let us be like them. First, by accepting deeply our true identity as God’s beloved; then, by receiving the blessing that comes from living as God’s beloved, and not as slaves of this world; and finally, by belonging to the people who long to see God’s face. May this Eucharistic worship be like the worship that John saw being offered to the Lamb of God in heaven. May we say together with the saints: “Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.” (*REV* 7:12)

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, Homily at the Ordinary Public Consistory for the Creation of New Cardinals, September 30, 2023.