

**Homily for the Solemnity of All Saints  
Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception  
November 1, 2016**

Today, the Church celebrates a great feast for humanity – the feast of the triumph of Love in the lives of people throughout the world and history who longed to see God “as *He is*” (1 John 3:3). The Holy Father offers the saints as signs of hope:

*“To see God, to be similar to God: this is our hope. And today, precisely on the day of the Saints and before the day of the dead, it is necessary to think a little about hope: this hope that accompanies us in life... The first Christians depicted hope like an anchor, as if life had cast the anchor into the river of heaven and all of us journeying toward this river were clinging to the anchor’s hope... This is a beautiful image of hope: to have a heart anchored there where our ancestors are, where the Saints are, where Jesus is, where God is. This is the hope that does not disappoint.”* (Homily for Solemnity of All Saints 2013)

All of us, as pilgrims, are reaching out to take hold of this anchor of hope, cast out to us by those who have already arrived at the end of their journey. During this Jubilee Year of Mercy, how many pilgrims have walked through the Holy Door in this Basilica seeking holiness and hoping for heaven!

How often, in the midst of this journey, do we have doubts about whether we will reach our heavenly home? While the door may be narrow, all are invited to enter through that door. The beautiful relief at the back of this Basilica reminds us of the Universal Call to Holiness. Sanctity is not for the privileged few but for all of us. The saints remind us time and again that we can make it to the Father’s house!

Along our journey, God gives us friends, who, like stars on a dark night, point out the way. During this Jubilee Year, we can reflect on a few saints. In canonizing Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Pope Francis proposed her as a “model of holiness” for living a life of loving service in Christ:

*“The Christian life, however, is not merely extending a hand in times of need. If it is just this, it can be, certainly, a lovely expression of human solidarity which offers immediate benefits, but it is sterile because it lacks roots. The task which the Lord gives us, on the contrary, is the vocation to charity in which each of Christ’s disciples puts his or her entire life at his service, so to grow each day in love.”* (Homily for the Canonization of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, 4 September 2016)

The Holy Father offered Padre Pio and Leopold Mandic as Saints of Mercy. These two Franciscans, persecuted and misunderstood, persevered in a marvelous way, dedicating themselves to the relief of the suffering and to bringing God’s mercy to sinners. Just two weeks ago, the Pope canonized a fifteen-year old Mexican, Jose Sanchez del Rio, who refused to deny Christ. In canonizing him and six others, the Holy Father revealed the key to their success:

*“The saints are men and women who enter fully into the mystery of prayer. Men and women who struggle with prayer, letting the Holy Spirit pray and struggle in them. They struggle to the very end, with all their strength, and they triumph, but not by their own efforts: the Lord triumphs in them and with them.”* (Homily for the Canonization of Seven Saints, 16 October 2016)

The saints should remain before our eyes, not only as an example to be imitated, but also to keep alive in our hearts -in the midst of struggle- the desire for God and heaven. Perhaps, we think that we cannot be like them- that we are sinners. In those moments when we feel lost, alone, or even ashamed, it is good to think of the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. The tax collector could not lift his eyes to heaven; he could only beat his breast and cry out, “Have mercy on me, a sinner!” It was he who went whom justified that day. This is the beginning of sanctity-

humbly admitting that we are beggars- beggars for mercy- before God. *Blessed are the poor in spirit for there is the Kingdom of heaven!*

The Beatitudes, so different from worldly values which pass away, reveal the interior attitude of the saints: poverty of spirit, meekness, purity of heart. In his book, *The Splendour of the Church*, Henri de Lubac wrote:

*“The best Christians and the most vital are not to be found among the wise, clever, the intelligentsia or the politically-minded, or those of social consequence. Consequently, what they say does not make the headlines; what they do does not come to the public eye. Their lives are hidden from the eyes of the world. ... Yet these are responsible more than anyone else, for ensuring that our earth is not a hell on earth. Most of them never think to ask whether their faith is ‘effective’. It is enough for them, to live it, as reality; and because the fruit of all this is often a hidden fruit, it is nonetheless wonderful for that.”*

The Book of Revelation speaks of a *great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue*. All – those officially canonized and those hidden from the eyes of the world - stand around the throne of the Lamb and offer adoration and praise. This is the communion of saints within which we live. In calling this Jubilee Year, His Holiness wrote:

*“The Church lives within the communion of the saints. In the Eucharist, this communion, which is a gift from God, becomes a spiritual union binding us to the saints and blessed ones whose number is beyond counting (cf. Rev 7:4). Their holiness comes to the aid of our weakness in a way that enables the Church, with her maternal prayers and her way of life, to fortify the weakness of some with the strength of others.”* (*Vultus Misericordiae*, 22)

The Christian life is not easy, but do not lose hope. The saints who will help you on your journey! Therefore, do not despair in the midst of trials, difficulties, persecutions, and uncertainties; rather, *rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven*. This is our hope – to reach heaven, to be forever with the Saints, and to cry out with them: *Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor power, and might be to our God, forever and ever. Amen.* (Rev. 7:12)