

All Saints Day
Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14;
I John 3:1-3;
Matthew 5:1-12a
Little Flower - 11/1/15

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints. Today also begins National Vocation Awareness Week.

On All Saints Day, we remember and celebrate all the holy men, women, and children of every time and place who are now in heaven. Celebrating the saints, we celebrate God's gifts to them. As the 1st Preface of Holy Men and Women in the former Sacramentary put it: "You are glorified in your saints, for their glory is the crowning of your gifts."

However, today in a special way we want to remember, celebrate, and give thanks for our family members and friends who have died and who now are with God. Because we believe in the communion of saints, we believe there is an unbreakable bond between those in heaven and us here on earth. When our loved ones died, their love for us did not die with them. Rather their love for us was made eternal and perfect. We believe that they remain really present to us in spirit. However, since our departed loved ones were not perfect, today is a good day to recall the old Irish blessing: "May you never forget what is worth remembering, Or remember what is best forgotten."

As I mentioned, today also begins National Vocation Awareness Week. I would suggest that today challenges us to reflect upon our fundamental human vocation. The word *saint* comes from the Latin *sanctus* which means *holy*. Our fundamental vocation, then, is to become holy. In the book of Leviticus, God told Moses, "*Speak to the whole Israelite community and tell them: Be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy*" [19:2].

If all those who are in heaven are holy, today's second reading suggests what holiness means. St. John wrote that when Christ appears in glory "*we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*" However, St. Paul suggests that we are called to become like him even now when he wrote to the Galatians: "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me*" [2:20; RSV, 1973]. Since St. Paul is the strongest personality in the New Testament next to Jesus, we believe that when we become more Christlike, we become more fully and freely ourselves. As the 2nd Preface of the Holy Eucharist in the former Sacramentary put it, we are called to "grow into the likeness of the risen Christ." To become holy is to become like Christ or Christlike.

Over the years, many times you have heard me use Matthew Kelly's phrase "the-best-version-of-yourself." In *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*, Matthew Kelly explains how he came to use that phrase. When he was about 15 years old, he encountered one idea that, to use his words, "turned my life inside out, but right side up." That idea was that God calls us to holiness and that everything that happens is an opportunity to grow in holiness. However, when he first started speaking and writing, he quickly discovered that the idea of a call to live holy lives did not resonate with people today. The phrase "the-best-version-of-yourself" emerged" from this experience. For Matthew Kelly, "the quest for holiness and the quest to become the-best-version-of-yourself" are one and the same. As he would say, God has an incredible dream for each and every one of us: he wants us to become the-best-version-of-ourselves [p.'s 77 & 78]. Today's Gospel suggests that we will become the-best-version-of-ourselves if we live the Beatitudes.

My brothers and sisters, our fundamental human, Christian vocation is to become holy, to become Christlike, to grow into the likeness of the Risen Christ, to become the-best-version-of-ourselves. However, in addition, God calls most people to marriage, some people to the single life, some people to the religious life, and some people to the priesthood. For those of you who are young or who have not found your vocation or career, perhaps the best thing you can do is stop asking what you want to do with your life and start asking God what God wants you to do with your life.