Sunday Message

ALL SAINTS SOLEMNITY

THE WORD

Year A • 1 November 2026 • Colour: White • Psalter Week 3

When we think of saints, we usually think of clergy and religious who have been officially canonised by the church. Their lives were carefully scrutinised, their writings and actions thoroughly investigated, to ensure their heroic virtues.

The title of saint or blessed is accorded only to those outstanding in sanctity - mystics, martyrs, missionaries, pastors and founders of religious orders. It seems out of reach of the rest of us.

But in his letter on holiness, Gaudete et Exsultate, Pope Francis challenged this way of thinking. "To be holy," he said, "does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious." We do not have to be "swooning in mystic rapture" or walking around with "lowered eyes" to be a saint. Sanctity isn't just for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. We are all "called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves."

The Holy Father emphasised that the call to holiness comes with our baptism and that "in the church, holy yet made up of sinners, you will find everything you need to grow towards holiness."

Therefore, when we think of holiness, we should not "think only of those already beatified and canonised." Nor should we grow discouraged by examples of holiness that appear unattainable. "The important thing," he said, "is that each believer discerns his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in their hearts, rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them. We are all called to be witnesses, but there are many actual ways of bearing witness."

Today's feast honours the multitude of ordinary saints, those described by Pope Francis as "the saints next door" who will never be formally canonised. All of us are called to be saints. ■

LEARN

Saints surround us. Think of the good people you have known, exemplars of love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, and Godliness. Perhaps your parents, a family member, a neighbour, a teacher, a friend, or a work colleague.

A saint makes time for another even when time is short.
A saint sees those on the margins, those with empty stomachs, those without a home.
A saint treats everybody the same, no matter who they are or where they come from.
A saint is honest and just in all her dealings and relationships.
A saint never discriminates based on gender, skin colour, sexuality, or postcode.
A saint is slow to judge, rich in mercy.
A saint fosters reconciliation, seeks to forgive and be forgiven.
A saint comforts, soothes, and stands in solidarity with those who suffer.
A saint speaks good news.
A saint trusts in God at all times.
A saint knows that love is always the answer.

To be a saint is to "bear witness" to God in all that we do. It is to live the Sermon on the Mount.

PRAY

Remember your deceased loved ones today. Pray that they may be counted among the communion of saints.

DO

Visit the grave(s) of your beloved dead this week. Ask the Lord to take them to himself.

REFLECT

In Gaudete et Exsultate, Pope Francis described the beatitudes of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel as the key to sainthood. The beatitudes are "the Christian's identity card." Our identity card. Nowadays, our purses and wallets are full of cards - driving licences, social security cards, bank cards, travel passes, club cards of various kinds. We carry lots of cards, but the most important one is not in our purse or wallet. It is in our hearts, shown in our actions, showcased in our daily living.

Writes Pope Francis: "Jesus explained with great simplicity what it means to be holy when he gave us the beatitudes," which are "the Christian's identity card." "If anyone asks: what must one do to be a good Christian?" then "the answer is clear. We have to do, each in our own way, what Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount."

We gain true happiness by aligning our wills with the will of God, as expressed in the beatitudes. In living like this, we become saints.

Not only are we called to be holy, he continues, we are also surrounded by people who are holy. "I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God's people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile...Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbours, those who, living in our midst, reflect God's presence."

I try to think of the beatitudes as my identity card. When people see me, encounter me, do they see a saint? Am I carrying a Christian identity card? ■

SAY

"Lord, help me to witness to you by living your way. Help me to become the saint next door. Amen."