

Solemnity of All Saints
Church of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
La Crosse, Wisconsin
1 November 2020

Rev 7, 2-4. 9-14
1 Jn 3, 1-3
Mt 5, 1-12

Homily

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Recalling the memory of all the saints, we celebrate our identity in Christ, the concrete substance of our life in Him. In His teaching of the Beatitudes, to which we have just listened, Our Lord describes for us the life into which we have been inserted as Christians, as living branches of the Vine Who is Christ Our Lord,¹ as true children of God whose inheritance is the Kingdom of Heaven.² Celebrating our identity in Christ, the identity which we share with all the saints, we are struck by the immeasurable and unceasing love of God Who calls us to be His very dear children. Contemplating the ineffable richness of the Mystery of Faith in the lives of all of the saints of every time and in every place, we are conscious that the same Mystery is at work also in us.

Let us recall the words of the First Letter of Saint John:

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are... Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.³

Contemplating the saints, whom the Lord called to live in Him, we are full of joy and gratitude, for we share the same vocation. Our contemplation is not abstract. It is not the contemplation of something outside of ourselves, outside of our personal experience. We also are called to live in Christ, because God the Father loves us so much and desires that we be with Him always. The saints, therefore, are truly our brothers and sisters. We are part of their communion with God –

¹ Cf. Jn 15, 1-17.

² Cf. Mt 5, 2 e 10.

³ Cf 1 Jn 3, 1-2.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Beatitudes, the New Law taught to us by Christ, the New Moses, describe perfectly the manner of living of the Christian, of the saint. They include the whole of the Old Law and they bring it to perfection. In fact, they describe the manner of living of Christ Himself, God the Son Incarnate, in Whom God the Father has adopted us as His beloved children. We are children of God in His only-begotten Son. The gift of Divine Love never ceases to flow from the glorious pierced Heart of Christ into the Church, into every Christian heart.

Referring to the Beatitudes in his commentary for today's feast, Dom Prosper Guéranger writes:

Not that the beatitudes repeal the commandments; but their superabundant justice goes far beyond all prescriptions. It is from His Heart that Jesus brought them forth in order to imprint them, more lastingly than on stone, in the hearts of His people. They are the portrait of the Son of man, the summary of our Redeemer's life.⁴

We celebrate today not only our Christian identity but also the high vocation which is ours as children of God, brothers and sisters of all the saints. A little later in the Sermon on the Mount, of which the Beatitudes are the heart, Our Lord declares to His disciples: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."⁵

Hearing the words of the Lord, we should never doubt the height to which we are called in Him. We have been chosen to share the company of the "great multitude" of the saints who, according to the Book of Revelation, "no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues."⁶ We are living members of the company of those who, by their words and actions, announce to the world: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb."⁷

Conscious of our weaknesses and sins, we suffer the temptation to doubt the word of

⁴ "Non qu'elles suppriment les commandements; mais leur justice surabondante va plus loin que toutes prescriptions. C'est de son Cœur que Jésus les produit, pour les imprimer, mieux que sure le roc, au cœur de son peuple. Elles sont tout le portrait du Fils de l'homme, le résumé de sa vie rédemptrice". Prosper Guéranger, *L'Année Liturgique, Le temps après la Pentecôte*, Tome VI, 11^{ème} éd. (Tours : Maison Alfred Mame et Fils, 1925), p. 91. English translation: Prosper Guéranger, *The Liturgical Year, Time after Pentecost*, Book VI (Great Falls, MT: St. Bonaventure Publications, 2000), p. 79.

⁵ Mt 5, 48.

⁶ Rev 7, 9.

⁷ Rev 7, 10.

Christ directed to us today. How is it possible that we are called to the perfection of the holiness of God, to the perfection of the saints? The Lord gives us the clear response, not using exaggerated or merely symbolic language lacking a connection with the reality of our daily life. By means of the Beatitudes, He describes for us the perfection to which we are really called every day of our life, the perfection which will reach its consummation in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We become perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect by following the way of Christ, the way described in the Beatitudes. All of the eight Beatitudes, in a true sense, are contained in the first. The way to holiness of life is the way of poverty of spirit, that is, the way in which we recognize humbly that all that we are and have comes from the hand of God, and we trust that God will provide all of which we have need, in order to live as His true children, abandoning ourselves to Divine Providence.

It is the way of accepting suffering for the purification and the perfection of our love of God and of our neighbor. It is the way which anticipates every day the life which is to come when “God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes.”⁸ It is the way of merciful love through which we give food to the starving and drink to the thirsty, and we welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit those who are sick and in prison.⁹ It is the way of suffering misunderstanding and even of being rejected because we have done what is just and good, recalling that “[t]he reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him [the Lord]”.¹⁰ In summary, it is keeping company with Christ always, following Him in the way of the Gospel, which is the Way of the Cross. It is the life in Christ to which we are all called by Baptism and Confirmation, and by our particular vocation in life, be it to the married life, the consecrated life, or to the ordained ministry.

Today’s Holy Mass is offered in memory of the 20th anniversary of the death of the Servant of God Father John A. Hardon, on December 30, 2000. Father Hardon, the founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate, desired that the Apostolate have its home here, at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse. He visited La Crosse on November 29th and 30th of 1999, and, on November 30th, he blessed the site on which the Shrine Church in which we are now worshipping God was eventually built.

⁸ Rev 7, 17.

⁹ Cf. Mt 25, 35-36. 42-43.

¹⁰ 1 Jn 3, 1.

Father Hardon was deeply conscious of the challenges of living in Christ in today's world. Contemporary culture, in so many ways, rejects Christ as it rebels against God and His Law, the source of right order in our personal lives and in society. For that reason, Father Hardon founded the Marian Catechist Apostolate for the doctrinal and spiritual formation of the lay faithful, in order that they might live more fully their high vocation of holiness of life and, through the apostolate of catechesis, be the cause of many others coming to Christ and following Him. In the *Marian Catechist Manual*, his last publication, he wrote the following words which apply to us all:

We live in the most highly educated nation in world history. But except for a small remnant, most Americans are abysmally ignorant of God's laws and His promises...

Catholicism is in the throes of the worst crisis in its history. Unless true Catholics have the zeal and the spirit of the early Christians, unless they are willing to do what they did and to pay the price that they paid, the days of America are numbered.

God knows the past, present and future. He put us here at this time and place knowing full well the gravity of our times. His grace is available in superabundance.¹¹

Father Hardon then reminded us of the fonts of God's immeasurable and unceasing grace: the teaching contained in the Sacred Scriptures and in Sacred Tradition, the Sacraments and daily prayer and devotions, and the guidance of the true shepherds of the flock.

Father Hardon saw in the sacred place here a beacon for our nation and far beyond, a beacon which is Our Lady of Guadalupe drawing her children to her Divine Son Who alone is our salvation and Who is alive to save us in the Church. As we honor the memory of Father Hardon today, let us pray and make sacrifices so that the catechetical mission of the Shrine can be more fully exercised through the building of the Retreat House and the Marian Catechist Apostolate Center.

Father Hardon's life and teaching are also an inspiration for us as we approach Election Day for our nation. There is no question that our nation finds itself at a most critical moment, the moment to turn around the culture of death, which threatens to destroy it, or the moment to leave

¹¹ John A. Hardon, *Marian Catechist Manual* (Bardstown, KY: Eternal Life, 2000), pp. xv-xvi.

it in the hands of the politicians of death, the politicians who attack the sanctity of human life, the integrity of marriage and the family, and the freedom to obey God's Law which He teaches us in the Church. Today, after the Holy Mass, we will pray all twenty decades of the Rosary for our nation and for the election of politicians who will most honor the Law of God, written on every human heart. The forces of evil in our nation, those who rebel against the moral law, would frighten us from doing our Christian duty. Let us all fulfill our sacred duty as citizens to vote, and let us vote, in accord with God's Law, for human life, for marriage and the family, and for the freedom of the Christian religion.

In the company of all the saints, we now approach the altar of Christ's Sacrifice. Our Lord descends from His heavenly throne to the altar here. Through His Virgin Mother, He draws us to Himself, to His glorious pierced Heart. The saints, by their example and their prayers, assist us to draw close to Christ and to be received into His Heart full of merciful love. May we, together with all the saints, entrusting ourselves totally to Divine Providence, bring the love of Christ from His Most Sacred Heart to all our brothers and sisters, and especially to those in most need. From our hearts may "rivers of living water" flow for the salvation of our nation and of the world.¹²

Heart of Jesus, delight of all the saints, have mercy on us.

Virgin Mother of God, Queen of all Saints, pray for us.

Saint Juan Diego, pray for us.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE

¹² Jn 7, 38.