

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

Solemnity of All Saints | For Sunday, November 1, 2020

Living As A Witness

Written by Angie Windnagle

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

1 John 3:1-3

Matthew 5:1-12a



When I was in high school, I was profoundly changed by the example of Catholics around me. During that time in my life, even though I had grown up in the faith, I was living a life that reflected anything but the faith. I was living a life centered on this world, but my heart was searching for more. I remember vividly one day sitting down and sensing the emptiness aching in the depths of my heart thinking, “there has to be more than this.” That split second of wondering, opened the door to allowing God back into my life, and that door led me to witnessing faithful Catholics truly living out the gospel. It was the example of those around me that poured fuel on that small flame in my heart aching for more in this life, and I remember wanting the joy they had. In this same way, the readings this weekend invite us to follow the faithful witnesses that surround us in the Catholic faith, the saints, and allow their example to embolden our own faith.

The first reading comes from the book of Revelation, which simply means “to unveil.” In many ways, the reading unveils to us the glory that awaits us in heaven and the life already enjoyed by the saints whom we celebrate today. What is most striking to me is when Jesus says they are “the ones who survived the time of great distress.” The saints did not live easy lives. In saying yes to Christ, they were literally called to say yes to his suffering and death in order to experience the hope and joy of his Resurrection, even if that meant martyrdom. In all their differences, the one thing they had in common was living detached from this world in order to gain the glory of the next, regardless of any earthly suffering that brought with it. We are called to follow that same path, saying yes to Christ even if it means tasting the cross in order to experience resurrection.

Paradoxically, that yes to Christ brings with it unsurpassed joy. In high school, when I discovered that the cause of joy in those around me was Jesus, I was shocked to realize that he was calling me to live that life as well. Holiness is the call of every Christian, you and me included. In the second reading, St. Paul shows us that this reality is rooted in the truth that we are God's children, and if we live our lives as such, we will someday be with him in heaven. Holiness and sainthood aren't unreachable achievements only for those with special powers, it is the personal and intimate call of Jesus to each of us to live as children of God no matter what sufferings come our way. It is the invitation to open our hearts to the radical love of God and do everything in our power to turn away from sin and toward that love, with the promise of true happiness.

The world we live in today is wrought with temptations to cling to this earth or be jaded by its corruption and ignore this invitation of love. But Jesus shows us another way on this Solemnity. In the Gospel, we hear his discourse on the mountain when he teaches the Beatitudes. The word beatitude means "supreme blessedness or happiness." By giving us the Beatitudes, Jesus is pointing the way to the happiness we seek and the life of heaven the saints enjoy.

The world will always let us down eventually because we are not made for this world. The Solemnity and readings this weekend help us remember this truth by surrounding us with faithful witnesses who we can look up to and emulate. There was something different about how the saints lived and there should be something different about how we live. When the world is darkened by sin, we are called to be a light. When the culture seeks worldly politicians to lead, we are called to follow the King of Kings. When everyone around us is shouting and fighting, we proclaim, "blessed are the peacemakers." If we invite Jesus into our hearts, recognizing that only he can fill our deepest longings, and live as children of God, we will someday join the saints and hear Christ say to us "rejoice...your reward will be great in heaven."

Angie Windnagle

PRAYER

I love you, O my God,
And my only desire is to love you until the
last breath of my life.
I love you, O my infinitely lovable God,
And I would rather die loving you,
than live without loving you.
I love you, Lord,
And the only grace I ask is to love you eternally...
My God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment
that I love you,
I want my heart to repeat it to you as often
as I draw breath.

-Prayer of St. John Vianney ([from Catechism of the Catholic Church 2658](#))