

Homily All Saints 2 November 2025

Since the earliest days of Christianity, the faithful have gathered to give thanks for the life and ministry of the saints—women and men whose witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been a blessing in every generation.

The witness of many of these blessed women and men—such as Francis of Assisi or Augustine of Hippo are well known. Many of their writings have become popular, their deeds inspire us to name churches, schools, and hospitals after them, and their service to the church is taught to the faithful in every generation. Yet, for others—such as Simon and Jude—little is known beyond their names.

But regardless of how much or how little we know about these faithful witnesses, one thing is certain: their life and ministry has richly blessed the church. And as we gather to celebrate this feast of All Saints, we are called to give thanks to God for the blessings that the saints have bestowed upon the church, as well as the many blessings God has bestowed upon us.

Of course, by the worldly standards of wealth, power, status, and influence, there is not much that seems blessed about most of those we call saints. Most of them did not know anything about wealth and lived their lives in poverty. Few enjoyed real positions of power or influence. Far from being loved, many were hated and put to death.

But worldly standards were not how the saints patterned their lives, rather, they lived by Jesus' standards. And as the Gospel of Luke tells us, Jesus' standard for what constituted a blessing is radically different from the standards the rest of the world is accustomed to. Jesus proclaims:

'Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven.'

Poverty, hunger, mourning, hatred, exclusion, revilement, and defamation—these things certainly do not seem like blessings! But Jesus is convinced they are. And most shocking of all, Jesus says that these are the sorts of people to whom the Kingdom of God is entrusted.

Of course many will object. How can we entrust the church to the poor—what do they know about business or how to handle money? How can we trust the likes of those people, surely their poverty is due to some character flaw or divine judgement? Others may say, all this talk about the Kingdom of Heaven and being counted among the blessed is just idealistic religious talk and has no application in the real world. Or worst of all, some will hear the words of Jesus and say, ‘See there, Jesus will take care of the poor and the hungry, the sorrowful and the reviled in heaven. What concern are they of mine? Whom am I to interfere?’

Yet, with piercing clarity, Jesus looks such objectors straight in the eye and pronounces a stern warning:

‘Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

Woe to you when all speak well of you, for this is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.’

In other words, woe to you who do not know what poverty looks like, or what hunger feels like. Woe to you who have never experienced mourning and known what loss of a dear one is like. And woe to you who manage to tell everyone what they want to hear in order to be liked instead of speaking the truth they so desperately need to hear.

And so we gather here on this feast of All Saints with words of blessing and words of woe ringing in our ears amidst all the beautiful trappings of such festive liturgies. But let us not lose sight of the fact that today God is calling us to action—God is calling us to bear witness to the Kingdom of God and to live into the vocation of what it means to be a Christian for we are all called to be saints. Remember the Kingdom of God is not some abstract theological term about a time and place the world has ever known; it is not all pie in the sky when you die. Rather, the Kingdom of God can be a place that all of us can come to know here and now, in this world and in this life

Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God breaks through when we love our enemies. It takes hold when we do good to those who hate us. It comes alive when we bless those who curse us. It shines brightly when we pray for those who abuse and mistreat us, whenever we feed the hungry, whenever we see and respond to the needs of the poor. The Kingdom is built and we fulfill our Christian calling whenever we do to others as we would have them do to us.

Of course the work of Kingdom building, the work of becoming a saint, is not easy. Life with God means that we will know what it is to be poor, hungry, sorrowful, and cursed. Life with God means that we will know what it is to be unpopular—to be discounted and overlooked.

But the good news is that the Kingdom is built—brick by brick, stone by stone—by people such as these: people who know what poverty and hunger and sorrow and being cursed looks and feels like.

So today, on this feast of All Saints, let us begin to live by a different set of standards. Instead of worldly standards, let us live by the standards of the Kingdom so that we too may be numbered among the blessed, remembering that to be counted among the saints, does not require perfection on our part. Saints, after all were people just like us, with faults and shortcomings of their own.

Living into our Christian vocation starts by loving our enemies, showing kindness to people who may not deserve it, forgiving those who wrong us, listening and responding to the poor and the hungry and the sorrowful and the reviled. When we do this, we exchange worldly standards for Kingdom standards and the blessed communion of saints cries out Alleluia! Alleluia!