

Brief Message for All Saints Day

In this season, as the winter approaches and leaves lie scattered on the ground; it is as though the curtain separating life and death draws thin, and our hearts are naturally drawn to the memory of those who have gone before us. And so, All Saints Day, which is actually tomorrow, comes to us at an appropriate time in the year.

Gratitude is one of the prominent emotions on this day. And it has always seemed to me that gratitude is one of the most appropriate emotions we can express and that it is also one of the most positive and powerful in its transformative effect on the present and the future. Gratitude sparks in us a natural desire to emulate the best traits of those we are thankful for.

And what can we be more grateful for than the people who provided us with an anchor in the storm and who awakened us to that invisible saving power that is God's love for the world? What greater gift has God given us than the people who laid the foundations for our lives; the companions who have walked the road of life with us or been our encouragement in our times of hardship?

it seems good that we are reminded on this day of the few who are dear to us, and also of the many unknown to us, who have contributed to our lives without our even being aware of it. Some of them are our forebears, some our friends and companions. Some may be very young. I know that one of the names that will be read today, spent only 22 years among us.

Through the crucible of life, God fired each one of them, burning away the dross and leaving behind some form of spiritual gold that shone, even through their imperfections, and cast a saving light into our hearts. They were for us the living presence of the Body of Christ.

And though they are not physically present with us today, they are present with us every time we gather, both through the way their memory continues to challenge and speak to us and through the way they continue to encourage us from their place in heaven. They are part of the great “cloud of witnesses” described in the Book of Hebrews, who cheer us on as we “run the race of life, with eyes fixed on the prize.”

I will keep my remarks short, but there is one more thing I’d like to add. Our Saints are not the heroes of our culture. They are our heroes. And

the measuring stick that we apply is not the one that is applied by popular culture. And I think we should draw satisfaction in the fact that true worth is recognized and is being celebrated today.

Too often it is those who have achieved great fame, amassed great wealth and have celebrity status that are celebrated. We bend our knees before youth and beauty and before powerful bullies, celebrating freedom from responsibility and not for responsibility. And we hide the suffering under the rug. But when all is said and done, the glorification of these things is but an empty mirage, a deception. Apart from love, they are nothing.

The only thing that is truly endearing and eternal, the only thing that leaves an ongoing legacy that truly inspires and gives life to those who remain is the presence of God's love, the servant Christ, that is at work in a person's life. And having recognized and been touched by the hidden beauty of that love we are forever transformed and forever grateful to those from whom they have received it, and whom we remember today. And so, let us linger on these names and take as long as it takes to remember them well. "Soli Deo Gloria". To God alone be the glory. Amen

