

PASTORAL SECTION

HOMILETICS

Feast of All Saints (Nov. 1)
Mt. 5, 1-12a (the Beatitudes)

Saints who "Ain't"

There are Saints with a capital "S", saints with a small "s", and saints minus the "s", that is, saints who "ain't".

Saints with the capital "S" are the canonized Saints, like Saint Dominic, Saint Catherine, Saint Martin, etc. They are the heroes of Christianity, people who followed Christ with outstanding generosity and became his very close friends even while they lived in this world. God called attention to their exemplary lives by working miracles at their request and giving them very extraordinary gifts like visions and prophecy. We honor all of them in today's festivity.

Saints with a small "s" are the numberless people who lived in a manner truly pleasing to God. Perhaps there was nothing evidently heroic in their lives. But the very fact that they fulfilled the will of God day after day have put them in the category of the great. Many of us have known people of this type: a parent, brother or sister or friend, perhaps a teacher or a neighbor—people who left edifying memories that help us live better lives. They may not have been canonized, but they are truly saints. Today's feast also honors them.

Saints minus the "s", saints who "ain't". Most of us fall under this category. We are "saints" because by our Baptism we have been consecrated to God. But in our religion, true sanctity cannot be the result of a merely external rite. If we are merely like "whitewashed tombs

that look handsome on the outside, but inside full of dead men's bones and every kind of corruption" (Mt. 23,27), we would be like the pharisees whose way of life was totally rejected by Christ.

To become true christians, true saints, we must pay attention to the teaching contained in the beatitudes. We must become *spiritual beggars*, expecting salvation not on account of a righteousness that we acquired by ourselves alone, but stretching out our arms and opening our hands to receive grace from Jesus Christ. We must become *docile* and let our great Leader, Jesus Christ, lead us to the Promised Land. We must *lament* over the sad affairs of men, and becoming instruments in the hands of God, try to make this world better. Like refugees from the calamity of life, we must *seek the relief goods* brought from heaven by Jesus Christ. Allowing the love of God to touch our lives so that we can, in turn, also love others, we must practice that *charity* that covers a multitude of sins (I Pet. 4,8). Cleansing ourselves not only exteriorly but in our hearts, we must become *sincere* in our dealings with God and men. *Seeking the peace* that God alone can give, we must accept our fellowmen as they are and encourage them to accept one another as true brothers. *Standing firm* on our Christian convictions, we should seek to establish on earth the kingdom of God.

We are all saints, because we are all christians. But what kind of christians are we? Christians who "ain't"? If that is what we are, today's feast invites us all to turn to Jesus Christ and all the real saints, so that we may cease to be saints who "ain't" and become saints who are.

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost (Nov. 8)
Mk. 12, 38-44 (or shorter: 12, 41-44): The Widow's Mite.

Outstanding Generosity

Quite often nowadays, certain groups announce a search for outstanding persons. The search for the Ten Outstanding Young Men

is nationally known. Manila has its annual search for the five prettiest. Many towns have an annual search for outstanding policemen or other public servants. But I wonder if any group has ever organized a search for the *Ten Most Generous Persons*.

If you know of a search of this kind, let me know. I have a candidate. Let me tell you about her. One day, a lady was standing by a store where religious articles are sold. Then a poor old woman came, carrying a nondescript bag. She looked at all the religious articles: glittering rosaries, gilded crosses, many-colored *stampitas*, beautifully covered prayer books, finely shaped statues, etc. Finally, she fixed her eyes on a beautiful *stampita*. She looked at it for a long while. Finally, she turned to go away. She could not afford the twenty centavos needed to buy the *stampita*. All the while, the lady was standing by, observing the old woman. Guessing what was in the old woman's mind, the lady quickly bought the *stampita* and gave it to her. The old woman accepted the *stampita* gratefully, and without a word, she started digging in her bag. After a while she was able to bring out two little boxes of raisins. Apparently, she made her living by selling those raisins, gaining two or three centavos per box. But she did not hesitate to give up two boxes to show her gratitude for a twenty-centavo *stampita*. The lady was touched, she did not know what to do. Finally, she managed to convince the old woman that some prayers said for her family would be enough gratitude for her little act of kindness.

Who is my candidate for the *Ten Most Generous Persons* award — the lady or the old woman? You guessed it. The old woman, of course! She had not yet sold enough boxes of raisins to afford buying a twenty centavo *stampita* and yet, to express gratitude for a little kindness, she offered two boxes of raisins!

Do you know where I will look for the nine other persons whom I will nominate for the *Ten Most Generous Persons* award? Not from among the rich, but from among the poor. Generosity is not gauged from the worth of the donation but from the spirit in which it is given.

It is not the gift, but the giver that counts. If we bear this in mind we will find no difficulty in recognizing the fact that the most generous people are found from among the poor.

In today's gospel, Jesus acted like a judge in a search for the *Ten Most Generous Persons*. He did not choose any of the rich who put a lot of money into the treasury. Instead he chose the poor widow who "put in two small coins, the equivalent of a penny."

That widow had the proper sense of values. Although she had an empty stomach, she considered it more important to use her last centavo in paying homage to God than in buying a bite of bread for herself. That widow had a dignity that put the *pasikat* of the rich to shame. That widow had outstanding generosity. If we can just be half as generous as she was, we would be better Christians.

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Nov. 15)

Mk 13, 24-32: The Coming of the Son of Man.

Waiting for the Signal

Both the USA and Russia have developed elaborate radar systems that will warn them about an enemy attack. They have willingly spent millions of dollars or millions of rubles in the belief that, if they are warned on time, they can neutralize the attack and even crush the enemy altogether.

The same reason prompted our Lord to warn his disciples about the great dangers that would come when Jerusalem would be attacked and destroyed by the Romans. History proves the wisdom of his warning. In the year 70 A.D., forty years after Jesus gave his warning, Roman Legions came to punish Jerusalem for rebellion. Christians, having been warned by the words of Christ, fled from the city and were saved. The Jews who did not believe in Christ and paid no attention to his words stayed in the city and perished with it.

The destruction of Jerusalem was not only a historical reality but also, and indeed principally, an eschatological symbol, that is, a warning about the end of the world. The important thing about the end of the world is not really how it will take place, or when, but **WHAT** it will be for us. Will it mean a day of terror and hysteria? Or will it mean the signal to rejoice at the triumph of Christ?

Let us not pay attention to the false prophets who tell us how the world will come to an end: either by collision with a comet or an asteroid, or by an explosion of nuclear bombs, or by dislocation from its orbit around the sun. When our Lord said that "the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven," he was talking in apocalyptic language, which is not to be taken literally. The important part of his message is that we should be ready to greet him when he comes as the glorious Saviour who will call us to his eternal kingdom.

If we heed the words of Christ, if we are converted from our sins and fight against evil, if we live a life of dedication to the service of God, we shall not be anxious about the end of the world, but shall "wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Last Sunday after Pentecost (Nov. 22)

Feast of Christ the King.

Jn 18, 33b — 37.

Crowning Conclusion

When people nowadays wish to celebrate a very important anniversary, it has become customary to declare a whole year of celebration. So, for example, in 1964-65 we had a year-long celebration of the 400th anniversary of Christianity in the Philippines. In 1967-68 we had the "Year of Faith" commemorating the 19th centenary of the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul.

The practice of having a year-long commemoration of a great event was begun by the early Church. The event that serves as the focus of the commemoration is the Resurrection of Christ. At first, only a few days were set apart to commemorate this event. Then the celebration was extended to several weeks before and after Easter. Finally, the celebration covered the whole year and included the commemoration of the other events in the life of Christ as well as highlights of his teachings and special aspects of his person, but all this is organized around the Paschal Mystery, and Holy Mass is always the main event of the celebration.

In the new arrangement of the Liturgical Year, the Feast of Christ the King has been transferred from the last Sunday of October to the Last Sunday after Pentecost, and has become the crowning conclusion of the Christian commemorative year. What more fitting conclusion can we ask for?

When we say that Christ is King, let us not think of him in a childish way, merely as a man with rich vestments, seated on a throne, holding a globe in his left hand and perhaps a sceptre in his right hand and wearing a crown on his head. If we really want to understand the kingship of Christ, it is more helpful to reflect on his grace and power and how we participate in them. He is a King, but his kingdom is not of this world. He exercises his kingship when his grace touches our hearts and his power makes us strong against the devil.

Christ is ruler or head of a living body, which is the Church. Just as the head contains the brains which control the movements of all the parts of the body, so also Christ possesses the fulness of grace and power from which supernatural life and movement flows to the Church. In this way, Christ is ruler in a manner which no earthly king can match. Earthly kings can improve the life of their subjects but can never give them life itself. Christ, however, as King and Head of the Church, gives supernatural life to all his subjects. So, in practice, we recognize that Christ is King by asking for supernatural grace. We should do this principally through the Sacraments, two of which we can frequently re-

peat, namely Penance and the Eucharist. We also obtain supernatural grace and recognize Christ's kingship through assistance at Mass and through prayers.

This afternoon, at a special service in all Churches, people will consecrate themselves or renew their consecration to Christ the King. This is a praiseworthy practice, and if you can come, you should participate in it. But even if you do not participate in this pious act, you should realize that you are deeply committed to Christ the King. You became a member of his through Baptism, which produced an indelible mark in your soul. I invite all of you to renew, through a fervent participation in this Mass, your baptismal consecration to Christ the King!

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