

***Ordinary Time 31C 2016***  
***Called to Holiness***

On Tuesday of this week, we will celebrate one of the most beautiful feasts of the church's liturgical year: the Feast of All Saints. This is a day when we thank God for the countless saints of every age in whom the holiness of Christ has borne fruit. It is a day we remember that we are holy in Christ—not because of anything that we have done, but because God has made us holy in Christ. It is a day we remember that as followers of Christ we have been called to live in holiness.

*First, we are already holy; we are already saints because God has already sanctified and consecrated us in Christ.* This is why Saint Paul regularly calls those to whom he writes, “the saints” or “the holy ones.” St. Paul understands that not all of his converts live saintly lives, but he still calls them saints because they have been sanctified by the blood of Christ. And so it is with us. All of us who have been baptized into Christ have been consecrated and made holy by the blood of Christ. We are already holy because we live in Christ. We are already holy because we have been given the gracious gift of God's own holiness in Christ: the holiness of the Spirit of the living God.

*Second, since God has sanctified us in Christ, and made us holy, we ought to live in a way that corresponds to this gift of holiness we have received.* We ought to live according to the holiness that God has bestowed upon us in Christ. We ought to live as people whose lives have been changed by the power of God's

Spirit. The saints of every age understood the gift of holiness that God bestowed upon them in Christ, and so they lived accordingly. They patterned their lives after the life of Christ. They made Christ rather than themselves the center of their lives.

*Third, the goal of our lives is to live with God.* The purpose of our lives is friendship with God in Christ. This doesn't mean we withdraw from the world. All to the contrary! As God's holy ones, we are to live in this world as people who are fully engaged with this world. But the goal and purpose of all that we do is life with God in Christ. To be holy, to be saintly, is to live in this world in a way that reflects the gift of holiness we have received. To be holy, to be saintly, is to strive for the final goal life with God in Christ.

In today's first reading, the Book of Wisdom speaks of the extraordinary mercy and forgiveness of God: "You have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and you overlook peoples' sins so that they can repent; for you love all things that are. In today's Responsorial Psalm we sang: "The Lord is gracious and merciful." And in the gospel we just heard, Jesus says that he came to seek and to save the lost. All of these texts remind us that God's purpose is to redeem and renew us and the whole of creation. No one is excluded from God's love; all are called to holiness. When we believe and understand this everything changes, everything is new; everything proclaims the glory and praise of God.