

From the PA's Desk

All Saints Day Mass:

There will be a Mass to celebrate All Saints Day on Tuesday, November 1st, at 7:00 PM in Shepherd. The Communion of Saints are those officially canonized by the church, but also, those who make up the family of God on earth and in heaven. In celebrating the Feast of All Saints and Commemoration of All Souls, we pause to remember our loved ones and friends who have died and now share in the promises of heaven. We think of the well-known holy ones whose lives inspire us; we think also of the saints from our own lives, real people with faults and failings as well, whose lives we recall and miss.

For us Catholics, we believe we journey to God together and are saved in community. For us Catholics, faith is an all for one and one for all kind of faith. We all know that at the deepest core of our human natures is the desire to belong to something outside of ourselves. One of the most beautiful images that arose out of Vatican II is the notion of the Church as the "People of God."

In the early Christian Church the baptized were all called "the saints of God." God calls individuals into communion with God and each other. This has a powerful message for us Americans who think in terms of rugged individualism. Christian faith is about dependence, not independence. We need each other. God is so much into the idea of community, that even God is a community within the Godself of Father, Son, and Spirit. One God, but a relationship of three "persons."

I often get phone calls asking what we require for baptism or marriage in the church, and I always start with the same question: "Are you a member of the parish?" Often the answer is: "No, but I grew up there, or my parents/grandparents belong there." My next question is: "So what is your parish now?" Some people misinterpret my question as a form of examination into who is in, and who is out, or who belongs, and who doesn't. However my question has a much deeper spiritual and practical reason which leads into a discussion about our identity as Catholic Christians. For us Catholics, being a "solitary" believer or Christian is an oxymoron. The very nature of Catholic Christianity implies belonging to the People of God together. To be Catholic means we belong to a spiritual family, and that family is our parish. It has nothing to do with numbers, demographics, or contribution envelopes, and everything to do with how God calls and saves us. God may call us as individuals, but God always calls us with the intention of connecting us to other people.

Perhaps this is one reason why we Catholics dislike the evangelical slogan about being saved. "Are you saved" is a phrase which seems to rub us Catholics the wrong way, and I think the reason is because we know that being Catholic means belonging to the family of God, not just me and God going it alone. We know deep down, almost intuitively, that God calls us to be the People of God together, not dividedly or separately.

We will celebrate our communal feast days on Tuesday and Wednesday, November 1st and 2nd, as we remember both All Saints and All Soul's Day. All Saints Day Mass will be on Tuesday November 1st at 7:00 pm.

Departed Loved Ones:

The Scripture readings of the Sundays in October and November draw our attention to the end times, not to increase our anxiety but to put it to rest. The scriptures make it clear to us that all relationships are fleeting, passing, destined to end – all but one. God's love is a relationship without termination, a love without end. The promise of everlasting life with God is an experience of a life free from death, separation, and disappointment.

In conjunction with the celebrations of All Saints and All Souls Day, you are invited to take part in a display that will remember and honor all those saints and souls from among our family and friends who have gone before us to live with the Lord. At the display tables in front of church, place a small, framed, photograph of your loved ones, as a sign of their constant companionship through our life. I tell people at funerals that one of the most beautiful teachings of our Church has to do with our sense of all being God's One Family, and that family consists of those who are still alive on this earth, and those who have gone on to live with God in the next. We will have the Paschal Candle (symbolizing the Light of Christ that led our loved ones through the threshold from life on earth to what is waiting for us on the other side), lit and burning, as it always is at a funeral, so that we can experience that same light as we follow it where our loved ones already have gone.

Scripture Today: Humility

In light of what we see in the cultural patterns of putting ourselves before others (at least half the TV shows we watch reinforce that idea), I thought of something C.S. Lewis once wrote: "Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less." The theme of our Gospel today is humility. Let's look first at what humility isn't. It's not poor self-esteem; it's worlds away from that. Truly humble people actually have very good self-esteem. It's not a blanket refusal to take any credit. It is not diverting a compliment so vigorously that people perhaps think, wow-that person is humble. A humble person is not disturbed by praise. A person who is not humble cannot accept praise gracefully. Now, let's discuss what humility is. Humility comes from the Latin word humus, meaning the ground, soil, earth. But that does not mean humility is thinking of oneself as dirt. Our phrase "down to earth" means not conceited, not speaking words designed to impress. A humble person is down to earth. Humility is recognizing reality. When humble people do something good, they think, yes I did something good, but only through the grace of God. I will not advertise it. I will simply be grateful. Humility thrives in freedom from bondage to oneself. Bondage to oneself is compulsion to make oneself the main consideration in decisions, transactions, ventures, projects, plans, relationships, and general attitude. Cutting those bonds is a gradual process, especially if "looking out for Number One" has been a dominant attitude for a long time. A few simple ways to loosen bondage to self: Let others take credit for what was originally your idea; Defer to another or others in choosing a TV show, movie, restaurant, a vacation spot; Let the other car go first at a four-way stop or allow the other car the parking space you saw first; Do something good for another without expecting a favor done in return; And finally, frequently say the core of the Alcoholics Anonymous "Third Step Prayer:" "Relieve me of bondage of self, that I may better do Your will." Jesus is telling us to stop thinking, what's in this for me? He is saying: don't do something good for others hoping for a payback. For example, giving financial aid, physical aid, or emotional aid with a view toward making the recipients feel indebted, that's using them. Do good for them and expect nothing back. If gratitude is forthcoming, it's a perk, not a condition. Remember C.S. Lewis' statement: "Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less."

Thanks for your Financial Support:

I want to thank all of you for your faithfulness to the financial support of the parish. I am happy to report to you that we are meeting our weekly needs, but I am more concerned with how we are expanding or not expanding the number of people actually coming to Mass. Please keep encouraging people to attend each and every week. Make sure you make it a priority in your weekly planning and please take an extra paper home to share with someone you know who might be interested in finding out what we do here. Share the info found on our new website with someone. Invitation, invitation, invitation; that is the secret to a growing church.