

Twenty Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is my great joy to celebrate with you the privilege that Jesus has given to me to serve Him in serving His Church and serving you, my family. 40 years ago, on the 3rd of October of 1980, it was the first Saturday of the month, dedicated to our Holy Mother, and the feast of my beloved Holy Sister, St. Therese de Liseaux. I was ordained to the Holy Priesthood, by both Bishop Hart, and Bishop Newell; I am so grateful to God! On the 4th of October, I celebrated my first mass on the feast of Holy Father St. Francis. Both St. Therese and St. Francis' relics are present on the altar, today, the Icon of our Lady of Guadalupe is also present today, because I dedicated the whole of my life to her service, and I am convinced that she is the reason why I am still a priest today, and after all- she is the Holy Mother that Jesus Himself gave us as His last act upon the cross! At the end of mass, if you would like to reverence their relics you may come forward to venerate them.

My beloved brothers and sisters, one aspect of our Holy Faith that our protestant brothers and sisters often do not understand, is our veneration and honoring of the saints. Some think that we worship them as if they are gods; of course, that is not at all true. We believe exactly what we say in the Nicene Creed that we use every Sunday and high feast day: we believe in one God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit! moreover, we also declare: "We believe in the communion of Saints.."; and, we so ask them to pray for us, something that most non-Catholic Christians do not do.

The Saints, we believe are with Christ in heaven, sharing in His Divine Glory, and His infinite love for us and for the whole Church. Jesus Himself talks about the Angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man, and He talks about Abraham, Isaac and Joseph. He talks with Moses and Elijah during His transfiguration on the mountain with His friends: Peter, James and John. And so, we do the same! Just as I ask you to pray for me, and you ask me to pray for you, so too, we ask the Saints, who already share the Beatific Vision, to pray for us; we are one communion in Christ!

But our love and respect for the Saints have another dimension: by their exceptionally Holy lives, they show us what it means to follow Christ and live in His Kingdom on Earth, and they show us How To Follow Christ, through His Grace, by prayer, Sacraments, self-denial, and by working for the Kingdom of God! Because of their fidelity to Christ and His Gospel, by God's Grace, they cooperated with God to bring forth the great harvest that Jesus wants for us and He teaches us in the first Reading and the Gospel! They show us how to do this!

St. Paul acknowledges this in the 2nd reading, when he urges the Philippians to: "Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me; then, the God of peace will be with you!" Paul then lists the saintly attributes that are the works of the Holy Spirit. It is how we water, tend, and nurture the Vineyard of God in our lives and in the Church!

My beloved brothers and sisters, we are mistaken if we think that the saints, all of those who are with Jesus in the Beatific Vision and union with the Trinity, are laying around on clouds all day, and doing nothing. They are hard at work on our behalf and the behalf of building up the Kingdom of God among us, they point the way, and often smooth the way for us!

I am so profoundly grateful to the whole army of God's angels and saints that He has assigned to me in my life and my priesthood. I know that they are my friends who have continually directed my path back to the Lord. I am so grateful to all of you, for allowing me the great privilege of serving you these past 40 years, and especially during the last 18 years in this parish, I love you all as my own family- it is the reason why I decided to celebrate this day during the midst of all of the covid falderal. Today, I humbly ask you, please pray for me that I become the great saint God wants me to be, please pray for yourselves and each other, that you too will be His great saints, for great saints are so needed today, and please pray with me that God will make of our parish a refuge of Holiness and peace!