

ALL SAINTS – NOVEMBER 1, 2006

Last week I received a telephone call from a newspaper reporter affiliated with the Penn Hills Progress. She was working on a story about the saints in anticipation, I suppose, of today's feast. The point of her story was to demonstrate just how much the saints fill our lives. For example, she noted in the East Suburban area alone there are some thirty churches named after saints. I took that all one step further when I mentioned to her that so many of our baptismal names originate from a saint. In addition, some of our cities are named after saints. Even some wines take their name from saints. And, of course, there are religious communities including our own Sisters of St. Francis who not only take the name of a saint, but collectively seek to live out the charisms of that saint. In deed, the saints fill our lives.

But who are these saints? The opening prayer for today's feast identifies them as "The holy men and women of every time and place." Some of these people are canonized and well known in our tradition—like Peter, James and John, Augustine, Agnes, Francis and Clare, John Newman and Francis Cabrini, just to name a few. And yet some are not officially canonized but saints nonetheless by virtue of their fidelity to God. Some of these saints include relatives and friends who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith.

Today as a community of faith we remember these blessed individuals who embraced in thought, word and deed the beatitudes outlined by Jesus in today's Gospel—poor in spirit, mourning, meekness, righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, peacemakers, and suffering for their faith through persecution. In fact, we believe that their reward is great in heaven. And we trust that these countless blessed will continue to intercede on our behalf.

This feast, however, is not just about all the saints, but it is also an invitation of what we are called to become. We must not forget that the saints were ordinary men and women like you and me who somehow with God's help became extraordinary. Everyday amid the ordinariness of our lives there is always the opportunity with God's help for us to become saints.

Someone once said, "There is only one sadness, not to be a saint." May we live our lives in the ordinary and never know the sadness of not being a saint. May we one day come to know the joy of sainthood and be counted among "The holy men and women of every time and place." All Saints—pray for us.