



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

The Solemnity of All Saints

Be holy as your heavenly father is holy

Readings: Apocalypse 7: 2-4, 9-14, Ps 23, 1 John 3: 1-3, Matthew 5: 1-12

In his twenty six year reign as Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church Pope Saint John Paul II canonised no less than 110 new saints (more if you count the grouped martyrs). Some people complained that he was devaluing the currency of sanctity. Most rightly understood that this great saint himself was merely pointing out the ubiquity and regularity of lives lived heroically for Christ. Those lives, now regularly remembered on the red and golden calendar, are but the tip of an iceberg of faithful witness. In our own age, spectacular for surpassing the earliest centuries in the number of Christian martyrs, we celebrate this extraordinary faithfulness at every turn and seek to emulate it in our own small local way.

In the Canon of the Mass we remember the great foundational saints of the Faith and in the preface for today we recall all those who, by their lives, have praised God. We acknowledge that, 'By their way of life you offer us an example, by communion with them you give us companionship, by their intercession sure support as they urge us on to victory and the imperishable crown of glory.'

We ought not, as Christians, be surprised by holiness. It should be our stock in trade. That is what Pope Saint John Paul II was trying to remind us of. It is, after all, what Jesus was trying to get us to understand when He told us to *'be holy as your heavenly Father is holy'* – a command first heard in Leviticus and repeated by our first Pope in his first scriptural letter. (Matt 5v48/ I Pet 1 v15/ Lev 11 v45).

When we hear this injunction, all too often our chin goes on our chest and we zone out until the implication of this 'unreasonable' demand has dissipated. Holiness, surely, is for other people, better people than me. Well we couldn't be more wrong. If we are going to live forever in the Presence of the All Holy, then holiness is a prerequisite of our attendance. Whether in this life or the life to come sanctification is what the Gospel is all about – becoming like Jesus, sons and daughters of the living God. We are right to reject false visions of pseudo-piety and we are correct in doubting our own ability to achieve this unaided but we are plumb wrong if we do not see this as the goal of our pilgrimage in Christ.

We are far from the finished product. We look to the Saints in glory to see our destination. We look to Mary, our Mother, and, in her crowning as greatest of saints, see the revelation of the destiny of all the children of the new Eve, the mother of all who will live forever.

We are a work in progress – on the road to sanctification, to sainthood. We may feel a long way off but that is our journey nonetheless and it is a journey of suffering and joy, of struggle and fulfilment set always in the context of the grace and mercy of God and the sacrifice of Jesus.

So we meet in this little mission station today to celebrate our brothers and sisters in light but we also meet to do something else.

In a few moments one elderly penitent sinner, who found his way home a dozen years ago, is going to welcome another elderly penitent sinner, sacramentally, into the company and companionship of the Universal Church of Jesus Christ. He will be welcomed, by Chrismation, into that band of Saints and would-be saints who gather at the altar of sacrifice to be part of the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ and the transformation of ourselves, slowly but surely by obedience and love, into His likeness, His Body.

The first elderly penitent sinner is me, your priest. I always end the dismissal at sacramental confession with the request, 'Go in peace and pray for me, a sinner'. One lady tried to argue with me through the grille. 'Not you, father, surely'. My response was brief. 'Either you don't know me or you don't know the Gospel. We are here by His grace alone.'

The other elderly penitent sinner is Peter Edwards who has worshipped with us much of this year and who has longed for this day for twenty years. Peter is being received here by the gracious dispensation of Bishop Mark and we rejoice at this moment with the saints in Heaven.

We give thanks that God has called Peter on this special day and we give thanks that He has called each one of us to follow the road of sanctification, both in this life and the next, for it is the pilgrim way of Christ and we are on the road to forever with Him.