Deacon Randy Perkins
Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14
1 John 3:1-3
Matthew 5:1-12

SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS
Epiphany Catholic Church
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We're just three days away from an election, so it's too late for any of you to run for anything this time around. But if you ever decide to run for office, I've got a great campaign slogan: "A vote for me is a vote for poverty, meekness, and mercy."

Sound like a winner? I've yet to hear any politician run that ad! And regardless of our political leanings, if ever a candidate came out and ran as the "meek, merciful, loving" choice, their campaign would be over just as quickly as it began!

We don't want meek, we want assertive and dominant.
We don't want mercy, we want justice.
That's human nature. And Jesus knew that.

He wasn't laying some new set of unachievable commandments that we have to live out perfectly, and he wasn't describing any real-life human beings who'd somehow achieved perfection. The beatitudes, though, give us the ideals that define sainthood, the same sainthood we celebrate today on All Saints Day, and the same sainthood all of us are called to strive toward every day of our lives.

The beatitudes show us what holiness, what love, what sainthood, looks like lived out in the real world.

As we celebrate All Saints Day today, I'm reminded of a quote by playwright Oscar Wilde: "Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future." And I think it's a good reminder to us, because sainthood is not about achieving perfection, it's about engaging the struggle toward holiness. And the people who we honor as saints today, whether they died thousands of years ago or just died in 2026, were every bit as human as you and me.

The beatitudes don't say, "Blessed are those who have never made a mistake." They don't say, "Blessed are those who have everything figured out." And they certainly don't say, "Blessed are those who are better than everyone else." And some of the saints we honor today are perfect examples of the truth that all saints have a past.

St. Augustine, one of the church's most revered saints, spent the first half of his life chasing money, power, and especially, women! Famously, he once prayed, "God, grant me chastity, but not yet." Today, he may be the church's most revered saint, the patron saint of philosophers and theologians.

One saint you've probably never heard of, St. Bartolo Longo, spent much of his life violently opposed to Christianity. He was an intellect who became involved in the occult and was even an avowed Satanist. But, when his life fell apart, he turned to God, he surrendered control of his life; and today he's St. Bartolo, the patron saint of the Rosary and for those struggling with anxiety and despair.

Or St. Mary of Egypt. Much of her life was spent chasing what we might politely label "sins of the flesh." She lived a life of open and proud debauchery and depravity. But when she realized that her life had become directionless and meaningless, she found her way to Jesus, and to holiness. And today she is the patron saint for all those who struggle with sex addiction and those searching for spiritual light.

These are just three quick examples. But they go to show that sainthood isn't about having a squeaky-clean history; and in fact, there seems to be a general theme that many of the most famous saints carried the most life baggage, and they often lived lives of painful personal struggle.

Every saint has a past!

And these same saints also can give us all hope, because they show us real-life examples of the truth that every sinner has a future.

So many of us have convinced ourselves that our past somehow disqualifies us from becoming the people God wants us to be.

Maybe it's something we've done that we deeply regret.
Maybe it's a relationship we've damaged.
Maybe it's a failure that continues to haunt us.

Maybe it's the feeling that we've disappointed people we love or fallen short of the person we thought we would become. And sometimes we begin to believe that those failures define us, or we just buy into the lie that “That’s just the way I am.”

But the lives of the saints tell us something very different.

Augustine's restless pursuit of worldly pleasure wasn't the end of his story. Bartolo’s life-long rejection of God didn’t prevent him from changing course. Mary of Egypt’s unholy past didn’t preclude her holy future.

And whatever mistakes we've made, whatever sins we've committed, whatever regrets we carry, they do not have to be the end of our story either.

As John wrote in our second reading today, "What we shall be has not yet been revealed." The past chapters of the books of our lives don’t define our endings. Our stories are still being written. Or, as John would say, we are still becoming.

And if we accept that truth for ourselves, that every sinner has a future, then we must be willing to believe that just as much about everyone else.

It's easy to believe in second chances when we're the one who needs it. But it's harder when we're talking about someone who has hurt us, someone whose choices we don't understand, or someone whose life has taken a very different path from our own.

We live in a world that is remarkably quick to define people by their worst moments. Someone makes a terrible mistake, and we decide that's who they are.

Someone struggles with addiction, and we see only the addiction. Someone has been in prison, and we see only the crime. Someone is poor, homeless, or living on the margins, and we sometimes assume that their circumstances tell us everything we need to know about their character.

But today's feast challenges that way of thinking.

Because if Augustine, Bartolo, and Mary of Egypt teach us anything, it's that we should never confuse where someone has been with where God might be leading them. The person we dismiss today may be the person whose compassion,

courage, or faith inspires us tomorrow. If God refuses to give up on people, perhaps we should be a little more reluctant to give up on them ourselves.

That's what mercy looks like. That’s what poverty of spirit looks like. That’s what peacemaking looks like. That's what sainthood looks like.

The Church doesn't celebrate All Saints Day just so we can admire good people who lived long ago. We celebrate it because we are called to join them.

Sainthood isn't an impossible dream reserved for a chosen few. It’s the destination toward which every Christian life is meant to move.

So today, as we honor all the saints, let's resist the temptation to place them so high above us that their lives seem impossible to imitate. Instead, let's remember that they were human beings just like us. They had weaknesses. They had regrets. They had moments when they failed to live up to their own ideals.

But they also had a God who loved them enough to keep calling them forward.

And so do we.