

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

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The following is a transcription of a homily given by the Vicar of Opus Dei to the young men of Northridge Prep on October 31, 2008.

Today we celebrate the real feast of Halloween since this word in Old English means All Saints. How do we view this special feast of All Saints? Perhaps we can imagine the Catholic Church like a baseball, football, or basketball team. However, in the Catholic Church everyone is welcome to be part of the team and there is no danger of getting cut. When I was a boy I tried out for the school basketball team and would get cut every year. It was not only because I was too small – I just did not have the natural ability to play. No matter how much I worked at improving, I did not have the capacity to compete as a basketball player. The coach said that my gifts and talents did not include playing on a basketball team. To not only make the team but to be a superstar requires an extraordinary ability written on your DNA.

Believe it or not, on a spiritual level we all have the capacity to become superstars. Not only are we welcome to be part of the Church, but we can also become saints. The sacrament of Baptism has given us the spiritual DNA to become a spiritual superstar. Each person in this chapel is a potential saint. That scruffy guy sitting next to you can become a saint – and after he leaves this world can even become a relic!

If this is true, why are there so few saints? Let us go back to our sports example. If someone has the capacity to be a great track star but his only exercise consists in walking to the refrigerator, he could never run track in any competition. Or, for instance, a potential baseball player with exceptional hand-eye coordination who does not put in time for batting practice would never become even an average ball player.

By the same token, if we satisfy ourselves with a prayer here and there but with hardly any effort to take our relationship with Christ seriously, we will get bored with our faith. Sometimes young people come and talk to me about their spiritual lives. Some complain that they are a bit bored with it. I respond by asking them what their spiritual routine is each day. They tell me that their spiritual schedule consists in perhaps a Hail Mary as they go to bed. Of course that person will be bored if that is all he does. Again, everyone is a potential superstar but each person needs to work seriously in growing as a Christian.

The Gospel for today's feast is the Beatitudes. Beatitude in the original Greek means "bliss" or "the ultimate joy and happiness." These Beatitudes are the play book or game plan to become a saint and become happy. These Beatitudes are a bit counter intuitive since they involve sacrifice and pain. Nevertheless, it is like practicing before a game. Practice requires effort, sacrifice, and pain, but a win makes it all worth it. The thrill of winning after working hard is very similar to the joy of growing closer to Jesus Christ as a consequence of self denial and struggle.

Lastly, let us focus in on a couple of Beatitudes. One of the Beatitudes states that the effort to be chaste leads to a more intimate relationship with God and true happiness. It is good but not enough to simply use the supernatural antibiotics found in the sacrament of Reconciliation and the vitamins available in the reception of the Eucharist. We need to be honest with ourselves and avoid those near occasions of sin. We need to take decisive measures to live this virtue. Another Beatitude speaks of meekness. An important part of following Christ is treating our parents, siblings, and friends with greater charity and affection. We need to put forth an effort in this area as well. We ask Our Lady, Queen of All Saints, to grant all of us a desire to strive for nothing less than holiness so that we become lights for both our family and friends.