

A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

In little more than two weeks the Church throughout the world will celebrate in very different ways two different feast days on two consecutive days.

On November 1 the Church rejoices during All Saints Day for all the holy men and women whose names and identities are now unknown on Earth but have been crowned with everlasting life and glory by God. It is well known that the Church has a lengthy list of saints. Some of these saints are holy men and women who lived in the early centuries of the Church and have been acclaimed saints by long tradition. Other saints are more recent and have been formally proclaimed saints by the Church in more recent times. In both cases we know their names and have some description of their holy way of life – even if the description for some of the early saints is sometimes very basic. However, the Church on Earth does not pretend to know the names and lives of all the saints of God. God has revealed to the Church some of the saints so that we might draw inspiration from their example of living a holy life. There must be many more holy men and women who lived lives of heroic virtue dedicated to God whose names we here on Earth do not know. On this feast day we give thanks to God for the grace He bestowed upon these unknown saints, and we ask these saints - who even now dwell in God's Kingdom - to pray for us too before God; asking God to help us in our struggle to join them in glory forever.

On November 2 the Church prays for all the dead asking God to show mercy upon them and to grant them a place in the Kingdom of God. Now, some of the dead may very well have already received this great mercy and now dwell with God among His saints forever. Others may be in need of our prayers to God on their behalf; asking God to forgive their sins and to wipe away the stain of vice upon their souls so that they may quickly take up their place in God's Kingdom. We here on Earth simply do not know to which category our deceased relatives and friends belong. Rather than simply saying "everyone immediately goes to heaven upon death" and then think no more of the situation; we as Catholics choose to take the time and effort that comes from the great love and concern we have for our deceased relatives and friends and pray to almighty God on their behalf. We believe that our prayers on this day (and every day) can have a beneficial effect for those persons who have died and even now struggle to rid themselves of the harm they have done to their souls through their sinful actions on Earth. To attend Mass and pray on this day is a great act of love and charity for them and will be remembered by God when we are in need of mercy and forgiveness.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Eickhoff
Pastor