**HOMILY for FEAST of ALL SAINTS – Year ABC**

On the Feast of All Saint, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you. A pastor's son who had just gotten his driving permit asked his dad if they could discuss the use of the car. The pastor said to his son, "I'll make a deal with you. You bring your grades up, study the Bible regularly, & get your haircut; & we'll talk about it."

A month later, the boy came back & again asked to discuss the use of the family car. That pastor replied, "Son, I've been real proud of you. You've brought your grades up; & you've studied the Bible diligently. But, you never got your haircut."

"You know, Dad, I've been thinking about that," the young man replied. "Samson had long hair; Moses & Noah probably had long hair. All the pictures of Jesus show Him with long hair…"

"Yes," the pastor interrupted, "and they also walked everywhere they went!"

Anyhow, this Sunday the Church calls us to celebrate the Feast of All Saints, which is one of my favorite feasts in our Catholic/Christian tradition. For it reminds me of our Catholic/Christian heroes who started out sinful like all of us & then ended up perfect like the Heavenly Father after going through a person conversion. Before we discuss more about the Feast & its spiritual meanings in our lives, I'd like to share with you its history. The Feast of All Saints was first mentioned in the fourth century as the Eastern feast of All Martyrs & celebrated on May 13 as St. Ephrem of Edessa attested to it. It also came to be celebrated on other days in the East such as Easter Friday & in the West on Sunday after Pentecost. In 609 or 610, the Roman Pantheon was dedicated on May13 under the title "Saint Maria & Martyrs." Many have begun to see in this origin of the Feast of All Saints. Then, for some reason, Pope Gregory IV, who reigned from 827 to 844 transferred the Feast from May to November 1. Perhaps the pope wanted the Church to honor the saints as its spiritual heroes & get inspired by those holy souls before it remembers the common souls with the Feast of All Souls on the day after, which is November 2. That is basically the history of the Feast of All Saints.

What does the Feast of All Saints mean to you? First, it reminds me of the stories of some favorite saints that I have read about since my childhood. As a child, I have read St. John Bosco, St. Therese of little child Jesus, St. Joseph, St. Peter, St. Paul, & so on. But, my favorite one was St. Therese of little Child Jesus. I have gone through several versions of her life story & was fascinated by it. She showed me how to deal with people as she had to put up with other nuns in her convent. Once she was wrongfully accused of breaking a light, she took it gracefully without throwing a tantrum. Another time she tried to pray quietly in the Chapel, but another nun kept making loud noises by hitting her rosary against the pew. That happened every time they got into the Chapel for prayer over the course of weeks; & it slowly got on Therese's nerves. Thankfully, Therese learned how to block out that noisy distraction by turning it into heavenly music. But, the greatest spiritual lesson that St. Therese taught me was to invite & challenge me to do at least one good deed a day, which she called the little way to Jesus. I have kept up that good habit since my childhood & searched for opportunities every day to do one good deed even now.

Over the years, I have begun to expand my repertoire of the saints by reading more stories of other saints such as Paul & Augustine whose amazing personal conversion has challenged me to change & called me to come home to the Lord, or Jerome who translated the whole Bible from Aramaic to Latin called the Vulgate & explained it in his Commentary & reminded everyone to study Scripture more with this message "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ," or Christopher who supposedly helped carry Jesus in the form of a child across a river & is named a patron saint of travelers, or Patrick who brought the Good News of Jesus to Ireland after being captured as slaves, or Francis of Assisi who gave away all his possessions to help the poor & treated animals with much

care & compassion, or Anthony who has helped people to find lost items, or Jude who has come to the aid of people in hopeless situations, or Martin de Pores who assisted slaves upon their arrival in south America & evidently was quite miraculous in answering prayers for many Vietnamese, or Kateri Tekakitha who was a native American & known as the lady who prayed a lot & has apparently blessed me with a miracle about twenty eight years ago as I prayed for a sick friend. The role of the saints is not only about interceding for our prayers but also being an excellent role model for us. As you might know, Catholics often do not go directly to Jesus or God the Father for their prayers because we feel that we are sinful & not worthy to ask God for anything. That is why over the years we have come to Mary & the saints, including three Archangels & the Guardian Angels, & ask them to intercede for our prayers. I invite you to take advantage of this unique prayer portal & come to Mary & the saints for your intercessory prayers. They might surprise you with their intercessory power & bring you all sorts of interesting miracles.

However, Mary & the saints have one more important role to play in our Catholic tradition over the years, namely, being a wonderful role model for us. For they had shared similar strength & weaknesses like the rest of us. They had also struggled & faced with earthly struggles & temptations like many of us. But, what distinguishes them from us is their ability to recognize their own sinfulness & their humility & courage to convert & come home to the Lord. After their conversion, they dedicated the rest of their lives to follow a life of virtues & holiness & prepare themselves & others for the Final Exam & Eternal Life in Heaven. These heroes & icons of holiness in the Church are excellent examples for us to emulate & aspire in our earthly journey. That is why the Church has scrutinized & created many new saints regularly to help us relate easily & look up to. Besides our Lord Jesus, Mary & the saints can inspire us to follow their way of life & intercede for us from their vantage place in Heaven. So, I encourage & challenge each & every one of us to pick out at least one saint whom we could relate easily & look up to in our daily lives. In fact, this Feast's First Reading reminds us the important role of the saints on our journey of faith as following, "…These are the ones who have survived the great period of trial; they have washed their robes & made them white in the blood of the lamb."

If there is one thing that the world desperately lacks amidst its abundance of wealth & material stuffs, it would be many more role models for everyone to emulate & aspire in their daily lives. If parents, children, teachers, students, coaches, players, employers, employees, leaders, citizens, & so one would have someone that they could look up to & emulate, we would see less bad decisions & terrible acts happen in our world every day. I owe my priesthood & virtues-oriented personality to my family & many teachers & religious clergy who have influenced me positively throughout my life. Without those heroes of holiness, I would not be the person that I am now or stand here before you as a priest. In fact, I have done thousands of funerals throughout my thirty years of priesthood. The only thing that the surviving members would appreciate & remember about their deceased loved ones is the way the dead had lived & influenced the living positively despite their life challenges. Wealth, power, & education level do not mean much to the surviving after one's death.

My dear brothers & sisters, are there some saints whom you have highly adored & come to often in prayers? If you haven't had one, I strongly urge you to find at least one for yourselves this Sunday to call on in your prayers besides our Lord Jesus. For they will come to Jesus on your behalf for your prayer requests. More importantly, they will be the wonderful role models for you to emulate & aspire in your daily lives. You will see your lives changed for the better once you have followed the ways of life of your favorite saints. Your families & friends will also benefit greatly from this conversion.