Holiness 101

All Saints Day Homily - Fr. Benjie

Well, good afternoon.

Today we celebrate All Saints Day.

Today we rejoice for all the saints who have loved and followed Jesus, and now they are in heaven.

Do you want to go to heaven? Do you want to go to heaven? He's listening, so you have to... Our Lord just gave a little bit of deafness today, so he wants to hear your voice. Of course you want to go to heaven.

So the reflection that I prepared for you today is all about holiness: how to be holy.

Today I will give you a very short course on holiness. And the title of our reflection this morning is "Holiness 101."

I'll try to answer four important questions on holiness. And here are the four questions. First question: What is holiness according to the Bible? Second: What is the common misconception about holiness? Third: How to be holy? And fourth: What will happen to us if we die without fully achieving holiness?

I think you're all interested to know the answer. Before I answer these questions, please allow me to share with you a funny joke about heaven. Disclaimer: this should be funny. So if it's not funny to you, be kind to Father Benjie. Pretend that you like it and laugh, okay? Deal? Don't worry, I will remember you in the sacrament of confession.

This is the story of Kevin, a good Catholic who died in a state of grace. Upon arriving in heaven, he saw a big wall covered with thousands of clocks, each clock moving at different speeds.

Kevin was very curious, and he asked St. Peter, "What are all these clocks for?"

St. Peter explains, "Each person on earth has a lie clock. Every time they tell a lie, the hands of their clock move."

Kevin points to one clock moving very, very slowly. "Whose clock is that?"

St. Peter answered, "That clock belongs to Mother Teresa, St. Mother Teresa."

Kevin said, "It has barely moved." The man looks around and asks, "Where's the clock of my boss?"

St. Peter replies, "Oh, Jesus keeps that one in his office. He uses it as a ceiling fan."

I think the clock of Father Benjie is in St. Peter's office. He also needs a ceiling fan. So my clock is moving very fast.

What is holiness? Holiness is rooted in a combination of God's grace, faith and good works, and a life dedicated to loving God and our neighbor.

What is the most common misconception of holiness?

Many people believe that holiness is an exclusive privilege only for priests and nuns. It's not true at all. Although there were priests who became saints, like St. John Vianney or St. Anthony of Padua, and there were nuns who became saints, like St. Teresa of Avila, St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, each person on earth is called to holiness.

Priests, nuns, and laypeople like you are called to be holy. I will give you some examples of laypeople like you who became saints.

For example, St. Pier Giorgio Frassati, an Italian university student. He did a lot of charitable work in serving the poor and the needy. Another example, St. Isidore, a Spanish farmer, a saint remembered for his work and piety. St. Thomas More, an English lawyer who was martyred and became a saint. So to all lawyers, there's hope, okay?

Question number three: How can we achieve holiness in our lives?

People think that all saints had an easy life on earth. This is another huge misconception. As a matter of fact, saints were normal people like us who had temptations and difficulties in their lives.

They became saints because they persevered and were able to overcome those trials through God's grace.

Saints were people who chose love over anger, who chose forgiveness over grudges. Saints were normal people who mastered the art of detaching themselves from pride, possessions, and power.

Saints were people who denied themselves, carried their crosses, and followed Jesus.

Speaking of following Jesus, in today's Gospel reading, our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed the Beatitudes.

The Beatitudes are a guide for Christians who want to pursue holiness and happiness.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." End of quote.

The Beatitudes reveal the spiritual pattern of the saints. They learned to live like Jesus. They were compassionate toward others, committed to doing what is right, and faithful to the Lord, even in suffering.

But we must accept the fact that it's not easy being holy in our unholy and imperfect world. Sometimes we give in to temptations and we fall into sin.

But falling into sin doesn't mean we should give up and become discouraged. If we fall, we stand up again and we try again.

The fourth and last question: What will happen to us if we die without fully achieving holiness? Where do we go?

One of the greatest gifts given to us by God is our free will. This freedom is a gift of God, and God expects us to use this gift wisely. All the saints of the Catholic Church have used that gift extremely well.

They chose wisely and did the right thing. As a reward, now they are in heaven and enjoying the fruits of their labor.

Like the saints, at the end of our life on earth, our bodies will go back to dust and our souls will go back to God who created us.

The next thing that I will tell you is extremely important, so I want you to pay attention.

When we die, we will face two judgments: particular judgment and general judgment.

I'm guessing that you're interested in knowing more about these two judgments.

According to the teachings of the Catholic Church, from the Catechism, paragraphs 1021 and 1022, our souls will be judged by Christ immediately upon physical death.

And this judgment will determine our destination. There are three possible destinations based on the soul's spiritual state and relationship with God.

The first destination is heaven, for all the souls who die in a state of grace and friendship with God and are perfectly purified.

The second destination, this is temporary, is purgatory, for all the souls who die in God's grace and friendship with God but are still imperfectly purified, requiring a final state of cleansing before entering heaven.

And the third destination is hell, for all the souls who die in a state of mortal sin by their own free choice and permanently reject God's love and mercy.

That's the particular judgment. The second judgment is called the general judgment. It is also called the Last Judgment, and it will take place at the end of the world during the Second Coming of Christ.

At the Last Judgment, human bodies will be reunited with their souls. In Matthew, chapter 25, verses 31 to 46, in the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus said that God will divide all people into two groups.

The first group is the righteous group, and they will enjoy eternal joy in heaven.

The second group is the unrighteous group, and sadly, they are doomed to eternal damnation in hell.

Did I scare you?

In other words, when we die, we will be judged according to how we lived our life on earth. There will be a full account of all the things we did and of all the things we have failed to do on earth.

Why am I telling you this right now? Because I love you. Because I want you to go to heaven. I want to see you in heaven.

And we are saved through God's grace. But the way we live on earth will determine our final destination.

To conclude our reflection today, please allow me to share with you an inspiring story about love. The title of the story is "Unconditional Love."

This is the story of Kevin, a 30-year-old man, super-rich and very successful in his career. He decided to send his 85-year-old father to a retirement home, as his wife wished, because they were both tired of dealing with him in his old age.

Kevin found a retirement home run by a Catholic priest named Father Miguel. He thought it was the perfect place for his father.

Six months later, Kevin and his wife visited his father at the retirement home. When they arrived, they saw Father Miguel having a long conversation with his father.

Curious, Kevin asked Father Miguel if he knew his father, as they seemed so familiar.

The priest replied, "Yes, I have known your father for 30 years. He came here 30 years ago and took with him a very sick orphan boy who had been rejected by every potential family. This man gave that boy a home and saved his life."

"He told us the boy deserved better and vowed to dedicate his whole life to making him the wealthiest young man by the time he turned 25."

"I don't know how long you have known him, but I can tell you he's a good man. And I'm glad to let you know that you're the sick boy no one wanted to adopt. But this man, this man right here, gave you the life you have today."

Moral of the story: We must not forget the sacrifices others have made for us. We must show love and kindness to everybody unconditionally.

In the end, when our moment to leave this earth comes, wealth, status, possessions, and titles stay behind. What remains is the goodness we shared, the respect we gave, the lives we touched, and the love we shared.