Solemnity of All Saints

Fr. Chris | Full Homily Transcript

Today we celebrate another solemnity of our church, All Saints Day. All Saints Day is followed always the next day by All Souls Day. Because today as we celebrate those who are in heaven, tomorrow we pray for those who are struggling, those who have passed away and are in that time of purgatory, of purification, we lift them up. The truth is our church is always united in that prayer, in helping one another.

Last week, I think it was after the 8 a.m. mass that I had, I mentioned that Halloween is a Catholic part of the celebration of all saints. That the way a lot of those traditions started was in preparing for a solemnity. You feast, you celebrate. Children would go, because again, all saints is always connected to all souls. All souls were praying for people. So children would go door to door saying, hey, knock knock.

Is anyone who we can pray for, for you? Anyone who has died in the last year who we can pray for? And since we're doing such a nice thing, praying, maybe do you have something sweet for us to eat?

That's how trick-or-treating started. Why did they dress up? Well, one, you dress fancy for a solemnity, for church things. What about scary things? They would dress up as devils and demons. Why? Not to celebrate them, but to mock them. Today is the day that we mock that the devil lost. He doesn't get us. We celebrate the saints who are in heaven, who are far beyond his touch.

Even as we are suffering with those temptations and difficulties, we're saying, look, that's where I'm going to wind up. You have no real power. And so we dress up not to celebrate, but to mock those evil things and say, you don't have power. We can make fun of you and there's nothing you can do about it. And why? Because we have a God who loves us so much as to want us with him, to bring us to heaven.

We don't get there alone. When I was in seminary, I think three different times, did just as a bit of fun to keep healthy, do exercises. I don't know if any of you have heard of the obstacle runs tough mudder. But did a few of those. There are 12, 13 mile runs with obstacles the whole way. Fun things like crawling through mud, swimming in ice, literally water with bags of ice in it.

crawling through cargo nets, that kind of stuff. And it's not just a race that yeah, there's somebody presumably wins, but they really emphasize the teamwork portion of it. And while a lot of the obstacles switch out, one of the ones that's the same for every Tough Mudder is what's called Everest. And Everest is a 13 foot tall, kind of quarter pipe ramp. And the super athletic, far more fit than me people can just kind of run up, jump.

and managed to get all the way to the top. But that is the very, very few minority of people. But what's neat is those people who are probably the fastest doing that right away, they don't just keep going. Because what they do when they get to the top is they turn around, lay at the top of that ramp, and reach down for those who are coming after them. And sure enough, some of the people are able to run up, was able to run up, grab the hand of those people,

And through us pulling up, them pulling up, make it over that ramp that we would not have been able to make it over ourself. What's really cool is there's some people who aren't quite able to reach those hands, who try as they might, they can't quite get enough speed or enough height to make it to those hands up top. So what winds up happening is there's others at the bottom who will lift people up. Some they're able to get a boost.

For some, I saw a guy who was really struggling and so what people actually did is they formed a human ladder. They had one person lay down on flat mud, next person on their shoulders, next person on their shoulders, and kind of climbed his way up until those people from the top could help him up. And that's the whole idea of this obstacle is very few people can make it on their own, but it's to stop and remember that race, getting to the finish line first,

isn't actually as important as helping all of these other people be able to overcome this obstacle. I think that obstacle is a great image of the Church. Because the ones who have already made it, they're the ones we celebrate today. The church triumphant, the saints in heaven, the ones who see God face to face. And I'll often say in funerals though that when we get to those gates of heaven, when the people that we love who have passed from this world,

made it through all those other obstacles and finally reached those gates of heaven that they by every right could just walk in and say, hey, I finally made it. Good luck everybody.

But these are the people who we love and who have loved us. And I really believe that when they pass through those gates, yes, there is this moment of triumph, of joy, of being greeted by the other saints in heaven, but there's also this going to God and saying, God, these are the people that you gave me to love, to help in that life. That doesn't end. They need your help now. Help them. And so in that, in their prayers to God face to face,

You hear in scripture, God hears the prayers of the righteous. Who is more righteous than the saints in heaven who are already there, already purified, seeing God face to face to turn down and to reach their hands, their prayers to help lift us up? We here in this world are what's referred to as the church militant. Sounds like an army, right? Military. It's a reason. We're the ones in the battle.

We're the ones battling against temptation, against sin, against the brokenness of this earth, trying to get there, trying to be holy, trying to look at the example of those saints and live in that way to get where they are going. But we're at the bottom. We've got our feet flat on the ground and we can help lift souls up. And when people die,

When, I died today, if I walk out those gates, and the example I was using, if I walk out the doors of this church and get hit by a bus today, I don't want you all saying, oh, Saint Father Chris, he's so holy, I'm sure he went straight to heaven. No, pray for my soul. I still got stuff to work out. If you're not comfortable, if you died today for people to call you Saint, whatever your name is, you need people praying for you. Don't just have them say, oh,

They're in a better place now, not yet. We need help. We need those people on earth lifting us up because in the middle is the church penitent. The church penitent are those souls in purgatory who are

purifying because the truth is, however hard we try in this world, most of us are not so pure as to right away say, yep, I deserve to walk through these gates of heaven.

but rather there's this time of purification. Now don't get me wrong, I also always say if I die and wake up in purgatory, the first thing I'm doing is a little happy dance. Because if you're in purgatory, you're gonna make it to heaven. But there's still those things that we need to purify from ourselves, to enter those gates, to be in the presence of God, to be holy enough to enter into those gates. And that's tough work. It comes with difficulty, it comes, none of us like

trying to grow in holiness. It's hard. And that's our main goal there. But even there, we are not alone because the church militant here in this world is pushing up. We're forming that human chain of prayers saying, God, help these people, lift them up, help them get through this time, help purify them. Those who are already there are reaching down saying, we want you with us. We want you to join us at the top. And when they get there,

They're not just running off on their own. They're saying, all right, let me help the next person. Let me help lift them up. And in that way, church militant, church penitent, church triumphant are never truly separated. It's one of those gifts of God is that we, blessed are we when we suffer, when we are persecuted, all of these things that we say, that doesn't make me feel very blessed. Because blessed are we also in that time of purification.

Most blessed are we when we make it there. But never are we forgotten, never are we alone as long as we are looking to those help that God gives us. That direct grace from God, but also that grace that comes through the prayers of so many people praying for us. Never cease praying, whether it be for your family in this world or the next, lift them up, use your prayers because when they get to heaven, they're gonna be the ones

who are reaching down and helping us. There is this beautiful connection that keeps us as a church, as a family, as that body of Christ, always in connection with one another. Today we celebrate the saints. Today we celebrate those who have already made it. The church has named a lot of saints. We know all, well we don't know, there's lots and lots of names, but today is not just those saints that all throughout the year we have.

Feast of St. Francis, the Feast of St. Stephen, the Feast of St. Anthony. Today is also all of those saints that we don't know the name of. We celebrate all those who have made it and we ask for their prayers. Because as the church militant, it's tough being in the battle. It's tough facing the brokenness of this world, those temptations that are trying to keep us from getting to where they are. But through their example.

through their prayers, through their help. We know it's possible. We know I might not be there yet, but I wanna keep doing what I can to get myself there, to lift up others, both in the church militant, but also those in that place between. Tomorrow we celebrate All Souls Day. We have here the Book of the Dead where we can write the names, but we pray for all those, not just here in this parish, but all those who have died.

who are in that time of purification. They're gonna get there, but we can help. And don't you want help whenever you're in that place saying, don't know what to do. When we're stuck in that place between those people who can jump up and try as they might, they're never gonna reach the top of that wall themselves. We've all in this world felt those times where you say, I don't know what to do. I can't do this by myself. And how frustrating it is.

when there's people walking by who say, you could help. They walk on by. Don't be that. Be the ones who boost people up because they're the ones who are gonna help us out. That's not the only reason we're doing it, hopefully. Yeah, we wanna get to heaven. We want every person in heaven. We want heaven to be crowded because the truth is, if you say, hey, I'm never gonna be a saint, there's only one other option.

You go, you become a saint or you go to hell. I don't want to go to hell. That means I got to keep worrying about being a saint. I got to keep trying to be holy, but I can't do it on my own. I need prayer. I will never say no to prayer, whether it's a Catholic, whether it's anybody else. If they say, can I pray for you? I say, please do. When I go and anoint people in the hospital, if they're able to hear me, I say, hey, I'll make a deal with you.

I'll pray for you if you pray for me. And whichever one of us gets to God first, put in a good word for the other. Because that's what the church does. That's what we celebrate today. Nazis people who are far off, floating on clouds, playing their harps, forgetting about the troubles of the world. What we celebrate is holy men and women who made it through these trials, who by the help of the church, of others, of Christ, have made it there to heaven.

then still say, God, help them. Help the souls in purgatory, help the souls who are struggling. We have made it through, but they still need your help. And so we celebrate them. We look to their example, but we ask for their prayers. Help us get to where you are and help us have the strength to continue to lift up our neighbors. And when the day comes for us to jump up and make that leap,

help pull us up from the top. People, family, friends, that day comes, well start praying for me now, but when that day comes that I die, don't say he's in a better place. Say, hey, pray for Father Chris. He needs all the prayers he can get, because it's true. Don't think you're besmirching my name, don't think, oh, don't say that Father Chris, he's so holy. Pray for me. Get your family to pray for me. Get your friends to pray for me. Get that random guy at Subway to pray for me.

And do the same for you, because that is what we are here for. We are here to lift each other up in prayer, to boost up the church militant, the church penitent, and to celebrate those church triumphant who still continue to reach down in their prayers, to ask God to help lift us up each to that day that we join the heavenly banquet.

and are with those saints in heaven, not forgetting about this world, not forgetting about our loved ones, but even as we celebrate face to face with God, asking him to continue to help reach down and lift up more saints for that kingdom. Amen.