

- Those of you who came to the carnival yesterday and took the theological tour through our new church hopefully learned that every detail of our church – even down to the color of the walls – has a purpose and a symbolic meaning.
- In fact, this building is loaded with signs and symbols that are meant to help us meditate on our beautiful Catholic faith.
- So, for example, here in the nave and sanctuary the walls have been painted white and gold. Both white and gold are colors that symbolize purity and innocence, and as such they serve as a reminder for us to strive for purity of heart.
- In our second reading, St. John speaks about this purity with regard to the followers of Christ. He tells us that as children of God, we will one day be made like God, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in God makes himself pure.
- And becoming pure is exactly what today's feast day is all about!
- Today is the Solemnity of All Saints. It is the one day of the year in which honor all of the saints who have gone before us and who now intercede for us in Heaven. It is the day, as well, that we give thanks to the saints for all they do for us.
- But today's feast is also meant to inspire us to lead holy lives! The saints remind us clearly of our call to purity and holiness of life. They remind us of the necessity of living in faith, hope, and love, and they show us the joy of embracing a life of virtue.
- But most importantly, the saints remind us that God has an image of who He wants us to be, and that we should strive with all our might to be that man or woman God has called us to be.
- Sacred Scripture tells us that our Lord has created us in His own image and likeness, but our Lord has also created each of us with a certain plan for our lives. In His mind our Lord has an image of the person He wants each of us to be.
- Throughout the course of our lives, if we choose to listen to our Lord through prayer, if we choose to follow God's will, if we endeavor to grow in virtue and seek to make reparation for our sins, we are gradually transformed into that person our Lord has called us to be.
- In other words, growing into that person that God has called us to be is simply a matter of growing in holiness. It's a matter of living out the Beatitudes that we heard in today's Gospel.
- If we manage to live lives of holiness here on earth and become that person that God desires us to be and accept His mercy for the times we have fallen short, then we enter into the joys of Heaven and live united with our Lord for all eternity.
- Of course, if we are not sorry for our sins, if we have not asked for God's mercy, if we have forfeited God's friendship through mortal sin and have no desire to be united to Him, then we will merit the eternal pains of hell.
- But if we fail to realize God's desire for our life but are still striving for holiness, and if we are sorry for our sins and have asked for our Lord's mercy, then our Lord allows us to be perfected and made into the image He has of us in the afterlife. And this we call purgatory.
- Rather than being a place of punishment, purgatory, my friends, is actually a great sign of God's mercy.
- You see, my friends, God and sin are mutually exclusive; they cannot exist together. So if we are to be eternally united with God in Heaven, then we must be free of all sin and all of our attachment to sin.

- If we fall short in our duty to grow in holiness in this life, or if we fail to make proper reparation for our sins, but still love God and desire to be with Him, then our Lord allows us to be purified in purgatory.
- This purification will involve suffering (commonly understood as purifying fire), and through this process God's fiery love "burns" away all impurities on the person's soul.
- And once the process of purification is completed, the soul enters into God's presence and is fully united to Him. So purgatory is God's way of preparing us fully to live with Him in Heaven forever.
- The saints are the people who have fulfilled that image God has of them during their lives on earth. They are people who have lived a life of holiness to a heroic degree and who have no need of purgatory.
- In other words, the saints are people who have proven not only that living a life of holiness is possible in this life, but that holiness is possible for any person living in any circumstance.
- In our first reading from the Book of Revelation, we hear of St. John's famous vision of heaven, and he tells us about the servants of God who come from every tribe of the children of Israel.
- St. John tells us of the great multitude of people standing before the throne of God, from every nation, race, people and tongue, and in doing so St. John tells us that sainthood is not restricted to a certain group or class of people. Sainthood is for all of us!
- And the Church's history has borne this out. While the Church does make distinctions between various classes of saints, such as martyrs, pastors, virgins and religious, the Church's roll of saints includes both men and women of all ages from every continent.
- And today's feast calls us to be among their number when we die.
- The beautiful thing is that the saints not only call us to join them around God's throne in the eternity of heaven, but through their merits and intercession they actually help us to fulfill God's will and grow in holiness.
- The author of the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of the saints in Heaven as a "great cloud of witnesses," and he writes: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith" (Heb 12:1-2).
- As we celebrate this great Solemnity of All Saints, as we bask in the glory of this great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, let us trust in their intercession to help us in whatever struggles life brings to us.
- Let us look to their example of heroic virtue and purity of life and seek to imitate it for the sake of our souls. Like the saints in Heaven, let us live out the Beatitudes with faithfulness and integrity so that we may one day join them around God's throne.