

SERMON - ALL SAINTS SUNDAY - 2 NOVEMBER 2008
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

O ALMIGHTY God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord; Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love thee;

We ask God to give us grace so to follow the blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which He has prepared for those who unfeignedly love Him, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which He has prepared for those who unreservedly love Him, who without any reservation love Him.

The key word here is unfeignedly.

We hear each Sunday that we are to love God with our hearts and our souls and our minds. In other words we are to love God with our total entire being, we are to love God unfeignedly.

We also hear each Sunday that we have the love of God that passes all understanding. God loves us more that we are able as mere mortals to comprehend.

We are to love God as the Saints have loved him because he loves us more than we can ever understand.

Oh! We might say, Oh! That is more than I am able to do, to love God as the Saints did.

But who are saints?

A Carthusian Prior once said in a sermon, "The celebration of the feast of all those who have attained the goal of their lives invites us to reflect on the fact that each one of us is

called to personal sanctity. It is not enough to get through life somehow, to avoid doing too much evil and meriting punishment - we are called to be saints.”

He goes on to say, “This is the standard by which we should judge our acts and our lives, the standard of holiness.”

And he goes on to say, “It would indeed be pretentious to aspire to sanctity, if God had not given us a thirst for it, in giving us the gift of his Spirit.”

Where can we look for saints? Who do we look for as saints?

I don't think we can find too many of them in the rich and the famous. Rather I feel that we can look to today's Gospel and look for them in the humble, the poor in spirit; in those who mourn, who are saddened by the condition of this world; in those who are meek; in those who seek righteousness; in those who are merciful; in those who are pure in heart; in those who seek peace and in those who are persecuted for their Christianity.

There are saints today in such diverse places as the Darfur and in Greensboro, in Iraq and in Winston-Salem. There are saints in monasteries and saints feeding the homeless and the hungry. There are saints in our parishes and saints in our families.

In other words, we have saints all around, those who unfeignly love God and live their lives accordingly, with love, with compassion, with humility, peacefully and without any pretensions.

That doesn't sound much like the model of today's successful, and I use the word successful in quotes, person, does it? That doesn't sound like the model of who we normally aspire to be, does it?

God tells us to aspire to be perfect. Jesus says in *Matthew 5:48 (KJV)* *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

And Paul writes in *2 Cor. 7:1 (KJV)* *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

None of us can really attain perfection. We are mere mortals. But we can aspire to holy perfection, we can have the intentions of our hearts aspire to be more like God would have us live.

And that is what makes saints.

Amen.