

According to William Shakespeare's play, "Hamlet," "The thought of something after death, the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns.... must give us pause." None of us feels quite sure what is in store for us beyond this mortal life. Saint Paul states our Christian hope by saying, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard nor has it entered the human heart to imagine what God has prepared for those who love him." Our Bible use colorful images to offer hope for what lies in store beyond, for those who love God. The saints in heaven are a glorious group of decent people. They lived such genuine lives that on the day of their death they went straight home to the God in whom they trusted. They went "marching in" - happy to be meeting face to face with the One they trusted, who held them in the palm of his hand - heroes and ordinary people. A small minority of them, through canonization, are held up as special examples, while hosts of others were unsung heroes, living a quiet life of kindness and duty, pure of heart and gentle of spirit.

The number of the saints is "A great multitude that nobody could count" - for God is rich in mercy, and in the Father's House there are many places. There is place there for all of us, and the surest way to get there is to follow the One who is "the Way, the Truth and the Life," our Savior and teacher Jesus Christ. He taught by word and example how to live a good and worthwhile life. He shows us how to be the best we can be, and the qualities he praises are often the very opposite of commonly held values.

The world says, blessed are the rich, because they can buy whatever they want and enjoy wasteful consumption. But Jesus says, Blessed are the poor in spirit, people who value God more than money; who know it is not their mansions or millions that makes them rich in the eyes of God, but what kind of people they are.

The world says, blessed are those who live it up, and keep the party going. But Jesus says, Blessed are those who mourn, who show compassion to the misfortune, pain and sorrow of others, and try to help them with understanding, kindness, and sharing.

The world says, blessed are the aggressive self-confident winners, with the ruthless streak. But Jesus says, Blessed are the gentle. Gentleness is not weakness, but a noble kind of strength. Saint Francis de Sales used to say that you can catch more flies with a spoonful of sugar than a barrel full of vinegar. In Jesus' book there is no place for barging and bullying.

The world says, blessed are those who enjoy prestige, and fame. But Jesus says, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what is right. The only power and prestige we need is to keep trying to do what is right. There is more satisfaction in living with a clear conscience than in mixing with the movers and shakers and celebrities of this world.

Today's feast is not about the canonized saints but about all the good and decent people who have ever lived. None of us is expecting to be canonized as a saint. We don't expect our picture to be painted on the

walls of churches. Not for a moment do we imagine anyone preserving pieces of us as relics. But in reflecting on the Church, the Second Vatican Council talked about The Universal Call to Holiness. Our Feast today is a reminder of our deep - down calling to become better people. It tells us that Jesus Christ can and will empower us to practice what he preached and to live what we believe. **Amen.**