All Saints' Day 2026 Homily at Choral Mattins - 1 John 3.1-3

"See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are."

There are few truths more remarkable than the one we hear in our reading from the First Letter of John this morning. Not that God tolerates us. Not that God puts up with us. Not even that God forgives us. But that **God calls us his children**. And, as St John immediately reminds us, ***"that is what we are."***

It's not an aspiration. It is not a reward. It's not something reserved for the particularly holy or the exceptionally spiritual. **It is our identity**. Before we have accomplished anything. Before we have succeeded or failed. Before we have proven ourselves worthy. We are loved by God and claimed as his children.

And perhaps that is where All Saints' Day must begin. Because when we think of saints, we often think of stained-glass windows, halos, martyrs, missionaries, miracle workers, and heroic figures whose holiness seems impossibly distant from our ordinary lives. We think of St Peter and St Paul. We think of St Andrew, our patron saint. We think of countless men and women whose courage and faith shaped the Church throughout the centuries. Yet John would have us understand that sainthood begins not with extraordinary achievement but with **belonging**.

The saints are, first and foremost, people who knew whose they were. They understood that *they were God's beloved children*. Everything else flowed from that. Their courage flowed from that. Their generosity flowed from that. Their forgiveness flowed from that. Their *holiness* flowed from that.

For holiness is not about becoming something entirely different. **It's about becoming what God created us to be.** The saints didn't become holy because they were perfect. They became holy because, *despite their imperfections*, **they allowed God's grace to shape their lives**. In fact, the closer we look at the saints, the more human they appear.

Peter denied Christ.

Thomas doubted.

Augustine wandered far from God.

Many saints struggled with fear, temptation, failure, and disappointment.

Yet God worked through them all.

That should encourage us. Because if sainthood depended upon perfection, **none** of us would stand a chance! But if sainthood depends upon *God's grace*, then **every one of us** is invited into that journey.

John goes on to write: *"Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed."* There is both reassurance and mystery in those words.

We are God's children **now**. Not, 'someday'. Not 'after enough prayer'. Not 'after enough good works' – but right **Now.**

And yet there is still more to come. God is not finished with us. **The person you are today is nowhere near the finished article**. The struggles you carry today are not the end of the story. Weaknesses that frustrate you are not the *whole* truth about who you are. God continues his work within each of us.

The saints remind us of what happens when a life is steadily surrendered to God's transforming love.

And that transformation does not end with death. That is why All Saints' Day is such a hopeful feast. Today we celebrate not only the saints whose names are known throughout the world, but the saints whose names are known only to God.

Faithful mothers and fathers. Loving grandparents. Quiet parishioners. Teachers, friends, carers, neighbours. People who never appeared in history books, but whose faith changed lives, nonetheless. The Church calls this the 'Communion of Saints'.

We are part of something far bigger than ourselves. The Church is not merely the people gathered in church this morning. It stretches across continents. Across centuries. And even beyond death itself...

We remain united with all who have gone before us in the faith, all who now dwell in God's nearer presence. And that is why this feast stands so beautifully beside All Souls' Day. Tonight, at our All Souls Requiem we will remember and pray for **the faithful departed.**

This morning, we celebrate the **glorious destiny** to which all God's people are called.
Today, we catch a glimpse of what awaits those who place their trust in Christ.
For John tells us: *"When he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is."*
What a staggering promise!
One day, every barrier between ourselves and God will fall away. One day, faith will become sight. One day, all that is broken will be healed. One day, we shall stand before

Christ and finally see him face to face. And in seeing him, be **transformed** by him. That is the hope that sustained the saints. It is the hope that sustained the martyrs. It is the hope that sustained the faithful generations who worshipped before us. And, it's the hope that sustains us today.

So, on this All Saints' Day morning, let us give thanks for the saints. Let us give thanks for their witness. Let us give thanks for those ordinary saints who nurtured our faith and whose prayers and example helped shape our lives. But let us also remember this:

The feast is not simply about them. It is also about us.

Because the same God who called them, calls us.

The same grace that formed them, forms us.

The same Father who loved them, loves us.

As John reminds us - "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are."

May that truth **shape** our lives, **strengthen** our hope, and **inspire** us to follow Christ faithfully, until we join the company of saints in glory.

Amen.

Fr. Mike.