
*All Saints Sunday -2020\
Hebrews 11:33-40;12:1-2 & Matthew 10:32-33;37-38;19:27-30*

Today all our automobiles have a rear-view mirror on the interior and the exterior of the vehicle. These mirrors are necessary safety features for the driver. Imagine how many accidents they prevent. Imagine how dangerous it would be if we steadily fixed our eyes on the rear-view mirror instead of the road ahead. The driver would kill himself and everyone else on the way. A good driver keeps his eyes on the road ahead and occasionally glances in the mirror to see what is happening behind him.

This illustration sets the tone for today's sermon on All Saints Day. Although it is prudent to occasionally glance in the rear-view mirror, that is not where our eyes should remain, nor our direction in life. We are very progressive people. We live in the present and look toward the future. But, occasionally, we need to look back and see from where we have come.

Christianity has a great tradition. It began a long time ago with a man who lived as no other person has ever lived. That tradition has been carried forward by people who caught that man's spirit and have kept alive, in some measure, his quality of life. Those people were "the saints". They are the ones who handed down the tradition to us and showed us how we are to live.

These noble men and women were poor in spirit, sorrowful, and lowly. They were merciful and single-hearted. But they were merciful peacemakers. And for all they did, they were persecuted. Despite all that, their hearts were glad, knowing that a great reward awaited them. On this All Saints Day, let us take a backward glance at the Church's moral tradition.

We need that sense of direction and stability that the Church can give us. The moral tone of our society can sometimes be described as "evil." And that is true in some parts of our society. To fire a gun from a passing car, wounding and killing anyone who is in the way, is evil. To break into an elderly couple's home, beat them up and steal all their possessions, is deplorable and despicable - there is nothing else you could call it." To have a police officer subdue a man by pressing his knee on the suspect's neck as he lay helpless on the ground is evil. "Please, I can't breathe," the man says, protesting for eight minutes before he becomes silent. Bystanders urge the officer to release the man from the cop's hold. Yet he persisted until the man died. But most of us do not do such things. There are only a few in our society that fit into that category of evil. The most accurate description of our community is not "morally evil," but rather "morally confused."

Sometimes when we see all these things happening, we ask ourselves, what is right? What is Wrong? And this is the place where the great traditions can come to our rescue. With a backward glance, we see a long history of laws that protect human life. These are more than just rules. They are the accumulated wisdom of the ages. A backward glance sees people trying many experiments - one man with many wives, one wife with several husbands, prostitution and so on down the line. Some have tried it all. But out of that came monogamy - one man and one woman being faithful to another for life. Marriage and family are not modern inventions soon replaced with some better arrangement. They are the accumulated wisdom of the ages.

The most precious moral possessions of humans are in their great traditions. And these have been embodied in the Saints. At their best, they have stood for those values that

preserve society and enrich the experience of living. Most of all, they have embodied the traditions of the Christian faith.

By that, I don't mean some building, or some creed carved in stone. I am talking about a way of life that flows like a river. It is ever-changing but is always the same. A glance , in the rear-view mirror will show us what this tradition was in the Saints. They have been different, as all people are. And yet, they had one thing in common - a sincere devotion to Christ and all that He represented. That is why we call them saints and honour their memory today. So, let us not fear this tradition. It will never enslave us but, instead, give us more power.

The only chance you and I have of contributing to human life is to become a part of some great tradition. Well, look at medicine, for example. At first, it had slow growth across the centuries. But by tireless and patient effort, it rose. Kings and queens have come and gone. Empires have flourished and fallen. But the grand tradition of healing kept on going without stopping. Anyone who contributes to it has made a lasting investment. It will still be there for as long as there are people on this earth.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the Christian tradition is like that. It will outlast every form of social and political structure we know today. Our living faith will keep on going. Whoever contributes to it has made a lasting investment. Whoever loves it loves something that will be here to the end of time and beyond. That is truly a great tradition. And we are blest beyond measure to be a part of it.

Amen.