

November 7, 2024
All Saints Sunday and Holy Baptism.

Let us pray:

Give us grace O Lord, so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those indescribable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Today is the Feast of All Saints and Holy Baptism. It is a celebratory day indeed, a day to remember those who in their earthly labors were shining examples of life in Christ, and to those who claimed Jesus no matter the cost. We look back at their lives to call us forward towards God's promise of eternal life.

Eternal life is our foundation of Christian hope. Take a moment to try to imagine this gift, this indescribable gift that Jesus gives us. Jesus gives us this gift freely by the grace of God. And because of it, we have nothing to fear this side of the resurrection. This hope calls us to follow the saints and their example of steadfast devotion to Jesus, and when the time comes for us to join them in their eternal rest. Today is a day when three of our parishioners will be baptized into new transformed lives, when they dedicate themselves to the Lord and proclaim their faith to us. The Feast of All Saints and Holy Baptism are both celebrations of transformation, joy, and hope.

Contrary to life's fleeting hope, God promises us everlasting hope. This hope is not merely hope for a distant future, but a hope that is available to us right now. God's promise of eternal life is a **present** reality.

Nowhere is this promise of eternal life more clearly envisioned than in the covenant of our baptism. When we pass through the waters, we are buried with Christ in his death so that we might be raised with him to new life. By dying to sin and death, we are **freed** to inhabit eternal life—not only in the future but right now. We live a new life in Christ right now! Paul says to the church in Corinth: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

If we can imagine the baptismal font not only as the grave to our old self, but as the gateway to eternal life, then we will begin to experience the new creation right now. Today, baby Judith, Mieko and Victoria are transformed by God's grace, from death into the risen life of Jesus. They are sent into the world as members of the living Lord to find their joy in serving others in Jesus' name. Not to live for themselves, but for a new life in Christ.

Our former Bishop Michael Curry says, “We choose to be baptized because we

want to enter deeply into a life in Christ. Those baptized die to a life that is not centered on Christ, so as to be born anew into one that makes no sense without the love of Christ.” Baptism is choosing to live a Christian life that is more than getting into heaven, it is about choosing to love others each day because God first loved us, and because all people are God’s beloved. Choosing to be baptized is to choose to be transformed by love over and over again for a lifetime.

But, let’s be clear, being baptized does not immunize us against the powers of sin and death. Systems of oppression and personal temptations continue their assaults against us. But when they do, baptism calls us to be different. It calls us to resist the schemes of our culture: lying, cheating, stealing, exploiting, and earning more at anyone’s cost.

When we do encounter the powers of this world, we are called to repent, return, and remember that those struggles do not define who we are, instead, we are defined by something much greater: The promise of eternal life— the promise of God’s grace already fulfilled for us in Christ’s death and resurrection.

This Sunday we also remember all of the faithfully departed that have preceded us to glory, especially those members of our parish and our communities who

have died in the past year. In your program today, there is an insert with names of those you wish to remember. I encourage you to bring it home and read through all the names and consider the lives they led with God.

By doing so, we acknowledge those on whose shoulders we stand. By their lives, may we remember the grace of our baptism that grounds us in the present and makes it possible for us to live the resurrection life now. These remembrances can be difficult. The absence of those near and dear to us can impact us in uniquely painful ways. The Feast of All Saints reminds us of what Jesus taught Mary on the day he stood with her outside Lazarus, her brother's tomb. The promise of eternal life is not about what God could have done. It is about what God is doing now in our lives. The promise of eternal life gives us not only hope but also a new direction to live. Baptism is not the end, but a new beginning, towards a new vision of hope and generosity.

If our baptism calls us to inhabit this reality in our daily lives, every time we come to the table, the Eucharist gives us the grace we need to keep doing so. As we celebrate this holy meal, we recall the sacrifice of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. And when we do, all the saints and souls in this life and in the next gather with us to give thanks. At that moment, time unites us with the entire company of heaven—those on whose shoulders we stand and those who will one

day stand on ours.

We have an indescribable joy found in the promise of eternal life from Jesus.

Let us thank God for his grace and live with new purpose. Today is indeed a day of joy, and hope and deserves our full hearts of gratitude. Thanks be to God. Amen.