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1 November 2007

### The Solemnity of All Saints<sup>1</sup>

Why do we celebrate and honor the Saints today? They have no need of our honor, and our praise of them adds nothing to the joy they experience now and the glory that is theirs. Why, then, do we make so much of them today?

To honor the Saints means that we think back on their lives, that we look to them, and to look to the Saints is to be filled with a great and holy longing. The shining example of the Saints reawakens within us the great longing to be like them; happy to live near God, in his light, in his family. Being a Saint means living close to God, to live in his family.

What distinguishes us from the Saints? It is the fact that whereas we all too often live as though God did not exist, the Saints knew very well that without God's existence they would not live.

How can we become holy, friends of God? To be a Saint requires neither extraordinary actions nor the possession of exceptional gifts. It is necessary, first of all, to listen to Jesus and then to follow him without losing heart when faced by difficulties.

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<sup>1</sup> Shamelessly taken from the homily of Pope Benedict XVI, 1 November 2006.

From the lives of the Saints we see that every form of holiness, even if it follows different paths, always passes through the Way of the Cross, the way of self-denial. Their biographies describe men and women who, docile to the divine plan, sometimes faced unspeakable trials and suffering, persecution and martyrdom. They persevered in their commitment.

The example of the Saints encourages us to follow in their same footsteps and to experience the joy of those who trust in God, for the one true cause of sorrow and unhappiness is to live far from him.

Holiness demands a constant effort, but it is possible for everyone because, rather than a human effort, it is first and foremost a gift of God.

It is God who loved us first and made us his adoptive sons in Jesus. Everything in our lives is a gift of his love: how can we be indifferent before such a great mystery? How can we not respond to the Heavenly Father's love by living as grateful children? In Christ, he gave us the gift of his entire self and calls us to a personal and profound relationship with him.

Consequently, the more we imitate Jesus and remain united to him the more we enter into the mystery of his divine holiness. We discover that he loves us infinitely, and this prompts us in turn to love our brethren. Loving always entails

an act of self-denial, "losing ourselves", and it is precisely this that makes us happy.

If we wish to be truly happy, let each of us follow the witness of the Saints and embrace Christ Jesus above all else that we, too, might live with the Saints in light. Amen.