

## Sunday, November 1, 2020: Solemnity of All Saints

*Beloved, we are God's children now;  
what we shall be has not yet been revealed.  
We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him,  
for we shall see him as he is.*

All Saints has ancient origins in the Church dating back over 1,600 years ago. The Popes developed this feast day to celebrate the many martyrs who did not have their own memorial on which to be remembered. Eventually this came to include all the saints throughout the history of salvation who do not have their own feasts. We can even say that it can also include all the saints that may not be recognized by canonization and name by the Church on earth but who lived holy lives and are in the eternal peace and joy of Heaven.

Today we praise God for what He has done through his loving grace in the lives of His saints. We also call out to the saints as our brothers and sisters in Heaven who love us to ask for them to be close to us and help us in our journey toward God.

At the same time, we look at the great truth of what a saint is and what it means for us. First and foremost, we need to realize that saints are normal. It is crazy to think of the saints as abnormal people. In fact, they are the most normal people there are and probably the only fully normal people that ever lived. To understand this, we need to understand what normal really means. We do not say they are normal in the sense that they look and act just like everyone else. We also do not mean that sanctity is necessarily commonplace. Sin is a thing that is really commonplace, but it is definitely not normal. Rather, it is extremely abnormal. When we say something or someone is abnormal, we mean that things are not as they should be – not as they are made to be – outside the norm. When we say a saint is the most normal of all people, we mean that he or she is exactly what he or she should be – exactly what God created him or her to be. If God who makes us and the whole world sets the norms, then the saints are the most normal of all people. In our devotion to the saints, we look at their lives and see how we ought to be.

Even more than that, we see what we can be! We can look at their lives and realize that God creates and calls each of us to be normal in the sense that the saints are normal. We are called to be amazingly normal like the saints. The saints have nothing that we do not have. We are each made by God out of love in His image. He created each of us to receive His love and live a unique adventure with Him in our lives. God also gives us the new life of grace in Baptism by which He personally comes into our souls to live and do amazing things. This is a truth of our Faith. We really believe that the God of the universe personally lives in you and me. There is only One God Who lives in the Christian soul. The saints did not get the better or stronger God and we a lesser entry level *model*. No. There is only One God Who dwells in the saints and in us. And because he is God, He does great things in us. St. John says that God makes us His children. This is not a mere nice expression but tells us the depths of God's will for our holiness. He wants us to be holy enough to be His children, like Christ and in Christ. And when God says something, He always gives us the grace to make it happen. He makes us His children in Christ Jesus.

So, this is also what we celebrate today. That God created us to be saints. He wants us to be saints and He gives us the power to become truly his children. This is everyone's vocation – to be close to God and fully alive in Him.

Often times young people can focus a great deal on what particular thing God is calling them to do with their lives. They ask, "Am I called to be a priest or a religious, or does God want me to single or married? What is my vocation?" This is a beautiful and necessary question that all young Catholics should ask, but it needs to be put in the proper perspective. Before a Christian knows his particular vocation, he or she already knows the most essential thing God wants for them. They know with absolute rock-solid certainty that God is calling them to be saints. The particular way in which He will make the person a saint is important but pales in comparison to the foundational truth that each of us is called to be deeply intimate with God and live as his child. Keeping this always in one's mind can take some of the pressure off. To properly discern, young people need a frame of mind that say, "I already know the biggest thing God wants. He wants me, my heart. He wants me to be holy. I just need to stay close to Him in my prayer and daily life, and the rest will fall into line." In the end, the most important thing for our young people to know about God's will in their lives is that He wants them to be saints.

In a few moments we will encounter Jesus in the Eucharist Who draws us to Himself to make us children of His Father and holy in His sight. We ask Mary, Mother of the Church and Queen of All Saints to pray with us at this Mass, and we ask her to intercede for us today that we grow in faith in the simple and profound truth of our vocation to holiness.

## Monday, November 2, 2020: All Souls Day

Today we commemorate the souls of all the faithful departed. It is a unique day in the Church when we focus on praying for the souls of our deceased loved ones and for those who do not have anyone to pray for them. At the heart of this day is the reality of God's great mercy and His will that we should share in His work of mercy by offering prayers and sacrifices. God asks us to pray for our departed brothers and sisters, and He allows our prayers to strengthen them on their journey toward Him. The act of God's loving mercy to which we join our prayers is His great gift of purgatory. Yes, purgatory is a gift of God's mercy. It is not something to be feared but something for which we should be grateful.

Jesus says, "Blessed are pure of heart for they shall see God" and "Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, mind and soul" and also "love one another as I have loved you." Heaven is seeing God, but it comes from the pure heartedness of loving Him with all we have. Love is accepting God completely and giving ourselves to Him and our neighbor. This is the simple logic of Heaven – we enter because we have pure hearts open enough to receive the full Light of God's Glory, the full power of His love, that allows us the eternal joy of seeing Him face to face – a happiness beyond imagining. Only the pure of heart can take the bright light that lets us see God face to face without being burned or blinded. Attachment and sin catch the light in the wrong way and this light blinds and burns us in our weakness. Most of us have not fully given our heart and all our self to God and have things that will deflect this light. We are attached to things that get in the way of Him shining through us. We are slowly letting God take over our life in fits and starts but we are not fully His.

So, what happens if we die wanting to love and follow God, trusting His mercy, but not being all His? Not fully pure of heart and ready to see His Glory? God in His mercy finishes our incomplete purification in purgatory. The Church drawing from Scripture teaches this truth of His mercy:

*All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. (CCC 1030)*

Purgatory is God working on us after death, making us ready for Heaven. It is God purifying us to receive the light of His glory so that we can truly see Him face to face in the fullness of His love. Today we pray for the departed souls and also wonder in gratitude for so great a mercy as purgatory.

Yet as great a mercy as purgatory is, the Tradition and the testimony of the saints are clear that it is better by far to allow God to purify us here on earth before we die. So, in addition to our prayers for the poor souls in purgatory we ask for graces for ourselves. We pray to recognize and detach from things that get in the way of God in our life. Even more important, we pray to see our whole life before the backdrop of Heaven. To have the grace to see that each moment and action of our life can touch toward Heaven if lived in union with God. This perception of the backdrop of Heaven in our life is simply a clear vision of how things really are. In reality, God is always near to us and beckoning us at every moment to move toward Him in Heaven. We pray that we come to live totally by this understanding of the closeness of Heaven.

This wonderful closeness of heaven is the true setting of our lives. We can look at all our situations and decision with it in mind. This is necessary for all of us, but it in a particular way it is necessary for the young who with their whole life ahead of them are in danger of not having heaven as the backdrop of their lives. Heaven the as goal of our life is the real context for any thought about what we will do with ourselves or what we will be. To see the happiness of heaven as our real goal and to have faith that God is reaching out toward us to draw us closer to Him, gives young people the concrete understanding of the meaning of the choices of their lives. It opens them to the truth that God has a plan for them and prompts them to look for His will. It encourages all of us who have a duty to serve others to pray for those still discerning God's will in their lives, and to beg for the grace to live each of our vocations to its fullest.

In a few moments we meet Jesus in the Eucharist and as we pray to Him for our departed brothers and sisters, we also ask for the grace to see Heaven as our true home and aim. We ask Mary, Help of Christians, to intercede for us.

## November 3, 2020: Tuesday of the Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time

One of the people at table calls out in excitement at being with Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will dine in the Kingdom of God.” Our Lord replies to this spontaneous outburst with a curious parable about people refusing to accept hospitality – about rejecting a good thing freely given. It is as if Jesus agrees but adds a sobering warning: “yes, they are blessed, but many may not see the banquet of the Kingdom as blessed. Many may not want it.”

We are used to the hearing the word “blessed” in Scripture and at Mass, and we may even use it quite a bit in our own lives to describe things that happen and to wish God’s blessings on other people. It seems ordinary for us to hear and use it, but it is anything but ordinary. Blessedness is an extraordinary gift from God. In the original language of the New Testament the word “blessed” indicates a divine happiness. For the pagans of that time it would have meant the happiness of the life of the gods, a happiness beyond any human capacity. The Christian world took this word and used it to indicate the gift of the new life of grace in Christ Jesus through Baptism. Jesus Christ who as God has this divine blessedness gives us a share in it. He invites us to join Him in his life and partake of His gift. I think the parable’s invitation to the great dinner may very well stand for the invitation of Christ to receive the gift of His blessed life.

In Jesus’ time a huge banquet was not something to be missed. In our time of plenty we may not quite grasp the appeal of an invitation to a rich man’s festive meal. For people who lived with hunger or the threat of hunger banquets were huge. In our own currency: think of a skybox at the Superbowl with sideline passes or imagine a private jet to Paris to eat at one of the best restaurants in the world. This is not something you pass on, but the invited guests of the parable do not see it as a great gift and miss out.

The words of the host stating that none of those men will taste his dinner are strong and inflexible. But rather than focusing on the consequences of missing the banquet it might be more fruitful for us look at what was lacking in the would-be guests and learn from them. Each of the three men have things going on – important things. They weigh their own plans against the value of the banquet and choose their own thing. Not that going to the banquet would stop them from accomplishing what they needed to do. The one could have brought his new wife, and the others could have taken a look at the oxen and field on other days, but they are fixed on their plans. They are blind to the great gift present before them. They lack the outlook to see the gift offered to them. It is implied that they will regret it, but too late.

Their lack of vision stands for the supernatural outlook of faith that recognizes God’s invitation as an amazing gift. It is interesting that it does not say that the men do not hear the invitation but that they do not heed it. They do not see it as an amazing gift. On the other hand, the supernatural outlook of faith not only hears God inviting but also sees every invitation from Him as an amazingly good thing. Many of us when we have an inkling of an invitation from God to enter into or take up something can hesitate and be afraid. We think He is calling but we worry that it may not make us happy. We may not see His invitation as an amazing thing and blessing in our life. This does not really make sense. Every invitation from God is an invitation to receive a wonderful gift and blessing. God is all happiness itself and in all His interaction with

us He is always trying to give us His happiness. To think that He is inviting us into something that is not for our good contradicts who God is. Our deepest faith tells us that everything God wants us to do will lead to blessings and true joy. God never asks us to do something and then lets us fall on our face and be ruined. He is all good and all loving and wants us to trust Him.

We need to pray for this supernatural outlook in ourselves, especially for anyone discerning a vocation. There can be a lot a trepidation about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life in a young person because somewhere deep down he or she is wondering if it will really make him or her happy – if it is really good. They hear a whisper of invitation but try to ignore or explain it away out of fear of giving up their plans or ideas for their life. This is where the deepest reality of the supernatural outlook of faith comes to bear. This is where its profound personal quality is active. The supernatural outlook does not stop at an understanding that God only gives good things. It is deeper and more personal. The outlook of faith trusts God who knows and loves each of us. It trusts God's love for us and joyfully runs to Him in response to the invitation. This is the full spirit of the supernatural outlook needed to hear and respond to God's calls.

Getting back to the guys who missed out on the dinner. If we rewrote a happy ending for them, it might look like this: They say to themselves: "I have this thing I really need and want to do. It is important to me, but I know the host. He is my friend, wise and loving. He always wants and knows what is best for me. This banquet must be really amazing. I would not miss it for the world."

This is the outlook we ask for ourselves. It is the outlook that opens us to receive God's blessings. Today at this Mass Jesus gives us His blessed life by inviting us into the sacrificial banquet of His Body and Blood. In the Eucharist, as we receive Jesus, He takes us to Himself to share in His blessedness. We ask Mary to teach us how to cultivate the outlook of faith that allows us to accept all God's invitations as blessings coming from a trusted loved One.

## Wednesday, November 4, 2020: Memorial of Saint Charles Borromeo

Jesus uses startlingly strong words to address the crowd that is following Him. They can puzzle us: Hate your family? Hate your own life? Yet, elsewhere we hear Jesus reprimand people who do not take care of their parents and He is certainly not getting rid of the Fourth Commandment to honor your father and your mother. Even more, he commands us to love one another as He loves us. So, he cannot really intend for us to turn with malice or even indifference toward others and ourselves.

Jesus gives us the key to understanding the meaning of His jarring words when He says, “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” He is talking about the heart of what it means to be His disciple. Whenever we hear about the cross, we always think of Jesus, His life and His Passion. He is pointing to Himself as the model for the Christian life and calling to the crowd to understand and follow His way of life. Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, took on His human life for the sole purpose of spending it for others. He became man to lay His life down out of love for His heavenly Father and out of loving compassion for us. His whole time on earth, particularly His Passion, Death and Resurrection, shows us that a life is meant to be spent out of love for others. This is the built-in cost of discipleship. To really be a Christian is to spend your life as Christ did – to have our life unified with Him on the Cross in giving ourselves to God and others.

This is the vocation of every Christian. To give themselves totally to the cause of Christ, to spend themselves in love for others. It is true for married people, priests, consecrated, and single people. In any and every vocation in the Church, this radical handing over of ourselves is the heart and goal. It is good for us to understand this and fix it in our mind as we think about our particular vocation, and especially as young people discern what Jesus has in mind for their lives. Every vocation involves this giving of self. God wants all to be conformed to the Cross of Christ in a radical way. A particular vocation is just a matter of figuring out how God wants me to give myself – how He will conform my life to the Sacrifice of the Cross. If a person is called to marriage, it will be by laying down his or her life for his or her spouse and children. If a priest, it will be in spending his life for the sanctification of his flock. If God calls a person to a form of consecrated life, it will be through a particular charism that one offers his or her life out of love. If a person is in the single life, it will be through making a gift of themselves to others in the circumstances that God gives them. One vocation does not call for more sacrifice than another or a deeper union with Christ’s Cross than another. As young people discern their vocation, they need to keep this in mind. We are all called to totally give ourselves to Jesus Christ by giving of ourselves in our life’s vocation; this is our only sure and certain path to happiness. This perspective gives a clearer head to someone sorting out God’s plan for their life.

Jesus reveals that all of us are meant to totally spend our lives out of love for God and others. This is why He talks about detaching from family and self and renouncing possessions so that we can give ourselves completely. It is also behind the parables about “calculating the cost.” He wants us to realistically look at what it means to give ourselves to follow Him and know what we need to do it. In the two parables Jesus tells us to take a look at what we have for the task: Count your stones before you build. Number up your troops before you go to war. We also need to calculate what we have for the task of carrying our crosses and coming after Jesus. And if we

are honest and look at ourselves and our weakness, we can wonder how we really do this or even how Jesus can ask us to follow Him so totally.

Fortunately, there is a method of calculation that will help us figure this problem out. There are a few steps. First step, we take our own capacities and abilities along with our weaknesses and come up with a number. It might be very small. Mine is. It does not matter how small it is because even if it is a fraction of a fraction the next step of the problem takes care of it. Next, we look at God and what He is and can do. Then we take the number for ourselves and multiply it by God's number, infinity. What do we get? Infinity times .000001 is still infinity. That is a lot of stones; enough to build anything, and it is an unbeatable army. Our littlest bit with God's infinite grace gives us the strength for Christlike self-giving. In seeking to follow Jesus we are never left to our own resources. Christ wants us to take up our crosses and follow Him and He makes sure we can do it.

The Eucharistic presence of Jesus is this infinite grace. In the Eucharist we receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ and enter into the full power and love of Passion, Death and Resurrection. All that Jesus is and does comes to us in the Eucharist. We ask for two simple graces today as we encounter our Eucharistic Lord: to help us to recognize that God's call for us to give ourselves in love is a beautiful gift, and to help us embrace this call and live it. We ask Mary, the perfect disciple of Christ, to also pray for us and teach us the beauty of this way of self-giving love. We also ask St. Charles, patron of seminaries, to pray that we have vocations of self-giving priests after the heart of Christ.



## November 5, 2020: Thursday of the Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time

“This man welcomes sinners.” For once the Pharisees say something true about Jesus and what they say is some of the best news of the Gospel. Jesus welcomes sinners! He does not want sinners to shy away from Him in shame and despair but seeks them out Himself. The parable of the *Lost Sheep* tells us this. The Fathers of the Church, the great saints and teachers of the early Church, have taken the parable to stand for God the Son coming down from Heaven to save us from sin and death. The shepherd in the story leaves the ninety-nine sheep in the green pasture to seek out the one that is lost. In a certain sense we can say that God the Son leaves the company of the angels in heaven to pursue us, the part of His creation that was lost to sin. God wants the sinner’s repentance and healing so much that He enters our world, takes on the lowly life of a humble man, and allows Himself to be subjected to death on the Cross to redeem us from sin. Jesus’ welcome to us sinners seeks us out and has the power to save us. In welcoming us, He forgives us, restores our joy, and lifts us up above our sins and to Himself.

As Catholics this is central to our Faith. We believe not only that Jesus is God but that He came to save each of us, you and me. That He welcomes us in all our sinfulness, knowing every petty and little grimy detail of our failings and weakness, and lovingly opens His arms to forgive and lift us up. His welcome says, “Yes, I know you are weak and have sinned, but I know you are more than your sins. Give them to me. Do not be afraid. Open your heart and let Me heal you.” We need to have faith in this love from Christ and ask for the grace to believe in it if we struggle.

We also know as Catholics that Jesus continues to offer us this loving welcome in a real concrete way in the sacrament of Confession. Jesus desires for each of us to encounter His healing welcome in this sacrament. He gave it to us as a gift before He returned to heaven in the Ascension so that He can continue to welcome us there and give us the healing we need. Regardless of what we have done and how long it has been, we can always go to Confession to encounter the healing of Jesus. He is always there. He is always forgiving, and His forgiveness always renews. We pray for the grace to realize what a wonderful gift it is. Anyone who has experienced the profound mercy and freedom of Confession knows this. And if we shy from Confession, we ask Jesus for the grace to see what is really behind our hesitation and to overcome it.

The priest in the sacrament of Confession is the minister of Jesus’ mercy. By this we mean that he stands in the person of Christ, and truly and effectively conveys Jesus’ loving forgiveness of our sins. Though the priest should fit his attitude to Jesus’ loving welcome, nevertheless, the merciful love of Jesus in the sacrament is not dependent on the demeanor of the priest. Regardless of the priest’s personality, Christ’s powerful mercy is always present in the words and action of the sacramental rite of absolution. Yet, if the priest does open himself to conform to the moment, what an astonishing thing he enters. Confession is an unfathomable gift of God’s mercy and it should amaze every priest what Jesus asks him to do. We often say we need priests and act almost like the priest is doing Church and God a favor by saying yes to the call. But in reality, the favor is all from God: to the priest and to those who receives God’s mercy in Confession. To be called to be so close to Jesus in His work of forgiveness, to be minister of this sacrament of mercy, is a possibility so wonderful that any right thinking healthy Catholic young man should want and pray for it, even if he is called to a different vocation, such as marriage.

Jesus tells us twice in today's Gospel that there is tremendous rejoicing in heaven over the return of one sinner. As we encounter Jesus in the Eucharist who comes to us in His Body and Blood and brings us to the right hand of his Father in heaven, we ask for the grace to really understand God's joy in pouring out mercy upon us in our sinfulness. We also ask Mary, Mother of Mercy, to help us to realize with joy and renewed wonder the great gift her Son gives to us in the sacrament of Confession.

## November 6, 2020: Friday of the Thirty-First Week in Ordinary Time

Parables can sometimes puzzle us. We get so taken with the details of the story and their surprise ending that we can miss the point of the parable. Like today, we see this sneaky steward who is caught misusing his master's wealth and pulls off one last sneaky trick to save himself. Then, when we expect the master to punish him, but he actually commends his resourcefulness. Jesus is, of course, not advocating for sharp dealing and greed, but He is using this greedy sharp dealer to give a profound teaching.

Parables are, most of the time, stories that present a single point by using commonplace things to represent powerful spiritual realities. To get at the reality we have to look closely at the parable and think about it. We have to distill away the details to get the pure action of the story that reveals the mind of God. Jesus gives us the key: *For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than the children of light.* Christ is talking about exercising a shrewd, bold and effective strategy in the Christian life. The steward does this in his life of sneakiness for gain. We are to do this in our life of light for God. God.

Look at what the steward does. Once he is caught and the game is over, he soberly looks at the reality of his situation. He knows the consequences he faces. He knows what he wants. And he knows what he has. Notice he is realistic about his own weaknesses, too proud to beg and too weak to dig. To survive he will have to look to other resources at his disposal. He looks closely at the situation and realizes what he has left and what he can do with it. Once he comes up with this plan, he is bold and decisive. He goes right after it. The steward is clear in his perception of the circumstances, wise about using what he has and quick to act. These are the qualities Jesus commends to us in the Christian life.

We can look at ourselves in our discipleship of Christ to see if we have these qualities. Do we clearly perceive the circumstances of our life? What we are facing? What our goal is? What resources we possess to deal with our circumstances and reach our destination? Do we really make use of what we have? Do we commit and act with bold resolve?

All of us have heaven as our main goal and destination. We reach it by living for Christ and conforming ourselves to His life. When we look soberly at ourselves, what we are and what we have on our own, we realize that our resources fall well short of what we need live as Christ's disciples and gain heaven. The dumb move is for us to double down on our own resources and try harder in the hope that somehow we can make it. The smart move is to take our eyes off ourselves and look to God. We know by faith that we are not left to our own resources in this life. We ask God's help to see the powerful things He has given us and to boldly make use of them.

Above all, the clear-sighted Christian realizes that he has God's love and His life of grace, which essentially means God personally living in us and doing things in us. He truly lives in our souls out of love and He is never without amazing effects. The obvious conclusion follows: God is going to get us to heaven; not our own abilities. Now comes the time to formulate a sound plan and act decisively. We must do whatever it takes to open ourselves to God's action in our lives.

The best way to do this is to turn quickly to Him and throw ourselves completely in His arms. This is an absolutely effective move that boldly relies on God's love for us. We make use of His loving grace by turning toward Him and not relying on ourselves. And this turning toward Him and even re-turning toward Him is something we do many times in our life and in fact many times during each of our days.

It is a scary thing to look at the Christian life and heaven and think that we need to get there on our own. Often times we become discouraged because in some strange place in our hearts we still think we need to do it on our own. In reality, God is our one and only true help. We open to Him and cooperate with His grace. This truth is necessary for us as *children of the light* to act with the kind of effective prudence Jesus suggests to us in the parable. This is especially true regarding God's plan for our lives. The primary and most important thing is for us to realize our complete dependence of God for all things and to lean on Him for all our needs. If this stance toward God becomes the main habit of our lives, the capacity to hear and the generosity to accept God's vocational will for our lives will never be lacking. Whether we are still listening to see where God wants to lead us – to marriage, priesthood, or consecrated life, or even if we have already committed to one of these states in life, God continually invites us to listen to how he is calling us to live our vocations to their fullest. We simply can't do it on our own.

In a few minutes we encounter Jesus truly present in the Eucharist and we ask for His grace to always turn toward Him in all things. We ask Mary, Mother of Grace, who as the Handmaid of the Lord always had her eyes on God, to help us to learn to live in the happiness of complete dependence on God.

## November 7, 2020: Saturday of the Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time

*I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.* Our Lord cannot mean to give us advice about how to deal with stolen property or goods obtained through fraud. Obviously, he is trying to get at something good that we need to know. If we take a broad reading of what Jesus means by dishonest wealth, we can understand it to mean all those things that we have and that will not last. It is dishonest wealth not because of how it was gained but because in the end it will leave us. It will in a sense betray us. Dishonest wealth is our money and other material possessions as well as other things that are even closer to us like our health, our abilities and our time. All of these things in the end will slip away from us. The great running back can blow out his knee and he will certainly lose a step with age, and his amazing ability to cut back, accelerate or break a tackle will have left him. A brilliant mathematician can get conked on the head and his neurons will not fire the way they used to and his genius will fade. Even barring an unfortunate accident or even the fading of the mind that can come with age and disease, he will eventually lose his brain functioning at death and where will be his gift for numbers? This is why Jesus says that the dishonest wealth is not even really our own possession because we cannot really hold on to it. It always betrays us in the end and shakes free of our grip.

Jesus advises us to use the things that will not last to make friends. Elsewhere we hear Jesus say, “I now longer call you servants but my friend.” This gives us a better idea of what Christ means by friends. He is our friend. He has made us His friends. We are no longer only creatures that simply worship before God but, fantastically, in the grace of Christ we are made His friends, friends of God incarnate. It is a real friendship. And like all true friendship we enter into His life and join Him in what He does. Jesus came to save mankind by offering Himself in love to the Father for our sins. To be a true friend of Christ is to enter into His mission of loving self-gift. So, as Christ’s friends we look at the passing things we possess (our material goods, our health, our abilities and our time) and use this dishonest wealth at the service of our friendship with Christ. This gives us a deeper insight into the commandment to love the Lord your God with your whole heart, mind and strength. Now we realize that in giving all to God it is not some ethereal love to a distant God, but a genuine intimate love of one friend to Another. It not just that we know the things we have are from God will not last and we might as well offer them, but even more, we offer our whole self and all we have because we simply want to join our Friend. We want to be a part of what He does.

We need the grace to realize this great truth of friendship with God. It is at the heart of the teaching of Christ and it is at the source of true happiness. Jesus really seeks to be our friend. He does not just love us but likes us and wants us to be with Him in His mission. He wants us to spend our lives joyfully with Him. We need to speak very simply and directly to Jesus and ask Him for the faith to know and accept His friendship. We ask Him to make His companionship the joy of our lives and giving ourselves to Him and others the greatest desire of our hearts. Friendship with Jesus is the only true outlook of the Christian. Without the guiding light of this truth, the Christian life can be a very gray and lonely way. Our prayer can become a dry monologue and our offerings an arid exchange. But with this truth in our hearts all things take on a new light. Each act of our life becomes a moment to love, a chance to give ourselves to Jesus. We look at what we have and

are in a different way. We understand that the only way our stuff can make us happy is by being offered to God and others. We start seeing our possessions as things to bring into our friendship with Christ.

If friendship with God is at the heart of joyfully living the Christian life, it is also at the heart of understanding vocations. We often pray that young people are generous in responding to God's call, but only in the light of friendship with Christ is the full meaning of generosity understood. It is not a one-way exchange in which we give of ourselves, and it is not even a reciprocal act of gratitude to God Who has given us so much. Rather, the generosity of responding to a vocation takes on the warmth of friendship. It is an invitation from a Friend to join Him and share what He loves. It is not like agreeing to take on a tough job, but, rather, it is like agreeing to join a close friend on a great adventure. In fact, a vocation from God is an invitation to join your best Friend on the greatest of all adventures, the salvation of the world.

Today at the Consecration each of us has an opportunity to renew our friendship with Jesus as He comes to us in His Body, Blood Soul and Divinity. The way He gives Himself to us in the Eucharist is perhaps the greatest evidence of His desire for friendship with us. We ask Him for the grace to accept His friendship for us and embrace what it means in our lives. We recognize that Jesus' Holy Mother is with us and praying for us at every Mass. We ask her to strengthen our faith in her Son's friendship for us and teach us about its joy.