

SERMON 893

November 2, 2014

All Saints' Sunday

970th Week as Priest

797th Week at St Dunstan's

62nd Week at Epiphany-Tallassee



THE SAINTS OF GOD

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

The greatest gift I have received as a priest over the past two decades has been the love that I feel for the Saints of God. I haven't done anything to develop a special ability. I haven't received a vision or a blinding light. I have simply been a part of people's lives—the baptism of their children, the marriages and confirmations, the house blessings and visits to the

hospital. It's these simple things that make the life of a priest worthwhile. Simple, but very important, I should say. When you're sick, I want to pray for you. When you need somebody to talk to, I hope you'll call me. When a member of your family dies, I want to come and comfort you.

I'm no expert, really. I'm more like a Jack-of-all-trades. But I am your priest, and I care about you. I'm not a therapist or a psychiatrist. As Leigh says, I'm a doctor, but I can't even write a prescription. But I am a good listener, and once in a while I may be able to offer an insight, or ask a pertinent question, or help you get to the heart of the matter. And when you need a prayer, I'm your man. When you need a blessing, I can offer it. When you're sick, I can lay hands on you and ask our Lord Jesus Christ to heal you with his grace, and strengthen you with his goodness, and surround you with his loving care. And when you're dying, I'll be there to beg Jesus Christ to let you into heaven.

You see, it's not about me. It's actually about the sure and certain hope you have as one of the Saints of God. It's about your life—which is of infinite importance to God. And it's about what you do with that life—because God takes seriously what you do with it. It's about knowing that you are

loved—unconditionally, wholeheartedly, without any hesitation or reservation. And if I can communicate that to you, then I've done my best work as a priest of this One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. You are one of the Saints of God. You don't deserve it. You can't buy it, or earn it—but you can receive it. As blessing upon blessing. As grace upon grace.

Last Thursday night, one of the greatest Saints of God that I have ever known died in Children's Hospital in Birmingham. Fisher Martin, four years of age, left the loving arms of his mother and joined the Saints in Light. Fisher loved the Lord, and people from all walks of life, and he loved walking on the farm, and dogs and horses, and books, and singing songs.

His mother Kerriann said that he was a Fisher of Men. He was a happy little boy, who when he prayed with me, he would fold his hands together (just like that). And when we finished praying, he would clap his hands (just like that). Fisher had a profound effect on his surgeons and doctors and nurses. He affected the spiritual life of every person who prayed for him—and there were thousands of people who did. He influenced us for good because we prayed for him in our worship. And I don't want you to feel like we failed, because

we didn't. Fisher is with the saints in light. Fisher is in the courts of heaven. Fisher is where there is no pain or suffering, and he is praying for you, and when he finishes those prayers, I am sure that he claps his hands.

So let's say a prayer for one of the Saints of God. Let's say a prayer for Fisher ... and let's fold our hands together ...

HOLY GOD, yours is the beauty of childhood and yours is the fullness of years. Comfort us in our sorrow, strengthen us with hope, and breathe peace into our troubled hearts. Assure us that the love in which we rejoiced for a time is not lost, and that Fisher is with you, safe in your eternal love and care. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, who took little children into his arms and blessed them. **AMEN.** (clap hands)