HOMILY ALL SAINTS DAY
November 1, 2026

Oh when the Saints
Go marching in
Oh when the Saints go marching in
Lord I want to be in that number
When the Saints go marching in.

How many of you here want to be saints? All of us, right? That is what this world is all about, right? And we are all saints under construction. We are not saints yet because to become a saint you must be dead. In the first thousand years of the Church, saints were named by popular acclaim. If a large number agreed after someone died that they were in heaven, they were named a saint. Later the Church started a formal canonization process that really looks at the whole life of the individual, and it frequently takes many years. Canonization by the Church does not put an individual into heaven; it just acknowledges that the Church believes they are already there. There are billions of people in heaven who have not been canonized and will never be named by the Church. To be canonized you generally have to have done something extraordinary that is recognized by many people. Many people who live ordinary lives are saints. About 50 years ago, the Church took some of the saints off the calendar. Generally, they were removed because the Church is not absolutely sure they existed or were more folklore. This is particularly true for saints that lived long ago before there were a lot of written records. St. Christopher, the patron saint of travelers was one of them. The Church did not declare that St. Christopher is no longer a saint. The Church is just saying that we are not sure of his existence. There is also the idea that saints are perfect. People will say, "I'm no saint," meaning "I am not perfect," but saints are not perfect. They are people just like us with strengths and weaknesses, virtues and sins. Stories about saints frequently become embellished over the years, but everybody here can be a saint.

In the Gospel reading today we hear the beatitudes. The word "blessed" has also been translated as "happy." I prefer that translation because while on the surface they appear contra cultural, they are a

blueprint to happiness in this world and the next. "Happy are the poor in spirit." Who would be happy to be poor. A number of years ago I lived in a very poor mission parish in Brazil. We do not have that kind of poverty in this country. There are no social support programs like we have in this country. They have no books in the schools. The government wants to keep the poor population uneducated, so they remain poor. There is really no hope for them to get out of their poverty. However, I met some of the most joyful people I have ever met. They have a very strong sense of community and strong relationships. They had to depend upon one another and they do. It seems that in our culture the more we have the more we want. We sometimes look for security primarily in money and stuff, and if we do that, we will never have enough. Happy are those who know when they have enough. People who are poor in spirit know they are not the center of the universe. They know they need community and can find security through relationships. Our culture values independence and self-sufficiency. The does not led to happiness, that leads to loneliness and I think that is why we have an epidemic of loneliness in our country today. People who are poor in spirit and kind.

"Happy are they who mourn." How can mourning make you happy? Well, the only way you can avoid mourning is to never love. It is better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all. After you work through that raw grief, you still have the whole in your heart that used to be filled by the person you loved, but you also have the memories of the gift that person was in your life while you have them. The more you love the more you mourn, but loving is how we get to heaven. Isn't that what Jesus taught us?

"Happy are the peacemakers." There are so many people in our culture who are working really hard to create divisions. It is really hard to be a peacemaker in our country today, but I think being a peacemaker could make us happy and help us to get to heaven.

Today I am going to invite you to pray with the beatitudes. Figure out how living them out could make you happy in this world and the next.