

People must choose: path toward holiness or nothing, pope says

VATICAN CITY — Saints are not just the well-known men, women and young people on the liturgical calendar, Pope Francis said on the feast of All Saints.

They include simple people “from next door, our relatives and acquaintances who now are part of that ‘immense multitude’” in heaven, he said, which makes the Nov. 1 feast of All Saints “a family celebration.”

“Saints are close to us, rather they are our truest brothers and sisters. They understand us, they love us, they know what is truly good for us, they help us and wait for us. They are happy and they want us to be happy with them in paradise,” he said.

Before reciting the Angelus Nov. 1 with people gathered in St. Peter’s Square, the pope talked about God’s call to holiness and happiness, which entails following the beatitudes. Thousands of people braved the uncertain weather to join him as scattered showers alternated with torrential downpours.

“The Gospel says, ‘Blessed are the poor,’ while the world says, ‘Blessed are the rich.’ The Gospel says, ‘Blessed are the meek, while the world says, ‘Blessed are the bullies.’ The Gospel says, ‘Blessed are the pure of heart,’ while the world says, ‘Blessed are the cunning and pleasure-seekers,’” the pope said.

But those who are the true victors in the end are the saints, not the world, and the saints “exhort us to choose their side, the side of God who is holy,” he said.

“Let’s ask ourselves which side are we on? Heaven or earth? Do we live for the Lord or for ourselves? For eternal happiness or for some immediate gratification?” he asked.

People need to ask themselves whether they really want to be holy or are they content being Christians who believe in God and respect others, “but without going

overboard.”

The pope said that the Lord, “who asks everything of us,” offers in return true life and the happiness for which people were created.

“Therefore, either holiness or nothing!” he added.

From their place in heaven, the saints are “cheering for us so that we choose God, humility, meekness, mercy, being pure of heart, so that we develop a passion for heaven rather than the world,” he said.

The saints also want people not just to listen to the Gospel, but to put it into practice by “walking the path of the beatitudes,” which does not require doing “extraordinary things, but to follow every day this path that brings us to heaven, to family, back home.”

After praying the Angelus, the pope greeted the many men and women who ran in the annual 10-kilometer Race of the Saints, praising the “beautiful initiative” celebrating the feast day.

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