

## Solemnity of All Saints

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Devotion to the saints has long been at the heart of Catholic life. Here at Our Lady & St. Anne we have statues of some of the more familiar saints, albeit not all the same size, and we also have stained glass windows depicting a dozen or so different saints to whom parishioners of past generations were devoted and who paid for the windows in honour of particular saints. I have never quite been able to work out why we have a window depicting St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, a Carmelite nun from Renaissance Florence. There is no accounting for taste. We have statues of the saints, paintings of saints and, as mentioned, stained glass windows. But we also remember the saints in the liturgy and even though most saints' feast days are now "optional memorials", i.e. we do not have to observe them, nonetheless the liturgical calendar is peppered with opportunities to remember particular saints. Many if not most of us have Christian names which are those of one or other saint, and most of us too like it when people remember us on the feast day of our patron. Many of us, even if we are not called Patrick, like to celebrate 17<sup>th</sup> March, while here in our parish church we honour St. Anne on 26 July.

The great solemnity of All Saints is not however the feast of all those whom the Church has canonised. They are included of course, but this great festival is in honour of *all* those who have passed beyond the portal of death and are now counted among the blessed in heaven. However devoted we may be to those saints whose feasts are in the liturgical calendar, most of us are much closer to many of the saints who have not won official Church recognition of their sanctity but yet are in heaven, having been among our closest relatives, friends and associates here on earth. On this Solemnity of All Saints we remember our late parents, siblings or friends who may have gone before us and, in some cases, some of you will be remembering children who have predeceased you. What makes this such a wonderful feast is that it celebrates sanctity in ordinary, the holiness of people just like us and of whose devotion, faith and holiness we are the beneficiaries. This feast affords us an opportunity to give thanks for the lives of those who have loved us and who, inspired by their Christian faith and with lives shaped by kingdom values, have lived exemplary lives. And yet most of them have done nothing extraordinary except in so far as, as disciples of Jesus Christ and children of the Church, the ordinary things they have done they have done extraordinarily well.

We are living through extraordinary times and in every church community, every neighbourhood and every family, we are witness to people like ourselves doing good deeds for their neighbour, putting the wellbeing of society ahead of their own and reaching out to others in such a way as to assure them that we consider them our brothers and sisters. By creating a new sense of family in the here and now, we are getting a foretaste of the fellowship we will enjoy with the saints in the world to come.

**Father Patrick**