November 1: All Saints

**THE CALL TO HOLINESS**

The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed God's universal call to holiness when the bishops declared, "The Lord Jesus, divine teacher and model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to each and every one of his disciples without distinction. He said, “You, therefore, must be perfect (compassionate), as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48) ( Constitution on the Church, Chapter 5, n.39ff.).

We and all the followers of Jesus Christ have been made children of God in baptism. So, God our Father has called all Christians in all walks of life to the fullness of Christian life and holiness.

The Saints understood very well that all are called to holiness, sometimes when the great mass of the people found it difficult to recognize Jesus, the divine teacher and model of holiness, either in the Church or in the clergy or religious, or in public life, or anywhere.

The Saints recognized Jesus in the Church and in the people, especially in the poor who had no voice in public affairs. The people, in their turn, recognized Jesus in the Saints and in the Church when it was renewed by penance and conversion, following the example of the Saints.

For instance, Christians in all walks of life heard the call to holiness that Jesus preached through the preaching of St Francis and the example of his "brothers and sisters of penance."

Friar Thomas of Celano tells us that “many, casting aside earthly concerns, gained knowledge of themselves in the life and teaching of the most blessed father Francis and aspired to love and reverence for their Creator. Many people, well-born and lowly, cleric and lay, driven by divine inspiration, began to come to Saint Francis, for they desired to serve under his constant training and leadership…. through his spreading message, the Church of Christ is being renewed in both sexes according to his form, rule and teaching, and there is victory for the triple army of those being saved…. to all he gave a norm of life and to those of every rank he sincerely pointed out the way of salvation” (1 Celano, 37. *FA:ED* p.216-217. *Omnibus* p.259).

We respond today to the same call to holiness preached by Jesus and the Saints and best expressed, surprisingly, in the Code of Canon Law that reads: "All Christ's faithful, *each according to his or her own condition,* must make a wholehearted effort to lead a holy life, and to promote the growth of the Church and its continual sanctification" (Can. 210).

God addresses his call to holiness not only to priests and religious but also to all baptized persons. Our particular call to holiness is related to our condition of life, whether secular or religious, and to our function, whether we are laity or clergy.

Secular people, in their efforts to be holy, should not copy religious, nor should religious copy secular people, but each of us should find appropriate ways of expressing our particular call to holiness.

As Franciscans, whether religious or secular, we are attracted to Assisi where the mortal remains of St Francis are resting. But it is not a tomb that attracts us. Rather, the spirit of St Francis radiates from Assisi and continues to attract all people of all walks of life to follow him in responding to Jesus, the model of holiness.

Let us give our full attention to Jesus, the divine teacher and supreme model; Jesus, who preached holiness of life to every one of his followers; Jesus, who sent the Holy Spirit to them to move them to love God.

Let us pray that Jesus Christ may teach us how to respond better to our personal and particular call to holiness, as Franciscans endowed with the charism of St Francis.