

Sunday Homily

Title Homily for All Souls Day

Date: November 2, 2025

Sunday: All Souls

Scripture: John 6:51-58

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Text: The afterlife is best explained by a German theologian, Karl Rahner. Let me try to make his innovative ideas understandable. Please go with me into your imagination, into your mind's eye. You are standing before God's throne, awaiting your final judgment. You are nervous. God smiles and says: "Well done, my good and faithful servant . . . Come share your master's joy" (Matt 25:23). You are relieved, but surprised. Since early childhood, religion teachers and preachers have pounded home that we are terrible sinners, frail, weak humans, unable to make our way without supernatural help—destined, at best, for purgatory. Our teachers instilled fear about our judgment. God notices your surprise. God speaks: "I wish your teachers understood my plan for your salvation. The Son of God came to save you. By his birth, teaching, miracles, especially by his death and resurrection, you are forgiven. Then, my Son and I sent the Holy Spirit to guide you through life."

God, then, reveals the basis of his judgment on you. Again, God speaks: "The Bible's first lesson is your creation in goodness (Gen 1:26-31). And then, my Son calls you to the fullness of life. Almost all the time, you answered yes." God says, "I sent persons for you to love; you loved. I sent situations that called for empathy; you cared. I sent incidents that called you to forgive; you forgave." God goes on: "I am the Creator and I called you to create; in your work, your play, especially in your home, you created space for human life to flourish. Strange times came, confused times, difficult times;

they, too, called you to your Christian self. You sought the knowledge to navigate those times; you sought the truth. Sometimes, those around you went wrong; they tried to draw you into their mess with their lies. You stayed focused on goodness. And more, you helped those around you value justice, mercy, peace, and tolerance. Of course, you failed on occasion; but you repented. My Son said, 'There is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine . . . who have no need of repentance' (Luke 15:7). Heaven partied at your repentance. Most of all, you chose my Son. You heard his Word, and you received his Body and Blood. While on earth, my Son's favorite line was, 'Your faith has saved you'."

Now, let's gather back here at St. Michaels. If that scene seems too simple, let's look more deeply into what that theologian says: Salvation is coming into one's true self as God creates us, and as God offers our true self to us now. God does not determine our future. Instead, God lays out a GOOD LIFE almost like a great chef lays out a smorgasbord or an amazing buffet. We determine our future by our choices, here and now. Each choice takes us either closer to our true self to our salvation, or further away from that true self to our damnation.

We perceive the time of our salvation as a time **NOW** when we choose, and a time **NOT YET**, which is the perfection of our choices. The **NOW**: This is the time to enjoy the sacraments to set us on the path to salvation. **NOW**, we choose from the buffet called life. We construct our true self—the self God created and God hoped we would become. So, we construct our salvation **NOW**. In today's readings, there were references to the **NOW** of salvation. St. Paul wrote: "If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once

reconciled, will we be saved by his life. Not only that, but we also boast of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Romans 5:10-11). Get the tense. We are **NOW** reconciled with God. Then listen to St. John record what Jesus says about the Eucharist: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood **HAS** eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day” (John 6:54). Notice again the tense. We have eternal life.

Our choices **NOW** construct our true self, the self God calls us to become. Therefore, our salvation begins **NOW**, in this life. Through baptism and Eucharist, we can enjoy a satisfying, inner peace guiding us to choose love, compassion, forgiveness, truth, goodness, and, when necessary, repentance.

You object. Most days in the here and now don’t feel like salvation. That’s the **NOT YET**. The perfection of our true self awaits our total union with God, which happens only after death. We don’t know yet what the perfecting process looks like (1 John 3:2). Scripture tells us we can help the deceased with our prayers (2 Macc 12:42-46). With your prayers, do help those you loved reach the perfection of their true selves in the next.

God seems to enjoy the whole of it: creating us and sending those moments through which God calls us to become our true selves. And God seems to have some fun keeping the end game a mystery, the **NOT YET** that is our perfection.