**20261101. Cycle A. XXXI Sunday in Ordinary Time. Solemnity of All Saints. UCA**

Today, as we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints, we honor all the holy men and women of God, known and unknown, who have preceded us on the journey to Heaven. The saints were ordinary men and women, with their struggles and failures, who joyfully placed their trust in God's love and faithfully followed Christ.

In today's First Reading from Revelation, St. John describes "a vision of a great multitude…from every nation, race, people, and tongue" standing before the throne of God. These are the saints who persevered, survived great distress, and remained faithful to the Lord. Their lives remind us that each of us is called to holiness.

In today's Second Reading, St. John reinforces this universal call to holiness. He tells us, "See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God." Through our Baptism, we have become sons and daughters of the Father, and it is through His grace that we can persevere in joy.

In today's Gospel, Jesus gives us a roadmap to sainthood. He calls the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the clean of heart, peacemakers, and those who are persecuted, blessed. By the world's standards for success, these would not fit the bill, but Jesus says, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

This is the joy discovered by all the saints who have preceded us. They did not lead easy lives, but they were able to go forth with courage, hope, and joy to serve others and proclaim the Gospel, knowing that Christ was their lasting treasure. Each year, we ask you to renew your commitment to Christ's mission in our Church through our parish Stewardship. This also includes the opportunity to come together through the United Catholic Appeal to reach beyond our parish boundaries and support vital ministries, programs, and services that teach, shepherd, and serve countless lives across the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. You should have received your stewardship renewal materials in the mail by now. This year's appeal is entitled " Go Forth in Joy." I encourage you to prayerfully discern how God is calling you to Go Forth in Joy to bring Christ to others through your prayer, personal witness, and financial gifts. Giving is a covenant where each of us faithfully offers what we can in love of God and neighbor.

I would like to take a moment to explain something that sometimes causes confusion: What is the difference between our Parish Stewardship and the United Catholic Appeal? The gifts we give during the Sunday offertory primarily support our own parish. It helps pay the bills, maintain our buildings, and cover the expenses of keeping our parish running.
The United Catholic Appeal, on the other hand, supports the mission of the entire Archdiocese of Indianapolis. It helps fund ministries and programs that no single parish could provide on its own. These include assistance for people in need, Catholic education, religious formation, family ministries, the care of retired priests, and the preparation of future Church leaders.
But you might be asking: How does the United Catholic Appeal benefit our parish? What do we receive from it? Father Chris suggested that I share an example I know very well. And that example is my own story.
For many years, my family and I were active members of St. Bartholomew Parish. Over time, we became more involved in the life of the Church. We served as lectors and Extraordinary

Ministers of Holy Communion. We helped prepare parents and godparents for baptism, accompanied couples preparing for marriage, and participated in retreats.

Then, one day, Amalia and I received an invitation to participate in a program called Pastoral Leadership, offered through the Archdiocese's Intercultural Pastoral Institute in Indianapolis, which is supported by the United Catholic Appeal. The program met every Thursday evening for two years. Its purpose was simple but important: to prepare people to become better leaders and servants in their parishes. At the time, we had no idea where that opportunity would lead. Looking back, I can see that it was the beginning of a journey that eventually opened the door to another possibility: serving the Church as a permanent deacon.

As some of you know, becoming a deacon requires five years: one of discernment and four years of formation. And believe me, it is not a simple process. It requires time, study, prayer, dedication, retreats, and many other activities. All of this takes people, facilities, materials, and resources. The archdiocese organizes and supports this formation, and the United Catholic Appeal helps make many of these ministries possible.

There is another important detail I would like you to know: for married men, formation is not just about the man becoming a deacon. It also involves his wife and his family. Our wives are required to consent and invited to participate in many aspects of the journey because the diaconate is not a vocation that we live apart from our families. It affects our marriages, our family lives, and the way we serve others.

I was blessed to be part of the fourth class of permanent deacons formed in our Archdiocese. In 2022, 16 men from our class were ordained. And God willing, next year, another group of 14 men will be ordained to continue serving our communities. Now, let me bring this story back to the United Catholic Appeal: When you see a deacon serving at Mass, proclaiming the Gospel, preaching, celebrating baptisms, or accompanying families, you are seeing the fruits of formation.

You may not see the classrooms, the retreats, the hours of study, or the people who helped make that formation possible. But all of that is part of the story behind the ministry you see here at the altar and throughout our parish.

Deacons serve without receiving a salary for their ministry. But our ability to serve is supported by years of preparation and by the generosity of many people. And I am one of those fruits.

That is why I wanted to share this story with you. The United Catholic Appeal is not simply about giving money to an organization. It is about supporting a mission that reaches far beyond one parish. It is about helping prepare the people who will serve our parishes tomorrow, accompany our families, and bring the Gospel to others.

And that is something beautiful about our Church: What we give generously today can become a blessing in the lives of many people tomorrow. So, as we consider our contribution to the United Catholic Appeal, let us remember that we are not simply supporting programs. We are helping people grow in faith, preparing future leaders, and strengthening the mission of our Church.

May the saints intercede for us, that we may never lose sight of our heavenly treasure. May we trust in God's love, live the Beatitudes, and go forth with joy, united as one body in Christ, confident that God continues to work through us.

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14, 1 John 3:1-3, Matthew 5:1-12a