Father O'Connor's Homily for 1 November 2026
Feast of All Saints

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

I would like to share some great news with you that happened on Friday [30 October 2026].

On 31 July 2023, a little more than 3 years ago, the Mayor of Amherst, Mr. Mark Costilow, came to see me, expressing the City of Amherst's interest in purchasing the 8-acre Saint Joseph Parish Athletic Field and re-developing it as a first-rate community "athletic park."

And, I understand from Mike Bokulich and Jenn Jackson, that this was the original purpose of this field when it came to be in the 1980s.

This sale was completed on Friday [30 October 2026] for the price of $600,000 to Saint Joseph Parish, with $300,000 paid now, and with the balance to be paid, with 4% interest, over the next three years.

As promised, this money would be used to further our parish athletic programs by applying it – along with our "Called to Flourish" Campaign pledge payments – to the construction of our new Saint Joseph Athletic and Performing Arts Center on the land where the former convent and service garages once stood.

I will be sharing more about this and other projects in our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parishes as information becomes available.

I am grateful to Mayor Mark Costilow and the City of Amherst – and to all of you – for enabling this great opportunity to come true.

A happy Feast of All Saints to you all!

The month of November is not formally a liturgical season like Advent and Christmas, or like Lent and Easter.

But since November begins with All Saints Day, followed by All Souls Day, and includes our national feast of Thanksgiving, and then comes to an end with Christ the King Sunday, these four weeks do have the <u>feel</u> of a liturgical season that focuses on "The Four Last Things": death, judgment, heaven and hell.

Where we live, the falling leaves, the migrating birds and the advancing cold weather serve as natural reminders of our mortality.

Phyllis McGinley wrote a book called **Saint Watching**. In it she says: "*When I was seven years old, I wanted to be a tight-rope walker, and I broke my collarbone. At twelve I planned to become an international spy. At fifteen my ambition was the stage. Now, in my sensible declining years, I would give anything to be a saint."*

Phyllis McGinley's light-hearted remarks make a fitting introduction to this Feast of All Saints.

They remind us that every one of us – without exception – is called to be a saint.

Not a single one of us in this church today is called to be anything less than a saint.

We read about saints like Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta. And we can ask: what is the best way to become a saint in this 21st century?

We must remember that we don't become a saint by doing what God created someone else to do. God already has a Saint Francis of Assisi and a Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta. We become a saint by doing what God created us to do.

Practically speaking, this means that if you are a student at this moment in your life, that is exactly the way that God intends for you to become a saint: by being the best student that you can be.

This means that if you are a parent or a grandparent at this moment in your life, that is exactly the way that God intends for you to become a saint: by being the best parent or grandparent that you can be.

Or if you are a senior person at this moment in your life, that is exactly the way that God intends for you to become a saint: by being the best senior person that you can be.

There was a retired couple who lived on a large lot near an elementary school. The children had the bad habit of cutting across their lawn as a short-cut, wearing an ugly path through it.

This upset the couple. It began destroying their peace of mind, and made them very intolerant of the children.

Then the couple came up with an idea. They put crushed gravel in the path and lined it with flowers. Then they put a bench along what was now a new walking path.

When school let out each afternoon, the couple sat on the bench and greeted the children as they passed by and learned their names.

The response of the children was amazing. They stopped and thanked the couple for making this beautiful path for them to walk on. They even asked the names of the flowers, and sometimes even sat down with them to talk.

The couple had turned an unhappy situation into a very happy one.

It is a great example of what Jesus meant in today's Gospel when He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

It can lead to looking for ways to turn an upsetting situation into a peaceful one.

If you are still in doubt about what it means to be a saint in today's world, take another look at the Beatitudes in today's Gospel, which is known as the Sermon on the Mount.

These Beatitudes give us a look at the "personality of a saint" and how, with God's daily grace, to live as a saint-in-the-making

And if we live these Beatitudes. like that retired couple tried to do, Jesus will someday say to us what He said to the people at the end of His Sermon on the Mount: "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

We should remember that the saints were <u>not</u> super-human, nor is holiness outside our reach.

Each one of us is called and enabled by our Baptism to be a saint. And God does not call us to the impossible.

God is always ready to help us overcome our weaknesses and become the best versions of ourselves, with the power of His grace and mercy.

This Feast of All Saints reminds us that every one of us – without exception – is called to be a saint.

Not a single one of us in this church today is called to be anything less than a saint.

Happy All Saints Day, everyone!