

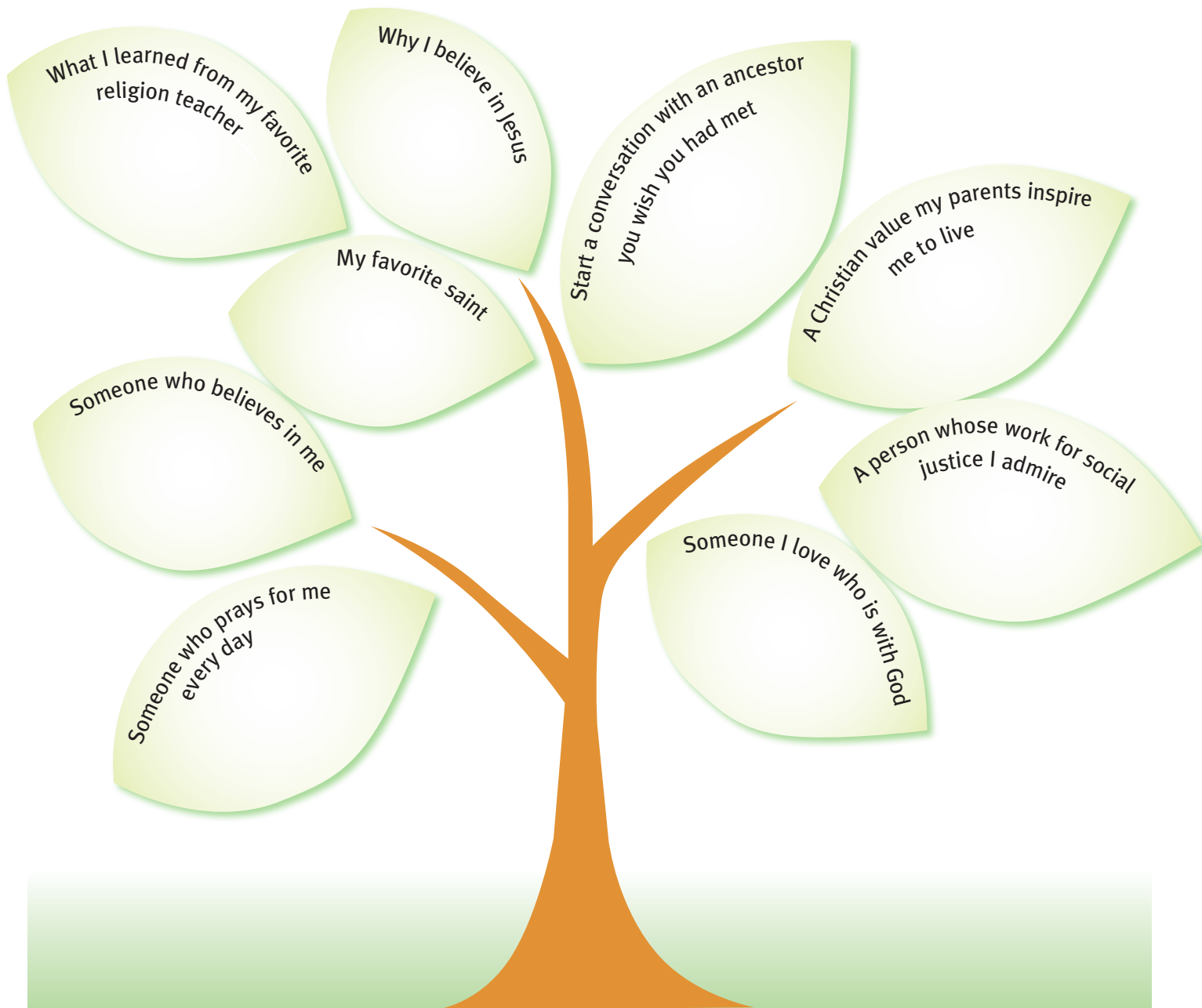
**PRAY** Life-giving God,  
you live within us and we live  
within you. In faith and love we  
live in communion with those we  
love, both living and dead. Bless us  
for the work of loving one another  
and leaving no one out. Amen.

Feast of All Saints



November 1, 2020, Vol. 33, No. 5

# SPIRIT



## TREE of FAITH



Image by pixabay.com/Alexe

by Margaret McCarthy

**A**s long as I can remember I wanted to be as tall, as strong, and as smart as my brother Jason, who is four years older than me. I especially wanted to beat him at basketball. Finally I did—on our driveway when I turned 16.

Jason plowed into me. “Driveway rules!” he grinned.

I elbowed back and stole the ball.

“You turkey!” Jason said, rubbing his ribs.

“First to 50?” I challenged.

“You don’t stand a chance, little brother.” Jason hooked one behind me.

But when the game was over, I was just as tall as Jason and just as good.

“Good game, Danny boy. You wasted me fair and square.”

Sweat dripped down my face and into my mouth. Victory tasted delicious! But the flavor changed as our games became uneven, and cancer took away Jason’s chance to beat me.

The games on the driveway stopped, and Jason went into the hospital for tests and treatments. The process weakened him so much that by my senior year, he couldn’t elbow me for a single basket. He was fighting for his life.

**J**ason greeted me from the couch when I got home from school one day.

“What’s up, Danny boy?”

“Nothing much.”

He always wore his White Sox baseball cap. Mom didn’t make him take it off in the house because it covered his balding head.

“I’ve got the life. All day long I sit around and read the sports page.”

I tried to laugh, but my eyes went to my shoes. I couldn’t look Jason in the face anymore.

“Have you heard from State?” he asked.

“No, but it doesn’t matter.”

“Doesn’t matter? Since when do State and basketball not matter?”

I shrugged my shoulders.

“Don’t play dumb, Danny. You’re good, probably All-League. I couldn’t take you if my life depended on it.”

Our eyes locked.

“The newspapers are all hype, Jase. Just headlines. You’re the one who taught me all the right moves out on the driveway.”

“You don’t owe me or the driveway. You’ve worked hard, Danny, and your work is paying off. Did the scout from State show up last night?”

“I didn’t notice.”

“You didn’t notice. What’s wrong with you?”

“Nothing’s wrong. I’m just sick of basketball, that’s all.”

Jason grabbed my wrist and stared at me from deep, hollow sockets.

“Look, Danny, don’t let my problems wipe you out. We’re two different people, you know.”

I tried to twist my hand free, but his grip held.

“You’ve got a great chance for State. So smile pretty at the scouts, okay?”

“Why should I? I could learn more playing against you on the driveway. I’d save Mom and Dad a ton of money, too. Basketball is a kid’s dream. It’s time for me to grow up.”

“Read the headlines, Danny. You have grown up. Even the boys on the sports desk say so.”

Jason put the newspaper on my lap. A black and white photo showed my rebound frozen in mid-air. But all I

**I wanted to say thank you for everything he had done for me. That’s when I got an idea....**



# SUNDAY GOSPEL

All Saints

## Beatitude people bless us.

**NARRATOR:** When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountainside. After he sat down, his disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them:

**Jesus 1:** Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

**Jesus 2:** Blessed are the sorrowing, for they shall be consoled.

**Jesus 3:** Blessed are those of low status; they shall inherit the land.

**Jesus 4:** Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for holiness, for they shall have their fill.

**Jesus 1:** Blessed are they who show mercy, for mercy shall be theirs.

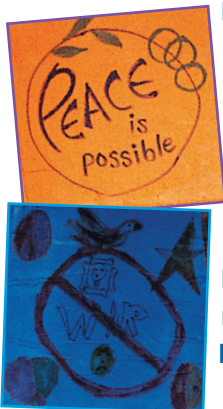
**Jesus 2:** Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall see God.

**Jesus 3:** Blessed, too, are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

**Jesus 4:** Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of holiness, for the kingdom of God is theirs.

**NARRATOR:** Blessed are you when people insult and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward in heaven is great.

Matthew 5.1-12



could see was my brother sitting on the couch, wasting away beneath his White Sox cap.

“I want you to make it, Danny. I know you can, so don’t blow it.”

Jason grabbed my hat, stood up, and ran into the kitchen. I leaped over the end of the couch, chased after him, and caught him easily beside the refrigerator. We laughed. For a moment the good old days returned. I

knew he wished as much as I did that life could be as it was before.

But Jason didn’t return to college for second semester. He stayed home, put in more time at the hospital, and followed my season. He was my biggest fan.

We won the league championship and moved into the state playoffs. I wanted Jason to come to my final game, but he had just gotten out of the hospital after another dose of chemotherapy. He felt wiped out and sick. Most of all, I knew, he was embarrassed. He’d lost a lot of weight. He didn’t feel like facing crowds looking so pale, skinny, and bald.

“Danny, I want to come, but I look more like your grandfather than your brother.”

“Jase, you look fine,” I reassured him, but I knew how sensitive he had become. I’d gotten used to his changed appearance, but he hadn’t. “The finals are at State. It’s only an hour away. Wear my hat and you’ll look like one of the fans.” I straightened my team cap on his head. He’d worn it ever since we had won the league title.

When I left the house, I didn’t know if Jason would show up or not. I had to leave early on the team bus. I wanted to make Jason feel better and show him how much I cared. I wanted to say thank you for everything he had done for me. That’s when I got an idea and stopped at the barbershop on the way to the bus.

“Danny, I didn’t expect to see you today!” Frank said as he brushed off his barber’s chair. “This kid’s All-League,” he told his customers. “Playing for the state title tonight.”

I slid into the chair.

“You want to look just right for the game?”

“I sure do, Frank.”

Fans packed the stands as our team warmed up. I kept watching the bleachers for my folks but couldn’t find them. We stood waiting for the announcer to present the team when suddenly I spotted my family finding their seats—three of them, Mom, Dad, and Jason. He was wearing my team cap.

I waved and fought back the lump that rose in my throat.

Jason saw me and lifted out of his seat. His eyes opened wide with surprise. He couldn’t believe what he saw. I was as bald as he was!

I rubbed my shaved head and smiled up at him.

Jason began to laugh, shaking his head. Then he took off his own cap and waved it high in the air. He rubbed his smooth shiny head and flashed me a thumbs-up sign.

We won the state title. I accomplished something Jason never had. But that isn’t as important as my new goal. I want to be as courageous as he is.

## QUESTIONS

- 1 What is Jason like before his battle with cancer?
- 2 Why does Jason insist Danny keep playing his best game?
- 3 How does Jason’s illness affect Danny?
- 4 What does Danny learn from his brother?
- 5 Who do you know that embodies one of the beatitudes?

## We celebrate the communion of saints

**W**hen we face the death of someone we love, our Christian faith in the promise of Jesus' resurrection must take over. This is our faith: that our loved one shares unimaginable divine life forever.

The Feast of All Saints (November 1) and All Souls Day (November 2) celebrate the communion of all Christian believers with our loved ones who have died. A saint with a capital S is a person the Catholic Church has officially canonized and recognized as a model follower of Jesus. A saint with a small s is a name that the apostle Paul uses to describe every Christian. For example, Paul addresses one of his letters, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi."

We Christians today live in communion with all who followed Jesus down the centuries. When we say the Creed, we profess our faith in the communion of saints. At every Eucharist we pray for the living and the dead.

The communion of saints is the visible and invisible body of believers whose faith we begin to share when we are baptized. Just as we are born into

our family at our births, we are born into the communion of saints at our baptisms.

In the communion of saints we are one with all believers. We share their faith in God who creates and sustains us, in God's Son who becomes one of us, in the Spirit who is with us and within us in every joy and sorrow.

All Souls Day is a feast for remembering and praying for the dead as the Catholic Church teaches. To pray for all souls and all saints is to remember those whose faith we inherit in our families and in our Church. We believe all who die in God's grace and friendship will share communion of life with God forever.

We also believe in purgatory, which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes as "an intermediate state after death, a process of purification in the light of divine love that some may need in order to enter the joy of God" (1054).

In Mexican culture, All Hallows Eve, All Saints Day, and All Souls Day are important feast days. Mexican families make Dias los Muertos (Day of the Dead) altars, on which they put photos and mementos of deceased loved ones. They honor the dead with *ofrendas*—flowers, favorite food, and candles. Families also put sweet breads and water on the altars, the basic nourishment for human life.

On All Souls Day itself people take the food from the altars to the graves of family members. They clean around the graves and decorate them with marigolds (*zempasuchil*) and other flowers.

Marigolds are the symbolic flowers of death of the Aztec people of ancient

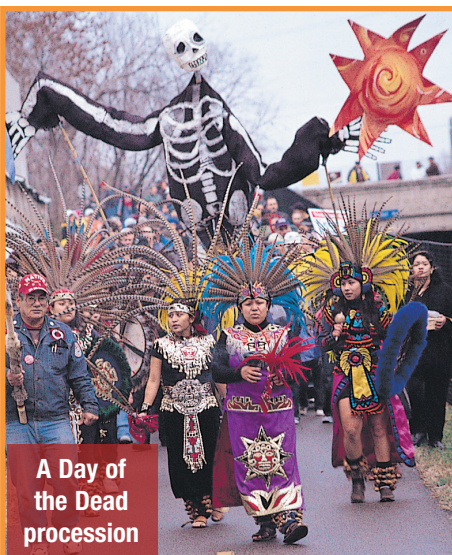
A Day of the Dead Altar



**"We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church."**

*Catechism of the Catholic Church #962*

Mexico. Family members picnic in the cemetery, light incense and candles, and keep vigils into the night. These customs introduce children to grandparents, aunts, and uncles they may never have known in life. It also eases fear of death. On this day the living visit the dead, and the dead come to life in the memories of their families and friends.



A Day of the Dead procession

### FAITH in ACTION

- 1 What communion do you feel with people you love who have died? How do you express it?
- 2 What questions about life after death do you have?
- 3 Invite to class or visit some of the oldest people in your parish, and ask them to tell you about the history of the parish, especially about some of the holy people who made a crucial difference in your community.
- 4 Visit family members' graves and take flowers. If your family graves are not nearby, visit your parish cemetery or nearest cemetery.
- 5 Tell a partner about a time when you experienced holy communion with all that is.