CATHOLIC WOMENPREACH
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

CATHOLIC WOMEN PREACH · 10TH ANNIVERSARY

All Saints Day Preaching Slam

TRANSCRIPT

FutureChurch Online Liturgy of the Word · November 1, 2026
Preachers: Kayla August, Ann Garrido, Cecilia González-Andrieu and Kerry Alys Robinson

Welcome and opening song (0:00)

Ariell Watson Simon (host): All right, well, we are at the top of the hour. We're going to go ahead and get started. Good evening, everyone, and welcome. It is such a joy to be together to celebrate both All Saints Day, this beautiful feast, as well as the 10-year anniversary of Catholic Women Preach.

I particularly want to welcome Martha Ligas, who will be our leader for today's liturgy, and Rita Houlihan, who will be our reader. We are also joined by Russ Petrus, who is executive director of FutureChurch; Betty Anne Donnelly, who is co-founder and preacher coordinator for Catholic Women Preach; and a wonderful lineup of preachers who will be helping us to pray and celebrate tonight.

As we are gathering, even though this is an online space, we want to take a moment just to acknowledge that we are each calling in from particular places, from particular locations, from lands that have been home to Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. We stand in solidarity with those Indigenous communities in their pursuit of justice, and we give thanks for their ongoing stewardship as we renew our shared responsibility to care for the sacred earth as our common home.

Let's begin our time together in song by singing "Women of the Church."

[Opening song: "Women of the Church" by Carey Landry (recording).]

Introductory rites (4:50)

Martha Ligas (leader): We gather this evening in the name and the presence of God, our loving Creator, of Jesus, Christ's fullness, and of the Holy Spirit of Life.

All: Amen.

Martha Ligas: The presence of Christ is with you.

All: And also with you.

Martha Ligas: It is an honor and it's a joy to join this community of faith this evening. No matter where we are tonight, where we are physically located at this moment, and where we are mentally and emotionally, the presence of each of you across this space is blessing us all. Thank you for tuning in. Thank you for showing up. Thank you for being present.

Tonight we gather to remember our saints: those known globally across the Church, and those who are known just to us, nestled in the sinews of our hearts, whose lives have brought light to our own. We remember saints of old and contemporary saints, patron saints, namesakes, and our personal saints. We thank God for them all.

And tonight we honor them through our prayer, and through the preaching of four women of faith, on this, the 10th anniversary of Catholic Women Preach. We joyfully welcome our preachers tonight, Kayla August, Ann Garrido, Cecilia González-Andrieu, and Kerry Alys Robinson, to help us celebrate our saints and mark ten silence-shattering years of Catholic Women Preach. Together, let us pause, and let us pray in joy and with gratitude to a God who loves us. So let us pray.

Loving God, you who rest in between each beat of our very hearts, we gather today to thank you for the saints who have blessed our lives. Companionship is one of the very things that makes us human; relationship is one of the very ways that we have been formed in your image. Thank you for the saints who have companioned with us on our journey, physically or in our hearts. And we pray that we might follow in their footsteps of grace, and of courage, and of hope.

And on this, the 10th anniversary of Catholic Women Preach, we pray in gratitude for the voices and the stories of women, for the ways that women shine particular light on the ways that you move through our world. So in gratitude for their witnesses, and in joy for their words, we give you thanks, O God of the Way. And we pray that we might have the courage to walk the paths of our saints and to proclaim the words of our hearts.

We ask all of this through Jesus the Christ, who lives and thrives with you and with us, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Liturgy of the Word (8:55)

FIRST READING: REVELATION 7:2–4, 9–14

Rita Houlihan (reader): A reading from the book of Revelation.

I, John, then saw another angel rising from the east, carrying the seal of the living God. It called out in a powerful voice to the four angels who had been given the power to devastate the land and the sea: "Do not harm the land or the sea until we have put our God's seal on the foreheads of the faithful."

Then I heard the number of those who were marked with the seal: there were 144,000, out of all the tribes of Israel. After that, I saw before me an immense crowd without number, from every nation, tribe, people and language. They stood in front of the throne and the Lamb, dressed in long white

robes and holding palm branches. And they cried out in a loud voice, "Salvation is of our God, who sits on the throne, and of the Lamb!"

All the angels who were encircling the throne, as well as the elders and the four living creatures, prostrated themselves before the throne. They worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen!"

Then one of the elders asked me, "These people in white robes—who are they, and where do they come from?" I answered, "You are the one who knows." The elder then said to me, "These are the ones who have survived the great period of testing; they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white."

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 24 (10:50)

[Recording. Music: Owen Alstott.]

Response: This is the people that longs to see your face.

Verse 1: The earth and its fullness are God's; the world and those who dwell in it. For God founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

Verse 2: Who can ascend the mountain of God? Or stand in this holy place? One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain.

Verse 3: They shall receive a blessing from God, a reward from God their savior. Such is the race that seeks God, that seeks the face of the God of our ancestors.

SECOND READING: 1 JOHN 3:1–3 (13:00)

Rita Houlihan: A reading from the first letter of John.

See what love Abba God has lavished on us in letting us be called God's children! Yet that in fact is what we are. The reason the world does not recognize us is that it never recognized God. My dear friends, now we are God's children, but it has not been revealed what we are to become in the future. We know that when it comes to light, we will be like God, for we will see God as God really is. All who keep this hope keep themselves pure, just as Christ is pure.

The Word of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (13:50)

["Alleluia! Give the Glory" by Ken Canedo and Bob Hurd (recording). Verse: "Make your word plain to us, oh Jesus; may our hearts burn with love as we hear your voice."]

GOSPEL: MATTHEW 5:1–12A (15:44)

Rita Houlihan: A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountainside, and after he sat down and the disciples had gathered around, Jesus began to teach them:

"Blessed are those who are poor in spirit: the kin-dom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are those who are mourning: they will be consoled. Blessed are those who are gentle: they will inherit the land. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice: they will have their fill. Blessed are those who show mercy to others: they will be shown mercy. Blessed are those whose hearts are clean: they will see God. Blessed too are those who work for peace: they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of their struggle for justice: the kin-dom of heaven is theirs.

"You are fortunate when others insult you 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; they persecuted the prophets before you in the very same way."

The Good News of Salvation.

All: Praise to you, O Christ.

Preaching: Kayla August (17:12)

Russ Petrus: So, since launching Catholic Women Preach 10 years ago, we have been blessed to have 483 women offer 620 reflections on our website. We'd love to have all of them tonight, but that would make for a very long preaching slam. So tonight we're honored to have four preachers join us.

Our first preacher is Kayla August. In the final stages of her doctoral work at Boston College's Clough School of Theology and Ministry, Kayla is Director of Mission Formation at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California. She's preached on two of the biggest days for Catholic Women Preach: Christmas in 2020 and the Feast of Saint Mary Magdalene in 2022. In addition to her preaching for CWP, she has preached for FutureChurch liturgies, and we were so lucky to have Kayla journey with us as our itinerant preacher for FutureChurch's racial justice pilgrimage in 2024. Welcome, Kayla, and thank you.

Kayla August: Well, everyone, I feel honored to be here with so many wonderful people, and I'm excited to preach for you today.

A group of friends and I brainstormed: if we became canonized saints in the Church, what would our saint image be? And the ideas poured in. The patron saint of parallel parking, pictured behind the steering wheel. Another one said, the patron saint of emails, pictured at the computer desk. And me? I wanted to be the patron saint of party starting, pictured in the middle of the dance floor.

But we know the saints in heaven are far more than the ones pictured or canonized. For a saint is simply a person who is recognized for living a holy life on earth, so much so that we believe they're in heaven. So perhaps this picture-perfect image isn't the one we should focus on.

Instead, in Scripture, we're given a new, clear image from the book of Revelation: a vision where Saint John sees all of creation, countless in number, gathered around the throne of God, crying out in praise and glory of Christ. Praising, joyful, exulting, gathering in heaven in the way we all aim to be. It seems those who enter the heavenly gates spend their afterlife the same way they spent their earthly lives: directed toward and praising God.

We see this in the canonized saints. Saint Joan of Arc heard the voices from heaven so clearly that it led her into battle, to fight, to risk her life for God's call. Saint Thomas Aquinas, philosopher and theologian, whose intellectual writings made undeniable impacts on the doctrines of the Church. Saint Francis of Assisi gave all he had away, the clothes off his back, the shoes off his feet, renouncing all possessions to live a life of simplicity, dedicated to the poor and in devotion to God.

As we remember these remarkable lives, saints sometimes seem hard to aspire to. They are these perfect people who did everything right, in our minds. And as we hold them up as images of holiness, their humanness somehow gets washed away.

But these saints were human, perfectly imperfect in many ways. In fact, many saints prove that to be holy and to be perfect are different things. Saint Peter, the rock, the first pope, the leader of the Church, professed his undying commitment to Jesus and then denied Jesus three times when Christ needed him most. And how can we forget Saint Augustine, who, while a wise bishop of Hippo, had a sordid past, with illegitimate children and a concubine, and a lack of listening to his mother for many, many years.

And in the writings of Mother Teresa, a modern saint, we see that even the holiest of us can struggle with prayer, can doubt, can go through periods of spiritual darkness, even when the world looks up to us as beacons of faith and examples. We can struggle. But it never stopped her from dedicating her life to the poor and vulnerable.

These saints remind us that lacking perfection does not mean we can't do good things for God. These saints were real people who struggled and doubted and stumbled and even sinned, and still made it into heaven, because they knew their mission.

In Pope Francis's apostolic exhortation on the call to holiness in today's world, he spoke about the mission of all those called to inhabit heaven. He states that a Christian's unique mission on earth is their path to holiness. He does this by saying, and I quote: "Each saint is a mission, sent by God to reflect and embody an aspect of the Gospel at a specific moment in history." I'll repeat: "Each saint is a mission, sent by God to reflect and embody an aspect of the Gospel at a specific moment in history."

Maybe, instead of thinking of your image, you should consider the mission God has for you. Each mission is different and unique, as different and unique as the people who embody it. But it's all deeply important. For we are each called in a time and a place to embody the Gospel in a way no one else can. God calls us, like God called Peter and Teresa and Aquinas and Augustine and Joan, and the names go on and on. And when we know our mission and we follow it, we add our name to the list. That is, if we aren't afraid to follow where it leads.

One saint who modeled this hangs above my bed: Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman. This preaching and teaching nun from Mississippi is on her way to being canonized in the Catholic Church. She was known for her vibrant spirit, proudly showing that her Blackness and Catholicism were intertwined. She brought her Black self, her whole self, unapologetically to the Church. And she was a preacher. And boy, did she preach! She preached with her life and with her words, and it was so powerful that it led her to preach in front of the U.S. bishops, in an unforgettable moment of baptismally claimed authority that shook the room and the Church and had people on their feet singing in unison.

As someone on her way to sainthood, she is a powerful reminder of how holiness takes on all forms, from a quiet, docile person of prayer to a vibrant, room-shaking, unforgettable sister from the South.

And yet, after the process started for her to become a saint, rumors started circling, traveling, about Sister Thea. Some who knew her said she may have had a bit of a temper at times, as if maybe we should think twice before making her a saint. It made me realize why most people were named saints years and years after everyone who knew them died: so that their memory was kept crystal clear, washed of all imperfections, washed of their humanity.

But Thea knew she wasn't perfect. In fact, when she died of cancer in her early 50s, on her tomb she requested two words: "I tried." She said, "I want my tombstone to say, 'She tried.' I want people to remember that I tried to love the Lord and I tried to love them with all I have. And how that computes is immaterial."

Thea did not lack holiness. If saints are holy people who make it to heaven, she knew loving God and others with all she had was her real mission. She gave her life to God and God's people, loving them until her dying breath. She knew her mission, and she used every single moment of it.

She reminds us that there is a difference between holiness and perfection. Because she wasn't perfect, but she was undeniably holy: the kind of holy we're all called to be.

She shows that to be a saint, we don't have to do everything right. We just need to do the one thing God has placed us here to do. We have to live our mission. So, what's yours? Can you name it? What aspect of the Gospel are you embodying? Because if "each saint is a mission, planned by God to reflect and embody an aspect of the Gospel at a specific moment in history," our moment is now. And your mission is calling.

Preaching: Ann Garrido (28:46)

Betty Anne Donnelly: Kayla, warmest possible thanks. That was just absolutely fantastic. I began the toast at our daughter's wedding quoting Mary Oliver, paraphrasing her poem "The Summer Day": each of us here is called to discern what we're going to do with the one wild and precious life we've been given. What is our mission? So thank you so much.

I'd like to introduce Ann Garrido, our beloved, equally talented preacher. She's an award-winning author of 10 books. After earning her own Doctor of Ministry in preaching there, Ann joined the faculty of the Aquinas Institute of Theology in the year 2000. One of the country's foremost teachers and

practitioners of the art of preaching, she has trained an entire generation of excellent preachers and pastoral ministers.

We are so grateful that Ann has preached for Catholic Women Preach for the Second Sunday of Lent in 2018, Christmas in 2021, and the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time in 2022. As you know, with the amazing search engine that Russ designed, you can put Ann's name in the search, and that first time she preached for us is one of my favorites ever, of the grandmother sitting around the fire in the Old Testament, teaching the young. It's just superb. So, Ann, thank you so much for being here. Please go ahead.

Ann Garrido: Thank you, Betty Anne. In tonight's responsorial psalm, we prayed, "Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face." And how true that is for all of us here gathered tonight. It's the story of our lives, isn't it? We're always longing for a greater closeness to God than we ever can experience in the present moment.

It's also the story of our whole liturgical year, as Kayla was lifting up, and especially today, the Feast of All Saints. This reminds us that we're not the only ones who are longing, and that we are also not without hope: that we belong to a whole communion, of which 144,000 is only a symbolic number, representing a number too great to comprehend, all of whom have longed to see the face of God.

Now, some we know the names of and the stories of, but most we don't. As Kayla was lifting up, if we do know anything about their stories, it's only the scantest of facts. Some of the stories that we do know sound purely fictional through history. But even these, even these, what a treasure to possess them. Because sometimes, like that number, 144,000, the richness of what they try to communicate symbolically is even richer than what we would ever be able to find in a modern-day history book. Indeed, it's in their bizarreness that they might have even more to say to us.

Such is the case of the saint that I wanted to share the story of with you tonight. It's the story of Saint Thekla. A second-century apocryphal text is the only place where we have anything of her story. It's called *The Acts of Paul and Thekla*. And although it was written quite early, it never made the canon of Scripture, for reasons that will shortly become somewhat obvious. I'll try to share it as briefly as I can.

Thekla was a young woman from Iconium who heard Saint Paul preach, and she wanted to convert her whole life over to Christ and to follow him. She wanted to see God's face, and she asked to be baptized and to go with Paul. Now, the problem was that she was engaged, and her parents forbade it. And her engagement quickly turned to enragement, as her fiancé brought her before the court for having shamed him by refusing to marry him, and she was ordered to be burned at the stake.

But the story goes that as this happened, a sudden deluge of rain put the fire out, and Thekla escapes. She pursues Paul on the road, and she asks him again to baptize her and allow her to come with him. And Paul, this time again, says no. She doesn't give up, and she follows him all the way to Antioch.

Now, here the story gets even better. There's another young man who falls in love with her and asks Paul for her hand in marriage, thinking that Paul must be her guardian. And Paul denies even knowing who she is, and leaves her on her own. She's standing there all by herself. And when Thekla rebuffs the young man's interest, she's once again condemned to death. This time, wild beasts are let into the arena, but they refuse to eat her. And then, on top of it all, she's had enough. If no one's going to

baptize her, she's just going to have to baptize herself. She spots a tank with man-eating seals in it and jumps into the tank. And Thekla says, "I baptize myself in the name of Jesus Christ." And all of the seals die immediately.

One last time they tried to tie Thekla up between bulls. But what the story says is that the cords were turned into ash. And the last line of the episode reads: "She was as one unbound."

That line aptly describes the remainder of Thekla's life. Leaving Antioch, she tracks Paul down in the town of Myra, and *The Acts of Paul and Thekla* wonderfully reads, "It was no small surprise to Paul when he saw her, for he imagined some fresh trial was coming upon them."

But Thekla was no longer there to involve Paul in any further mishaps, nor even to seek Paul's guidance. She'd come to share the story about how she'd found her own voice in a powerful way in that arena, and how God had assisted her in the midst of her trial. She wanted to bring Paul some money from the community in Antioch so that he could continue his mission. And then she let him know she was going back to Iconium, with the implication that that's where she would continue hers. And Paul says to her, in a closing line, "Go, teach the word of the Lord."

Thekla is alleged to have lived all the way to the age of 90. In the Orthodox Church, she's referred to as the Protomartyr and Equal to the Apostles, as seems right and just.

Now, you can probably already guess why I like Thekla so much, and why I think Thekla is a woman for all of us in this particular moment. Because Thekla's life, yes, it's true, it's fantastical and weird, but it's full of the qualities that are necessary for living a truly Christian life. And I want to name just three that I draw from her story, that I hope you'll also hang on to as tonight's prayer goes on and you long to see God's face.

The first thing I draw from Thekla, the first quality I want to lift up, is gumption. Now, I know that's not listed as a virtue in the *Summa*, but it is to be highly valued. Thekla tries the system, but if it's not working toward what she knows to be the good, she continues moving forward, taking on the role of baptizing herself if need be. And sometimes things just need to get done, and we don't have all of the time in the world to wait for others to exercise their leadership in the way that we think they should. And in that case, sometimes we just need to exercise leadership ourselves. As one of my own mentors in life told me at the very beginning of my leadership journey, "Ann, it is often going to be easier to ask for forgiveness than for permission." And how true that has been. So true.

Point number two: interior freedom. What gives Thekla so much gumption is her interior sense of freedom. My favorite line in that whole story that I told you is the one that comes at the end of her persecution, when it says, "She was as one unbound." She was as one unbound. Yes, that refers to the rope that's sliding off of her wrists. But does it not refer to so much more than that? What was it like for her in that moment when she realized that she was truly free? And what is it that traps our own minds, that we need to be freed from, where we hold ourselves in?

And this brings me to point number three: continued goodwill and charity toward others. Even after all that Thekla has been through with Paul, and Paul, again, only comes across as a nincompoop in this entire story, Thekla does not ever wish him ill. Thekla collects money for his mission, and she blesses him as he goes on his way and she goes on hers. She could have collected money to start her own

church. She does not. She could have expended her energy getting mad at him. She doesn't do that either. She saves her own precious energy for the ministry of preaching, parting ways with him, but wishing him the best. Wishing him the best. There's such spiritual maturity there.

So let's pause for a moment again and think. Which of these three qualities, gumption, interior freedom, continued goodwill and charity, do we need in our own lives right now? Do you long for in your own life right now?

And may this year's feast satiate our longing to see God face to face, but may Thekla's witness teach us to settle for nothing less.

Preaching: Cecilia González-Andrieu (40:57)

[The small-group faith sharing in breakout rooms was not recorded. The recording continues with the next introduction.]

Ariell Watson Simon: Thank you so much, Ann. What a privilege to hear about Thekla, and thank you for lifting her up for us this evening.

Russ Petrus: Our next preacher for tonight is Dr. Cecilia González-Andrieu. Cecilia is Professor of Theology and Human Rights at Loyola Marymount University, and she is also past president of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States. We're so lucky that for Catholic Women Preach, she has preached prophetically, I might add, on the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time in 2018, on Palm Sunday in 2022, and most recently this past Christmas. Her writing is frequently featured in *America* magazine, and her Christmas reflection for us this past year was reposted at *National Catholic Reporter*. As always, Cecilia, it's always so good to have you with us and to be with you. Thank you for being here.

Cecilia González-Andrieu: Thanks so much, Russ. And of course, it's just a joy to join this beautiful community.

So, you know how you sometimes listen to the Scriptures and you struggle with how they relate? Today isn't one of those times. In this liturgy that we have for today, I hear a process, but it's playing backwards, like the kind of thing today we call "reverse engineering." Because there's a finished product, and from that, we work back to see how we get there.

So we begin with the finished, the reading from Revelation. It's a vision where those from "every nation, race, people, and tongue" together rejoice before God: all humans, every generation, all of history. But then Psalm 24 tells us that there is a deep desire, a longing for this world, in those "whose hands are sinless" and whose actions seek this vision. And when we get to the second reading, from the first letter of John, we see that there is resistance to this, and that getting there requires hope and active doing.

But it is when we get to the Gospel that we are confronted by the stark reality of the world. Jesus doesn't sugarcoat it. Many mourn. Many are counted as nothing. Many thirst and hunger. Many face cruelty and violence. Otherwise, why would you need all those blessings? And what's more, Jesus acknowledges that unmasking this brings persecution and insult. Yet there is a blessing.

So where does this blessing come from? How are the mourning comforted? How is it possible that the meek, the nothings of history, will inherit the land? Jesus tells us it all begins with us. To get to the splendor of the reign of God, where humanity rejoices together, is a long process, and it begins, as Jesus did, in the flesh.

Now, I knew one saint very intimately. She has no statues, no feast day. She was my abuela, and she embodied this story.

I grew up in Abuela's house, where as you entered, you encountered a large image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. There he was, Jesús, his hand eternally pointing to his burning heart. Abuela also had a sticker on the front door that fascinated me. I read it when I left for school. I read it when I came home. She told me it was a phrase associated with Santa Teresa de Jesús (you might know her as Teresa of Ávila): *"Con Cristo todo, sin Cristo nada."* It is hard to translate, so I learned to read it through my abuela's life.

Mi abuela's name was Dolores, for Our Lady of Sorrows, and she was the most serene, wise, creative, and intelligent human I have ever known. *Con Cristo todo, sin Cristo nada.* Did it mean that with Christ all things are possible, and without him nothing is? That's one way to translate it. Or did it mean, as she taught me, that we must always act as Jesus' hands, feet, and voice in the world? Maybe it was not that Christ made all things possible, but that all we did, *todo*, had to be done in Christ and with Christ. As Abuela did, we had to make present the abundance that Jesus incarnated as he fed, and he healed, and he set others free.

But then our world ended. Abuela fled as a refugee. Her home was shuttered. We took refuge in a friend's house; a neighbor shushed me away and told me to not look back. We followed her soon after, leaving everything behind, and living through the dehumanizing indignities of those seeking refuge in a strange land. *Con Cristo todo?*

I shared a tiny bedroom with Abuela until I left for college. Gone were her house and the piano where she taught me to sing. Gone were our beloved parish and everything familiar. And yet, somehow, in her serenity, in her rich prayer life, in her constant generosity, light continued to radiate from mi abuela. She was now our image of the Sacred Heart. She had lost her husband and her youngest son, and her large brood had been scattered by forced migration. Yet there she was, not a rock, but a soft and constant center of light.

When I graduated, Abuela gave me the writings of Teresa de Jesús. And later, when I told her I was going back to graduate school to study theology, my now-blind abuela searched for my hands and, beaming, told me, *"Van a decir de ti lo que decían de Santa Teresa: '¡Es mucho hombre esa mujer!'"* I laughed and kissed her.

But since then I have thought a lot about this. Abuela had set a desire in me. She had taught me to long to see God's face and do everything to build that reign of God Jesus describes in the Beatitudes. Abuela had given me tools and the guidance of one of the greatest women in history, Santa Teresa. And when she said, "They will say of you what they said of Teresa, 'That woman is a lot of man!'," it was an acknowledgment that it would not be easy. But then, making Christ present in the world never is.

I think she would rejoice to see what women in the Church have been building. I know she would. And maybe we can tweak what they said of Teresa and instead say, *"¡Esa es mucha mujer!"* Teresa and Dolores certainly were.

These are difficult times, when we are called to be brave *bendiciones* to all. So let's go out to heal, to feed, to liberate, to comfort, to light up the world. *Abuela, aquí estoy, predicando. Gracias. Con Cristo todo.*

Preaching: Kerry Alys Robinson (51:32)

Betty Anne Donnelly: Cecilia, that was brava, brava, brava. You were so characteristically prophetic, as always. And I hold your abuela in my heart. What an amazing influence she had on you, and through you to the rest of the Church. How marvelous.

Dear, dear friend Kerry Robinson: last but not least, our final preacher. As you probably know, Kerry is President and CEO of Catholic Charities USA. We've been blessed to have Kerry's wisdom on our website four times. In fact, she was one of our inaugural preachers, preaching for the Third Sunday of Advent in 2016, because Kerry's all about joy: Gaudete Sunday. She is all—

[Betty Anne's audio broke up for about five seconds here. The liturgy script reads: "She has also preached for All Saints Day in 2018, the Assumption of Mary in 2022, and is preaching for Christ the King Sunday in a few weeks."]

—look for her preaching for Christ the King Sunday in a few weeks' time. Kerry, warmest thanks for being here, and for preaching again for the Feast of Christ the King. Take it away, Kerry.

Kerry Alys Robinson: Thank you, and happy, happy anniversary.

A Third Order Dominican who entered religious life at 18, refusing marriage and the pressure of her family to make a match. A mystic and woman of letters who corresponded with popes simultaneously during the Great Schism of the late 14th century. Poorly educated but fiercely intelligent, committed to the poor and the sick, and politically astute enough to negotiate for unity in a divided Church.

Intensely religious from childhood, she experienced her first ecstatic vision at age six and continued to experience them throughout her short life. She left her contemplative cell in 1370, after she saw heaven, hell, and purgatory in a series of visions and felt herself called to enter public life. Men and women alike were drawn to her for spiritual instruction: this woman who made a cell in her heart for the Lord. Yet she was called to account for herself before the Dominican General Chapter of 1374 for commanding such great religious authority. The following year she received the stigmata, but prayed that the marks remain invisible during her lifetime.

I can only be speaking of Catherine of Siena, whose *Dialogue* with Christ, with whom she felt joined in a mystical marriage, is one of the great religious and spiritual works of the last millennium.

Catherine left us with an indelible image of her, bowed under by a great ship placed upon her back. The ship is the Church, the weight of which is crushing her. She collapsed and died not long after this final vision, in the year 1380, at the age of 33. Canonized in 1461, she was made a Doctor of the

Church almost 500 years later, in 1970, along with Teresa of Ávila. They are two of only four women to be so designated. The other 34 are men.

Now, I say this only partly in jest, but what woman cannot relate? If not to the intimate relationship with Christ, or the commanding correspondence with popes and men, always men of great power, then to the burden of expectations, both low and high. The waiting for recognition and respect. The questions about our authority and expertise. The need to hide our gifts from a doubting world.

Catherine's life was extraordinary by any measure. Yet it also serves to remind us that anyone can be called. Neither gender nor culture nor humble stature may impede that call. In fact, in today's Gospel, Christ tells the faithful that to be meek, to show mercy, to hunger for righteousness, to mourn, to be poor in spirit, and to be peacemakers is to find favor with God and to be rewarded in heaven: to be called blessed.

Prior to her canonization, Catherine of Siena, like all saints, passed through a period in which she was called Blessed. This blazing comet of a woman, who came from meek, humble circumstances, who learned to read through miraculous intervention, who left a life of contemplation for one of service, wrote that through Christ crucified, you can do everything.

Over five centuries later, our response to Catherine's call, as Catholics, as disciples, as women, should be to do everything we can to bring about the reign of heaven here on earth, for all those we serve. Let us prayerfully, humbly, urgently, collectively carry that great weight of Church, as Catherine did, and not collapse under the burden, but together lift it high, so that all may know they are welcome to full participation. And then we will know we may be called blessed too.

Amen.

Litany of Women Saints (58:58)

[The second small-group faith sharing was not recorded.]

Ariell Watson Simon: Thank you so much, Kerry. That was just beautiful and inspiring, and a wonderful note to close our time of preaching on.

Martha Ligas: Thank you, and thank you to our preachers for so richly blessing us this evening.

So today, instead of our typical Sunday evening prayers of the faithful, I invite you to lift up the women saints as our intercessors, asking them to pray with us and for us. So together we're going to listen to a recording of the Litany of Women Saints. While we do so, you're invited to use the chat to add your own female saints, canonized or not, to our litany. So let us listen, and let us pray.

[Recording: "Litany of Women Saints." Saints compiled by Ariell Watson Simon; music by John D. Becker.]

God, have mercy. *God, have mercy.* Christ, have mercy. *Christ, have mercy.* God, have mercy. *God, have mercy.*

Holy Mary, Mother of God; Saint Elizabeth; Mary Magdalene; Saint Veronica; Saint Martha; Lydia and Dorcas; Saint Ann; Saint Phoebe: *pray for us.* All you holy women of God, *pray for us.*

Saint Rose of Lima; Saint Lucy; Catherine of Siena; Saint Joan of Arc; Perpetua and Saint Felicity; Saint Agnes; Saint Monica; Saint Hildegard: *pray for us.* All you holy women of God, *pray for us.*

Saint Teresa of Jesus; Saint Lucy; Saint Bridget; Saint Clare; Agatha and Thérèse of Lisieux; Saint Cecilia; Saint Bernadette; Rita of Cascia: *pray for us.* All you holy women of God, *pray for us.*

Elizabeth Ann Seton; Teresa of Calcutta; Kateri Tekakwitha; Josephine Bakhita; Dorothy Day and Thea Bowman; Edith Stein; Martyrs of El Salvador; Saints of God: *pray for us.* All you holy women of God, *pray for us.* All you holy women of God, *pray for us.*

Concluding rites (64:15)

CLOSING PRAYER

Martha Ligas: Nourished by God's Word and strengthened by this community, let us pray together our closing prayer.

All: Oh God who sees our every step, thank you for those who have walked with us on the journey. We pray in gratitude for our role models, our companions, our witness-bearers, our truth-tellers, our care-givers, our secret-keepers, our saints.

Inspire us through their witnesses to accompany others on their journeys, to walk in the footsteps of the saints we so admire.

We thank you for the wisdom that has been shared, for the inspiration that has been received, and for the invitation to keep companioning others on the Way.

We ask for your help and your blessing as we go forth in hope to learn from, to walk with, and to hold close all those who we find alongside us in our holy work of building the kin-dom.

[Closing prayer by Martha Ligas.]

FINAL BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Martha Ligas: And may our Creator God fill us with light. May the peace of Christ dwell within us all. And may the Holy Spirit gift and guide us, now and forever.

All: Amen.

Martha Ligas: Our liturgy, our work, continues as we go forth as witnesses to Christ in all.

All: Thanks be to God.

THANKS AND CLOSING SONG (66:32)

Ariell Watson Simon: Thanks be to God. Thank you all for being here for this wonderful celebration. Thank you, Martha, for presiding at this gathering. Thank you to Rita, and to Russ, and to Betty Anne: we thank you for your leadership, not only this evening, but also in these 10 years of Catholic Women Preach. Thank you to our wonderful preachers, Kayla, Ann, Cecilia, and Kerry. Thank you so much for lifting up these saints for us tonight.

And also, a big thank you to our musicians: Russ, and Vickey McBride, who's chair of the FutureChurch Board and provided absolutely stunning vocals for tonight. So thank you, thank you, thank you to everyone who made this evening, and who made these last 10 years possible, through your time and your talents.

[Closing song: "Lead Me, Lord" by John D. Becker (recording). The recording ends at 70:45.]

Times in parentheses mark where each section begins in the recording.
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