

November 1

SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS

“GAUDEAMUS: LET US ALL REJOICE!”

‘Let us all rejoice in the Lord as we celebrate the feast in honor of all the saints.’ With these words, our Mass began today.

November 1, All Saints’ Day, is the feast in which Holy Mother Church exults with exceeding joy. Today the Church ‘contemplates the glory of her children who, having reached their heavenly fatherland, are safe for all eternity, forever delivered from the snares of the evil one, and now numbered everlastingly among the elect, the people of God.’¹

Today, the Church provides us with the opportunity to honor all the saints; both those formally declared as such, as well as those who are yet unknown.

The First Reading (Epistle), taken from the Book of Revelation (7:9-10), offers us the apocalyptic vision of the glory of the saints:

‘I, John, ... had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.’

The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes the saints:

The saints are the blessed in heaven who survived the time of great distress, whose robes were washed in the blood of the Lamb. The saints are the men and women who died in God's grace and friendship and, having been perfectly purified, live forever with Christ. The saints now see God face to face.ⁱⁱ

Today's feast day is one of great hope, for many of the saints now enjoying the beatific vision lived in conditions not unlike our own. The saints in heaven are those:

'who have lived upon earth as we have, who have known our miseries, our difficulties, our struggles. Some of them we recognize easily, for the Church has raised them to the honors of the Altar, but the great majority are entirely unknown to us. They are humble people who lived obscurely in the accomplishment of duty, without display, without renown, whom no one here below remembers, but whom the heavenly Father looked upon, knew in secret, and, having proved their fidelity, called to His glory.'ⁱⁱⁱ

'The honorable positions accomplished by others no longer possess any value of themselves: eternal beatitude is not determined by the great things achieved here below. One thing only endures, for the humble and the great, the poor and the wealthy: the degree of [charity] they had attained, to which corresponds the degree of glory which now renders them eternally happy.'^{iv}

The Beatitudes, proclaimed in today's Gospel, remind us of the blessed life we are called to and the eternal beatitude that is assured to those who are faithful to their baptismal promises.

‘The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of [Christ's] Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulation; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ's disciples; they have begun in the lives of the [Blessed] Virgin Mary and all the saints.’^v

St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) provides us with some insights and encouragement as we celebrate All Saints' Day:

‘Calling the saints to mind... arouses in us... a longing to enjoy their company, so desirable in itself. We long to share in the citizenship of heaven, to dwell with the spirits of the blessed, to join the assembly of patriarchs, the ranks of the prophets, the council of apostles, the great host of martyrs, the noble company of confessors and the choir of virgins. In short, we long to be united in happiness with all the saints. ...

... But our dispositions change. The Church of all the first followers of Christ awaits us, but we do nothing about it. The saints want us to be with them, and we are indifferent. The souls of the just await us, and we ignore them.

... We should not only want to be with the saints, we should also hope to possess their happiness. While we desire to be in their company, we must also earnestly seek to share in their glory.

... Come, let us at length spur ourselves on. We must rise again with Christ, we must seek the world which is above and set our mind on the things of heaven. Let us long for those who are longing for us, hasten to those who are waiting for us, and ask those who look for our coming to intercede for us.^{vi}

May our prayer today unite us to the eternal hymn of praise of the saints in heaven who now worship the Lamb who was slain for our sins! As we kneel before the altar today, may our voices be one with the blessed in heaven, who prostrating themselves before the throne of Almighty God, exclaim:

‘Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.’^{vii}

ⁱ Fr. Gabriel of St Mary Magdalen, *Divine Intimacy*, 1964, TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., Rockford, IL, p. 1164

ⁱⁱ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1023

ⁱⁱⁱ *Divine Intimacy*, p. 1165

^{iv} *Ibid.*

^v *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1717

^{vi} From a sermon by St. Bernard, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, 1975, Vol. IV, Catholic Book Publishing Co, NY, p. 1526f

^{vii} Rev. 7:12