

November 1. ALL SAINTS' DAY

“THE BEATITUDES AND THE BLESSED IN HEAVEN”

1. Plenary Indulgence (Nov. 1 - 8)

November is dedicated to prayer for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. I have included some information about this in the bulletin, including a plenary indulgence gained each day from November 1 through to 8 by visiting a cemetery and offering prayers for the deceased. See the bulletin for details.

2. Preaching during the Month of November

During November, Deacon Heinzl and I will preach on the Last Things, namely: Death, Judgment, Purgatory, Heaven and Hell. Today, on All Souls' Day, I will say a few words about the Blessed in heaven, those who behold the beatific vision.

3. Revelation 7:9-10

The Book of Revelation (today's 1st reading or Epistle) provides a glimpse of the great number of the elect in heaven:

'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.'

There is a great multitude in heaven! Surely, this gives us hope!

4. What can we say about heaven?

(a) *The Essential Bliss of Heaven*

‘The souls of the just, which in the moment of death are free from all guilt of sin and punishment for sin, enter into heaven.’

‘Heaven is a place and condition of perfect supernatural bliss, which consists in the immediate vision of God and in the perfect love of God associated with it.’ⁱ

(b) *The Eternity of Heaven*

‘The bliss of heaven lasts for all eternity.’

Pope Benedict XII declared of the blessed in heaven: ‘The vision and enjoyment (of the Divine Essence) continues without interruption or diminution of the vision and enjoyment, and will continue until the General Judgment and thenceforth for all eternity.’ⁱⁱ

(c) *Inequality of Reward*

‘The degree of perfection of the beatific vision granted to the just is proportioned to each one’s merits.’

The souls of the perfectly just ‘clearly behold the Triune and One God as He is, but corresponding to the difference of their merits, the one more perfectly than the other.’ⁱⁱⁱ

5. The Beatitudes and the Blessed in Heaven

The Beatitudes (Mt. 5:1-12a) respond to our natural desire for happiness. Every human person wants to be happy. And God has placed the desire to be happy in each human heart so as to draw each soul to Himself, who alone can fulfill; ‘God alone satisfies.’^{iv}

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains that the Beatitudes: ‘shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ’s disciples; they have begun in the lives of the Virgin Mary and all the saints.’^v

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’

The ‘poor in spirit’ are those ‘who recognize their need for God and his grace. Unattached to this world, they find their security in the Lord and rely on his mercy rather than their merits or material wealth.’^{vi}

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.’

Those who mourn are the people who lament the present state of this life and look with hope to eternal life. Mourning ‘includes weeping for sins as well as the grief that comes when the saints are made to suffer for their faith. In the life to come, they will be comforted by God, who wipes away every tear (Rev. 7:17).’^{vii}

‘Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.’

The ‘meek’ are ‘those who appear powerless and insignificant in the eyes of this world. Far from being weak, however, the meek possess an inner strength to restrain anger and discouragement in the midst of adversity.’^{viii}

‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.’

Those who ‘hunger and thirst’ ‘yearn to live rightly according to the will of God. Their first priority is to seek the Lord’s kingdom and righteousness as the most necessary sustenance of life.’^{ix}

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.’

The ‘merciful’ are those ‘who imitate the Father’s mercy by extending forgiveness to others. The merciful are patient and understanding in bearing with others’ faults, and they are generous in aiding the needy by works of charity and compassion.’^x

‘Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.’

The ‘pure of heart’ are those ‘who act with integrity and serve the Lord unselfishly. ... A pure heart is undefiled by evil and lustful thoughts and finds its treasure in heaven.’^{xi}

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.’

The ‘peacemakers’ are those who sow peace in the world, striving to live at peace with others and to share the peace that Christ offers.^{xii}

‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’

‘Those who are persecuted’ are the individuals who are slandered or abused, or oppressed for their public witness to Christianity. They are targets of the world’s hatred because of their commitment to the righteousness of the Gospel.

The saints, the blessed in heaven, had these beatitudes in mind while they were here on earth. They now live in eternal beatitude with God. May the examples of the countless number of saints who have gone before us inspire us to live our lives here and now in accordance with God’s holy and eternal will!

Our generation needs saints! And many of them! In response to God’s invitation to sanctity, most of us can tend to respond by saying: ‘Lord, I want to be a saint, but just not today!’ God wants us to be saints today! ‘If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts!’

We should never think that it is boring to be a saint! Read the lives of the saints and find that they are not boring! Note, also, that, with the exception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints were not without their faults! They were not perfect in this life, but through God’s grace and mercy, they are now perfect in heaven!

The saints remind us today that we are called, not to lives of mediocrity, but of sanctity! The lives of the saints teach us to know that happiness lies, not in doing in what ‘appears’ to bring happiness, but in conforming our will to that of God.

‘O blessed, heavenly souls! Help us in our misery and intercede for us with the divine Mercy, so that we may be granted some part of your joy and you may share with us some of that clear knowledge which is now yours’ forever. Amen.

ⁱ Ludwig Ott, 1954, *FUNDAMENTALS OF CATHOLIC DOGMA*, B. Herder Book Co., St Louis, MO, p. 476

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, p. 478

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, p. 479

^{iv} St Thomas Aquinas, *Expos. in symb. apost. I.* as quoted in the ‘Catechism of the Catholic Church’, n. 1718

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

^{vi} Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: New Testament, 2010, Second Catholic Edition, RSV, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, p. 14

^{vii} *Ibid.*

^{viii} *Ibid.*

^{ix} *Ibid.*

^x *Ibid.*

^{xi} *Ibid.*

^{xii} *Ibid.*, p. 15