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Solemnity of All Saints - Monday 1 November 2021

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Monday 1 November 2021

Solemnity of All Saints

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction

Today we celebrate the saints of the Church. Their example and their inspiration are set before us as models we can follow. The readings remind us of what 'great reward' they experience; a closeness to God, an unfettered union with the Most High.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lamb of God, you were offered up for our justification. Lord, have mercy.

You are the way to the Father. Christ, have mercy.

You are with the Father in the company of the Saints interceding for us. Lord, have mercy.

First Reading

Revelation 7:2–4, 9–14

Having endured great trial, the heavenly scene in Revelation points to a reward offered to people of every nation, race, tribe and tongue; of a great multitude, impossible to count, bursting out in joyful praise and worship in the presence of God.

Second Reading

1 John 3:1–3

We are children of a loving God. We endure hardship in this world which often fails to acknowledge this great love. Yet, our hope remains because in God's love we are made ever more like Christ.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 5:1–12a

Jesus teaches on the way of holiness. He speaks of great happiness that comes in staying true to God even in the face of persecution and difficulty.

Reflection

The first reading speaks of heavenly angels joined by a multitude crying out in worship of the almighty and victorious God. They worship because they experience God as saviour and their adulation is born out of a joy of being counted among 'the elect', those who are to dwell with God in heaven for eternity. They are able to experience the fullness of knowing God as "our God" even as this God is "seated on the throne" (Rev 7:10). Likewise, the second reading speaks of an intimacy of being called 'children of God'. An intimacy that leads to an ultimate vision of seeing God as God is (1 Jn 3:2). Then we have the beatitudes taken from Matthew, one of Jesus' more memorable orations. The repeated proclamation of 'blessed', nine times in total, speaks of the giftedness God offers to the faithful summed up with a great reward in heaven (Mat 5:12). Attention to the blessedness, the heavenly vision and the unfettered closeness to God is a key feature and worth celebrating.

However, there is a distinct double edged feel to this feast, and this too is reflected in the readings. The great joy is juxtaposed by the 'trials and tribulations' that run throughout the scriptures of the liturgy. For example, the triumphant imagery of the first reading refers repeatedly to Christ as 'the Lamb'. Christ is so titled because it captures the sacrificial nature of Jesus. It is the blood of Christ, the life essence of Jesus, which is the 'mark' of those drawn into the heavenly feast. It is this they are washed in. However, they are not simply passively touched by the blood of the Lamb, they are partakers by their own 'laying down of their lives'. This celebration is only so because, they "have been through great persecution" (Rev 7:14). A piece of scripture from elsewhere in the same book captures this plainly:

*They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
love for life did not deter them from death. (12:11)*

The saints spoken of here loved life, but they loved God more. In something of a paradox, their love for the giver of life allowed them to endure to the point of losing their life.

It is well noted that a great number of the saints are recognised because they endured distinct difficulty and were often persecuted on account of their dedication to Christ. Indeed, the origin of formally recognising saints in the Catholic tradition is born out of veneration for 'the holy ones' (the Latin term being *sancti* from which we get the English word saint) which were what the early Christians called those who were martyred for their faith. Of course, not all saints are martyrs and many of us live in an age where following and doing the will of Christ will not require us to do so to the point of literal death. Nevertheless, there is always trial to be endured in some form. It seems our faith will face testing at some point.

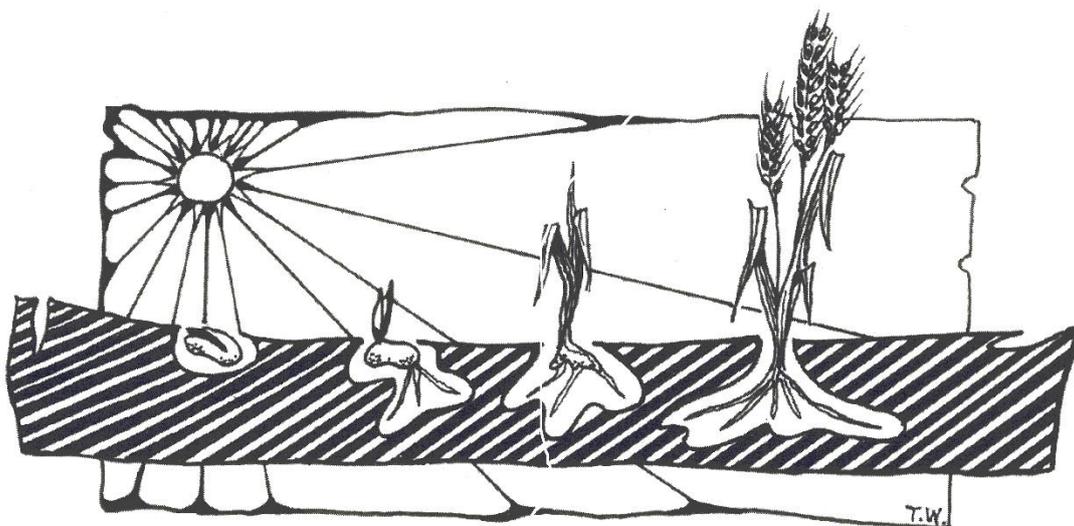
This feature of the faith is sometimes expressed in scripture in the form of an antagonism between 'the world' and those called to live the life of Christ. The letter of John speaks of it and the Gospel reading from Matthew, similarly, speaks of blessedness that especially follows when one is accused and persecuted "because of me" (5:12). Thus, it can seem that sainthood is about 'us against the world', that

the world is the enemy of saintliness which equates to proximity to God. A picture of God with the saints against the world might be how we perceive things, but caution must be given here.

The saints are acclaimed as saints not because they categorically 'hated the world', that is, because they chose against the world in and of itself. No, they are saints because they loved first. As mentioned above in reference to the first reading, it is because of their love of the source of life that they were able to stay true even to the point of death – and this love, being of God, always flows outward to our world. They loved God first which then called them to love all else in God.

As in all things in the Christian life, the first and final word is love. Love allows one to endure and face the trials and persecutions of our existence. We celebrate the saints not because they were perfect (they often famously weren't), not simply because they endured and suffered persecution (though many did), and not even because they are in heaven. We celebrate the saints, indeed celebrate *with* the saints, because they show us what love is. In all its infinite manifestations, they give us vivid reminder of the love we are called to have and the love of God which drives us forward.

As is a well established tradition of the Church, we also ask for their intercession to help us stay true to the love of God through our own trials and tribulations. Most of us will never be asked to lay down our lives on account of our faith, but we all face our hardships. We ask for the saints to aid us through intercessory prayer such that we can foretaste in this life what they enjoy in its fullness. With such inspiration of where our ultimate hope lies, we also pray that we too can one day be counted among those who experience the unbridled joy of the heavenly feast.



*If a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies,
it yields a rich harvest.*

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

Just as Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father in Heaven, we gather together to pray with the Saints who are now in glory.

Petitions

We pray for the continual strength and renewal of the Church, as we continue to trust in the saving grace of the Lord Jesus.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for political leaders of all levels in Australia. May they find ways to work together so that justice and mercy will be evident in our culture and our daily lives.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for Christian communities throughout the world that with all the saints they may be given the power to know the depth and breadth of the love of Christ for us all.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who struggle to understand the presence of God in the world. May the saintly people that they encounter be a beacon of hope for them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who suffer. May they continually be inspired by the lives of saints who endured because of the knowledge of Christ's love.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our community gathered here to celebrate your love. May we strive for holiness in everything that we do this week at work, home or study.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Father, we ask that you humbly hear our prayers and grant our petitions through the power of the Spirit as we pray with all the Saints and continue to live in hope through the knowledge of Jesus's earthly sacrifice.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Be not afraid. B. Dufford SJ. 449
Come to me all you who labour. G. Norbert. 228
For all the saints. W. H. How; R. V. Williams. 551
I have loved you. M. Joncas. 402
O Christ the great foundation. S. Stone/ S. Wesley. 483

AOV1

Come to me all you who labour. G. Norbet OSB. 37
I have loved you. M. Joncas. 126

AOV2

Table of plenty. D. Schutte. 20

CWB

For all the saints. William Walsham Howe. 679
The beatitudes. Peter Kearney. 817

CWBII

By all your saints still striving. Horatio Nelson/Jerry D. Godwin. 423
For all the saints. William Walsham Howe. 439
The beatitudes. Peter Kearney. 456

S&S2

Rejoice with all the saints. Timothy R. Smith. 331

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 23: *Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.*
Psalm 23: Barrett Armstrong/Stephen Somerville. CWB 468
Psalm 24 (23): Jenny O'Brien. JOBB pg. 112
Lord, this is the people: Tony Alonso. LPSF pg. 108

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Heaven shall be yours (TCS) [Gathering, Sending]
Blessed are the merciful (DOM) [Gathering, Sending]
We are all saints (SYJ) [Sending]