

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Saint John saw them. He saw that gleaming multitude which no one could number. He saw them clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, crying out in jubilation to the enthroned Lamb they behold day and night, without end. He saw heaven opened. And it was full of saints, a great multitude beyond counting.

Their praise and worship is unending, given eternally to the God who won heaven for them. Their praise and worship is united with that of the mysterious four living creatures and the holy angels, as they lift up their sinless, heavenly voices to the God who created them, the God who sanctified them, the God who redeemed them, the God they stand before.

On earth they were sealed, set apart to worship the God who created them. They received the Seal of the Living God, the indwelling of His Spirit, marking them as those redeemed of Christ the Crucified.

It is He, their Savior, your Savior, that dwells among them, God and Man, exalted to the throne that is above all thrones, the Divine Lamb who shepherds them to living fountains of waters. They know no sadness, no suffering, no persecution, no illness. They know only bliss and felicity. They behold the face of God.

It is for them, for all the saints, that we give thanks to God this night. We thank God that in His mercy, they rest from the tribulations of the flesh. We thank God that they rest from warfare of the Church Militant. We thank God for their testimony, their witness of the Truth of Christ Crucified and Risen. We thank God for their faithfulness in the face of temptation, and for their strength under persecution, for in it we find hope and comfort in this fallen world.

We thank God for the vision of them given St. John, for that other-worldly foretaste was given that you peer into paradise through the Evangelist's Words. That vision was given that you have the confidence that comes with the sure knowledge of the reward of faith: the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. Faith longs to be with them, to be added to that luminous throng that reflects the Divine Light of the radiant Countenance of God.

Many suffered violence in their earthly life. Their symbols adorn our Nave. From their symbols we learn about this fallen world. From their symbols we learn that when the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us, men would not receive Him. Nor would they receive those He sent. From their symbols we know that they endured the hatred and the rejection of the fallen world. Axe and sword, spear, arrows and clubs stand in testimony of their earthly persecution.

On earth they mourned. Now they are comforted. On earth they hungered and thirsted for righteousness. Now they are filled. On earth they were merciful, now they bask in Divine mercy. Their hearts were purified by faith, their faith purified by suffering. But now they see God. What joy there is for the Christian to glimpse with St. John the eternal reward of faith.

These are they who were reviled and persecuted, against whom evil was spoken falsely. They were thrown to the beasts and broken on the wheel. And before they endured it, their Lord, your Lord, promised them "Blessed are you..." For now they rejoice. Now they are exceedingly glad. For great is their reward in heaven.

But we are not in heaven yet. Now we see dimly, as in a glass. St. John uses numeric metaphor and simile to describe heavenly realities, realities that surpass our earthly words. But of this be assured: what the saints in heaven have now, you have now by promise. And the necessary corollary is that what they once endured you now endure.

For now it is we, not they, that wrestle with temptation and falsehood. Now it is we, not they, that are reviled and persecuted, against whom all kinds of evil is spoken falsely, for Christ's sake. Now the world mocks and rejects us because of Him.

And while by revelation we behold their glory, what we see in the world that surrounds us is anything but glorious. War, pestilence, famine, strife, hatred and division mark our world as sin grows seemingly without limit. Death confronts us all. And we see that our faithfulness, our witness, has been faltering, imperfect, meek not bold.

For that, for your shortcomings, for your transgressions, for your trespasses, for your death, the Enthroned Lamb they encircle shed His Blood. He died for you. He forsook the glory the Church Victorious beholds, the luminaries His footstool, and He emptied Himself and took on Flesh to be rejected and reviled. He became truly poor in spirit.

He mourned without being comforted. He was meek, going silently as a Lamb to the slaughter. He was shown no mercy. His pure heart was rent. He was persecuted for righteousness sake, He lay down His life, to open the Kingdom of Heaven to you.

For in that reward, in our glimpse this night of the saints in heaven, the burdens of earthly life seem lighter. The indignities of this life have an end. Insurmountable tribulation is seen to have been conquered. Injustices will be corrected.

So it is that we pray that God would grant us grace to follow His blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we come to those unspeakable joys which He has prepared for those who love Him. Thanks be to God, this night as we glimpse the saints in heaven, we glimpse the heaven Christ has opened for you. We behold the bliss and the joys and the eternal rest reserved you who believe in Him.

So tonight we ask the angelic question posed to a bewildered John: "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And we know from John's Testimony that these are they who have come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And to that washing God has brought you, to the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, that your sins be forgiven, your death taken away, and that you be vested in the white robe of Christ's righteousness.

It is to you that He gives His Mysteries: salvation through His Holy Word; the absolution that brings the Blood of Christ to your sins; the Baptism that seals you as a servant of the Living God; and the Body and Blood of Christ your Lord, for the forgiveness of your sins, and the strengthening of your faith, a taste of heavenly bliss.

So rejoice and be exceedingly glad, dear Christian, for without you the number of the saints in heaven isn't complete. In Christ, all your sins are forgiven. In Christ, great is your reward in heaven. And God will wipe away every tear from your eyes.

Revelation 7:2-17
The Feast of All Saints, 2019 A.✠ D.

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