

Feast of All Saints (11/1/09 – *Saints Militant & Triumphant*)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

You are all incredibly near-sighted! But, then, so am I. And I'm not talking about your physical eyesight, of course. That's not what is in view this *Feast of All Saints* – any more than Jesus was talking about physical and earthly poverty, mourning, meekness, hunger, thirst, purity of heart, and peace in the words which begin His *Sermon on the Mount* ... the Word we know as *The Beatitudes* ... *The Blessings*. In fact, all three of our *Holy Scripture Lessons* for today speak to the same truth – the truth of what and who we are in Christ ... **already** but **not yet**; the truth that we are both **sinners** and **saints**; the truth about the *Saints Militant & Triumphant*.

You and I – **we** – are horribly near-sighted, because we don't see our true reality through the eyes of faith as we ought. We hear *The Beatitudes* and automatically think: **I must become poor in spirit, I must mourn, I must become meek, I must work to hunger and thirst for righteousness, I must show mercy, I must become pure in heart, I must strive to make peace with everyone ... and willingly let myself be reviled, spoken evil against, and persecuted if I am going to achieve blessedness and possess the kingdom of heaven.** We think that way because that is the way of the Law ... the way of working and earning – the way of the flesh. And if we are honest with ourselves – if we are not near-sighted about ourselves – we realize that we often **don't** think of ourselves as poor in spirit (**don't** think that we are, literally, only beggars before God ... **always**). We **don't** mourn our sin as we ought. Instead, we walk – even run – headlong into it ... and revel in it. We **don't** hunger and thirst for righteousness – not nearly as often as we become hungry and thirsty for food or material goods ... let alone constantly, every day. We **don't** show mercy – indeed, quite the opposite ... we can be very cruel and merciless. Our hearts are far from pure. And **we ourselves** are those who cause strife in the lives of our families and friends. Let ourselves be maligned, reviled, and spoken against ... willingly? We'd much rather give someone a piece of our mind ... even curse and condemn.

You and I are also horribly near-sighted, because we fail to see who we **already are** in Christ. We are always looking around ourselves – at the

world ... at worldly things ... at ourselves. And we draw conclusions based upon what we think we see with our eyes and our reason. Instead, we should draw conclusions about ourselves and our lives – both here and now and also in the life to come – based upon what God says and promises. And this is something we have to fight for. That’s why the Christian Church on earth and believers here below are referred to as the Church or Saints **Militant** – because it’s a struggle ... a fight ... a war ... between good and evil ... between heaven and hell ... between our saintly souls and our sinful flesh.

So, on this *Feast of All Saints* we are brought to our knees by our failures ... our sins; but then we are raised up again by the blessed vision of the saints in heaven, the promise of our own glorification on the Last Day when our Savior appears, and the certain knowledge that all we are **not**, Christ has been **for us** ... and continually applies **to us** now ... until He shall make us perfect saints in heaven. And, conversely, all that we **are** according to our sinful flesh – all of our boasting in our supposed rich spirituality, our failure to mourn over our sins, our arrogance, the way we spiritually starve ourselves by our lack of prayer and devotional life, the **impurity** of our hearts (and the sin that proceeds from it) – all our sins Christ has taken away from us ... cleansing us ... washing us ... and clothing us in white robes just like those in John’s blessed, heavenly vision [REV 7.13] ... clothing us in the perfectly white and holy robes of His very Own righteousness.

We – by God’s grace – are **already** like those blessed saints John saw in His God-given vision of heaven. **Already** we *have washed* our *robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb* [7.14] – through Baptism and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And **yet** we long for the day when we visibly stand with them before the Lamb on the throne in heaven, *clothed in white robes, with palm branches* of triumphant victory *in* our *hands*. **Already** we worship the Lamb Who sits on the throne and shelters us with His presence. And **yet** we must wait for the day when we shall worship Him face to face. **Already** we may laud and magnify His glorious Name with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven ... with our family and friends who have gone before us into heaven – that’s what happens in the *Divine Service* ... that’s the reality we’re speaking about week after week ... as we sing *Holy, Holy, Holy Lord* with the seraphim and come before the altar with

bended knee. And **yet** we look forward to the day when we may fall on our faces before the throne, worshipping God day and night in His temple, and saying: ***Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.*** [7.12]

For now, however, we must be content, dear brothers and sisters in Christ – dear saints of our Lord – knowing that the fullness of our salvation shall be revealed on the Last Day. For now we have trials and temptations – and great tribulation. For now there is scorching heat. For now there are pains and tears – some of our own making ... some that come upon us and we struggle to understand how or why. For now there is hunger and thirst in the world. For now we must fight as valiant soldiers – clad in the armor of our God ... gird with the belt of His truth ... protected by the breastplate of Christ's righteousness ... shod with the Gospel that alone brings true, lasting peace ... shielded by God-given-and-sustained faith ... sheltered by the salvation of our Lord ... armed with the two-edged, Spirit-filled Word of God ... bowed low in prayer to our gracious, heavenly Father [EPH 6.11-18]. For now we are the Saints and Church Militant – we fight against the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh.

But we do not battle alone! Indeed, the battle – the entire war – has been won **for us** by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Though we are Saints Militant ... we are also in Christ, **already now**, Saints Triumphant in a sense! We **are** saints! We are those whom the Holy Spirit has made holy in the sight of the Father by blessing us with repentance over sin and faith in the Savior from sin, our Lord Jesus Christ. We are children of God – as St. John says: ***Behold what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; AND SO WE ARE. ... Beloved, we ARE God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as [Christ] is pure.*** [1JN 3.1-3]

We are blessed! For ours is **already now** the kingdom of heaven [MT 3.3]. Ours is the kingdom that came from heaven when the heavenly Son of God made Himself ***poor in spirit*** by His incarnation so that He might draw

near to us. Ours is the kingdom that is characterized by heavenly bliss and the blessed relationship of making us children of our heavenly Father. Ours is and shall be the kingdom that leads to heavenly blessedness and glory.

We are blessed! For even **now** we are comforted in our mourning [3.4] – over the sins in our lives and the sorrow we feel in missing our loved ones who have gone before us. We are comforted because Christ mourned over the sins of the world and the separation they caused – taking them into Himself so that we might be reconciled to God. And in heaven **God will wipe away every tear from our eyes** [REV 7.17].

We are blessed! For Christ, the Almighty God, made Himself meek for our sake – allowing Himself to be reviled, spoken evilly against, and persecuted for righteousness' sake [3.10-11]. And because of **His** meekness, we **shall inherit the earth** [3.5] ... and the paradise once lost to us by Adam and Eve shall be restored to all God's saints.

We are blessed! For Christ the Savior so hungered and thirsted for righteousness **for us** that He was willing to descend from His glorious realm, suffer at the hands of sinful men, and be crucified so that He might be **for us** the Bread of Life and the Living Water to nourish and satisfy us unto life eternal ... clothing us with the robe of His righteousness [3.6].

We are blessed! For Christ our God has shown mercy – to the poor, the weak, the sick, the dying. And even now He is merciful to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness – graciously restoring us to holiness in His sight [3.7].

We are blessed! For He Who is truly **pure in heart** has shown us the face of God's Fatherly love [3.8]. And we **shall** see God in heaven!

We are blessed! For the true Peacemaker, the eternal Son of God, has made peace between God and men by His life and death and resurrection. Thus we are – and forever shall be – **called sons of God** ... blessed children of the heavenly Father [3.9].

Blessed are you, dear saints in Christ ... both now and forever! **Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven** [3.12]!

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]