

- In our first reading from the book of Revelation, St. John the apostle describes those faithful marked with the seal of God because they have borne the inevitable sufferings and difficulties encountered in following Christ and yet persevered in their faith and love of God.
- Wearing white robes as a sign of their victory... they surround the throne of God and the Lamb—the Lamb who is, of course, Jesus, the Lamb of God. *Agnus Dei*.
- Again, the number 144,000 is not meant as a literal limit, with St. Peter clicking off people coming through the pearly gates, but rather symbolic, as we see when John says: “...*behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...*”...which also attests that God does not look at race or nationality, but at the heart.
- “*These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*”...all washed by that cleansing blood of Christ on the cross which redeems us from sin...and gives us the ultimate hope of resurrection to salvation.

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- But the goal of salvation is not reached simply by our mere existence; it is one for which we must continuously strive.
 - This is why we celebrate All Saints Day. This is why we decorate our homes and churches and workplaces with reminders of the saints: to keep always before us their examples of fidelity and courage... their toughness and determination...in times of trial and challenges to our faith...looking always toward eternity and remembering what Jesus said: “...*there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father [or anything whatever], for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time...and in the age to come eternal life.*” (Mark 10:29-30 RSV)
 - We remember the apostles, the early Roman martyrs...the great saints of the Middle Ages like Benedict and Bernard, Francis and Teresa...missionary saints such as Patrick and Francis Xavier...

myriads of martyrs...a plethora of priests and popes...a bunch of bishops... loads of lay men and women...all our brothers in sisters in Christ...all now beholding forever the face of our Heavenly Father.

- They are princes like Louis and Stephen...paupers like Francis and Dominic. Thin (John Vianney) and not-so-thin (Thomas Aquinas). Hermits (Antony) and urban (Mother Teresa). There is no place, vocation or state of life in which grace cannot flow, and it is by choice that we become saints...or not.
- ...and the saints intercede for us before God. As St. Paul wrote of the Body of Christ: “...*the members [of the Body] ...have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*” (1 Cor 12:25-26 RSV)
- In Christ’s parable of poor Lazarus, even the rich man in Hell prayed for his brothers; how much more so will the friends of God, in whom charity and grace abounded, do so for us?
- As Thomas Aquinas wrote: How do we become a saint? Will it!
- And the saints are proof that regular ol’ men and women like you and me have the potential and grace to attain holiness just as they did.

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- People often ask “What is the meaning of life?” ...sometimes flippantly, as if it was a question which had no real answer.
 - But St. Ignatius Loyola answers it: “*Man is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.*” (Spiritual Exercises, “First Principle and Foundation”)
 - And so...as we read in the letter to the Hebrews: “...*since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us...*” (Heb 12:1 RSV)
 - ...reminding us, as Pope (Saint) Clement I said, that those who follow the saints become saints...because they followed Christ.

I, John, saw another angel come up from the East,
holding the seal of the living God.
He cried out in a loud voice to the four angels
who were given power to damage the land and the sea,
“Do not damage the land or the sea or the trees
until we put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.”
I heard the number of those who had been marked with the seal,
one hundred and forty-four thousand marked
from every tribe of the children of Israel.

After this I 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.
They cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne,
and from the Lamb.”

All the angels stood around the throne
and around the elders and the four living creatures.
They prostrated themselves before the throne,
worshiped God, and exclaimed:

“Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving,
honor, power, and might
be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

Then one of the elders spoke up and said to me,
“Who are these wearing white robes, and where did they come from?”
I said to him, “My lord, you are the one who knows.”
He said to me,
“These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress;
they have washed their robes
and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.”

Responsorial Psalm
[Ps 24:1bc-2, 3-4ab, 5-6](#)

R. (see 6) **Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.**
The LORD's are the earth and its fullness;
the world and those who dwell in it.
For he founded it upon the seas

and established it upon the rivers.

R. **Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.**

Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD?

or who may stand in his holy place?

One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean,

who desires not what is vain.

R. **Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.**

He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,

a reward from God his savior.

Such is the race that seeks him,

that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

R. **Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.**

Reading II

[1 Jn 3:1-3](#)

Beloved:

See what love the Father has bestowed on us
that we may be called the children of God.

Yet so we are.

The reason the world does not know us
is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now;
what we shall be has not yet been revealed.

We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him,
for we shall see him as he is.

Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure,
as he is pure.

Gospel

[Mt 5:1-12a](#)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain,
and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him.

He began to teach them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.

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Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you
and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.
Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward will be great in heaven.”