

English Homily
Solemnity of All Saints (Cycle A)

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints. It is a special day as we rejoice in the holy men and women of every time and place found worthy of being in heaven with God. Our celebration should renew our desire for Christ as we long to join all the saints who are longing for us to be with them. We also should ask the saints to pray for us as we strive to join them in heaven.

In today's first reading Saint John describes **his** vision of heaven. He tells of a large group of people from every tribe, nation and tongue. They are standing before the heavenly throne worshipping the Lamb of God. Each person has a seal on their foreheads marking them as members of God's chosen ones. They are holding palm branches in their hands and are dressed in white robes.

Biblical scholars see John's vision of heaven as a clear reference to the past, that is, the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, a festival celebrated in the fall months thanking God for the abundance of food gathered during the harvest. Jews traveled to Jerusalem, set up booths or tabernacles to live in as a memorial of the exodus from Egypt. They sacrifice the 'first fruits' of the harvest to God in the Holy Temple and afterwards, feast on rich food and choice wines.

Saint John's vision of heaven was also a foretaste of the resurrection of the new creation which will be celebrated at the end of time. During this heavenly festival, the glorious company of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Joseph, all the apostles, prophets, martyrs, and saints praise the Holy Trinity singing songs of joy.

John uses the imagery of the Feast of Tabernacles to also say something about the figures who are dressed in white robes. In the Old Testament only priests wore white linen vestments and they only wore them when they offered animal sacrifices. The

priest would go into the temple wearing white linen and then they'd sacrifice lambs, oxen, bulls, etc. What do you think that white linen would look like when they were done sacrificing? Right! It'd be stained with the blood of the animals.

In Saint John's vision of heaven, Christ the High Priest offers Himself as the sacrificial Lamb of God. In doing so he takes the suffering upon himself to redeem the world. So everyone is wearing a white robe because Jesus has ransomed them through his death and resurrection. John uses this fascinating image of having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. Now if you've ever done laundry with a white garment you'll know that if you get red on a white garment that's it's not going to come out easily. Right? So if you want to make a white garment clean you don't wash it in blood. Right? So there's a paradox here: they made their robes white by washing them in the blood of Christ.

We desire to follow their example. Think about this for a second. Baptismal garments. Vestments for priest, deacon, and altar servers. A wedding dress. Altar linens and purificators. Even the Funeral Pall. They're all white. Why? Because, like the saints in heaven, we want our lives to be washed in the blood of Christ.

As Catholics, we have already begun this journey toward heaven at our baptism when we were marked by the sign of the cross, washed clean of our sins, and anointed with the Sacred Chrism oil that makes us God's priests, prophets, and kings. We wore white garments as the outward sign of our new life in Christ and, with the help of our family and friends, we strive each day to bring that dignity unstained to join all the saints of heaven.

Today, let us commemorate the saints and ask for their intercession as we make our way to you.

O God, source of all that is holy, you have let your holiness shine through the lives of your saints, with the help of their prayers guide us on the path to Your Son, Jesus Christ.

Saint Martin de Porres and all the saints, pray for us!