



ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4797 Curtis RD Port St. John FL 32927

All Saints Day
November 1, 2020

The passage selected for the sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel:

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil things against you falsely, rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven.”

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

All Christian churches gather together on the Lord's day to hear Scripture and receive instruction. Mature and catholic churches celebrate the Eucharist, as our Lord commanded us on the night before His death. It is a true and beautiful gift of Anglo-Catholic Churches that we also have a sensual Liturgy; sights, sounds, and smells, that amplify and reflect the truth of Scripture and sacrament to aid us in our understanding and to lift our worship.

Last week, I was vested in a red Chasuble, as was the Chalice and the tabernacle. The red vestments remind us of the blood that was shed by the martyrs, who have made the supreme sacrifice for their God and their fellow men. Today, on the Feast of All Saints, the Chalice, the Tabernacle, and the priest are vested in white. The vestments are beautiful, but they pale beside the vestments of which they are an imitation, the robes of the Saints. “These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:14) The whiteness of their robes, the brightness of their vestment, is the reflection of the light of God seen face to face. At the Transfiguration, Jesus stood with Moses and Elijah, and their raiment was

transformed to a glistening white. This is the transformation of the earthly to the heavenly. What was earthly is blessed and perfected. The heavenly is lit with the glistening light that comes being in from the direct presence of God. All the God given beauty on earth is the merely palest hint of the beauty of heaven.

As Christians, we are guilty of making heaven seem a boring place. How many people, how many songs, books movies and lives teach that the reckless thrill of sin and desperation are preferable to the boring monotony of standing before God and singing His praise day and night as servants in His court. Nothing could be further from the truth. Just as the whiteness of this vestment is the poorest imaginable reflection of the glistening robes of the saints, so also the pleasures of this world, the happiness and thrills are merely the weakest, bleached out reflection of the ecstatic and Blessed joy which we will enjoy in the presence of Our Lord in Heaven.

We often think of heaven as the absence of tribulation. It is true that we will experience a peace and serenity in heaven that is impossible in this mortal vail. St. John tells us that in heaven, “God shall wipe all tears from their eyes.” But heaven isn't the just absence of temptation and trial. Heaven is the perfection of love. In heaven, we no longer see the object and source of our highest love through the glass darkly, but we behold God, our Father, in all His Mercy, majesty and Glory.

In our earthly lives, we have grace filled moments that approach that perfected state of love. A child wrapped up in the arms of a loving parent. A friend standing by us when we are desperately alone. Young lovers staring into each other's eyes and seeing the potential wonders that they will become because they are united in love. A mother or father holding a new born infant. The loving

spouse that sleeps in a chair by a sick bed to hold the hand of their beloved as they face death. These are transcendent moments of grace, hints of what is in store for us when we will be surrounded eternally by the limitless love of God for us in heaven.

Those moments can't be sustained in this world. They don't even occur, except by the grace and intervention of God. The child that snuggled in a mother's arms pulls away as it ages because that love becomes strangling expectation. Young lovers who once saw unlimited potential in each other's eyes stop looking each other in the eye. Either sinfulness makes us feel unworthy and we punish our lover for caring for us when we believe we are unlovable, or pride and narcissism slip in, making us see our lovers as means to our satisfaction rather than partners in grace. The newborn whose birth filled us with boundless energy and zest for life, becomes the source of anxiety about whether we can have enough or know enough to be the parents we wished we could be. The hand held in love at the moment of passing becomes immediately afterward, the occasion of grief and separation.

In this world love is inconstant. Lovers leave. Lovers change. Love is unrequited or abandoned or perverted. Lovers reserve a dark place of secrets they will not share. The thrill of love is the pulse of fear, fear of rejection, betrayal and hurtfulness. In this world, when we open our hearts and share our desires hopes and fears, those secrets are turned into weapons that open poisonous wounds that can scarcely be healed. Love in this world is temporal. Ecstasy lasts a moment, stress lasts for decades and loneliness and insecurity are lifelong realities.

But we are not abandoned to earthly love. We have the foretaste of heavenly love given to us in the sacrifice of Jesus and in the life of His saints. In heaven, no guilt intrudes in our love to make us hateful. In heaven, we are together, in the life of our Lord, for eternity. We don't have to reject for fear of being rejected. Love leads only to more love, never to separation or grief or pain. The love between a husband and wife that gives only a flickering and un-sustainable moment of physical transport is replaced by Godly love, in which ecstatic transport is eternal and unflagging. It is the joyous love that makes us want to sing in gratitude and praise at the top of our lungs, and the psalm never ends.

Our love for each other is perfected in our love for God. He opens our hearts and floods his light upon our secret desires, sin and fears, exposing them and replacing them with the peace that passes all understanding. By His love, we are able to embrace each other as the people we were meant to be, finally able to share with each other the best of all our hope, giving the gift of a self that is sanctified in love, nourishing, respectful and joyous.

That ecstatic heavenly love reaches out to us in our earthly wretchedness as prayers for the church militant by the communion of saints. The love of God, shared between the persons of the Trinity pours forth in abundance as Creation. The godly love shared by the Saints, pours forth and overflows heaven, spilling abundant grace upon us in history. God's command for us is to love Him with all our heart and mind and soul, and to show that love by loving our neighbors as ourselves. Here, because of pride, sin and weakness, we can sustain that command only by grace. In heaven, unshackled by the temporality and limitation of this world, the saints keep His commandment perfectly. They love and praise God in ecstasy and joy, praying and singing unceasingly, heart, mind and soul, as they behold His face. The love of the Saints overflows heaven as perfect caring, tearless, unashamed love for everyone that had gone before them, and everyone who is yet to join them.

The saints pray for us. They pray for Our Lord to shower us with grace to persevere in this world so we can join them in the fulfillment of our earthly hope in the eternal bliss of godly love in heaven. The spouse, the parent, the friend, the child, everyone who goes to rest in Christ prays that their beloved here on earth will follow them and share their joy. Great saints, Apostles, prophets, martyrs, and the beloved of our own history care for us because our Lord has chosen us, and they pray that we receive the grace we need grace to join them in heaven. G

Let us give thanks to All the Saints that pray for our perfection in the Love of Christ. Praise God, Father Son and Holy Ghost, who loves us, and has given to us the love of the Saints to share with Him forever in heaven.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.