

Introduction

All Saints celebrates the baptized people of God, living and dead, who are the body of Christ. As November heralds the dying of the landscape in many northern regions, the readings and liturgy call us to remember all who have died in Christ and whose baptism is complete. At the Lord's table we gather with the faithful of every time and place, trusting that the promises of God will be fulfilled and that all tears will be wiped away in the new Jerusalem.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you have knit your people together in one communion in the mystical body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant us grace to follow your blessed saints in lives of faith and commitment, and to know the inexpressible joys you have prepared for those who love you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

First Reading: Revelation 7:9-17

The book of Revelation is written to seven churches in western Asia Minor during a time of great oppression. Today's reading is a response to the question asked in 6:17: "Who is able to stand?" The writer gives the faithful the assurance of God's protection and a vision of victory.

⁹After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

"Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

¹¹And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²singing,

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honor
and power and might
be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" ¹⁴I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵For this reason they are before the throne of God,
and worship him day and night within his temple,
and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.

¹⁶They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;

the sun will not strike them,
nor any scorching heat;
¹⁷for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Psalm 34:1-10, 22

¹I will bless the LORD| at all times;
the praise of God shall ever be | in my mouth.
²**I will glory | in the LORD;**
let the lowly hear | and rejoice.
³Proclaim with me the greatness | of the LORD;
let us exalt God’s | name together.
⁴**I sought the LORD, who | answered me**
and delivered me from | all my terrors.
⁵Look upon the LORD| and be radiant,
and let not your faces | be ashamed.
⁶**I called in my affliction, and | the LORD heard me**
and saved me from | all my troubles.
⁷The angel of the LORD encamps around those who | fear the LORD
and de- | livers them.
⁸**Taste and see that the | LORD is good;**
happy are they who take ref- | uge in God!
⁹Fear the LORD, you saints | of the LORD,
for those who fear the | LORD lack nothing.
¹⁰**The lions are in want and | suffer hunger,**
but those who seek the LORD lack nothing | that is good.
²²O LORD, you redeem the life | of your servants,
and those who put their trust in you will | not be punished.

Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-3

A saint is one who has been set apart by God for God’s purposes. God, out of divine love, set us apart to be the children of God. Our holy hope is that we shall see God as God really is.

¹See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:1-12

In the Beatitudes, Jesus provides a unique description of those who are blessed with God's favor. His teaching is surprising and shocking to those who seek wealth, fame, and control over others.

¹When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Prayers of Intercession

Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need, saying "Hear us, O God," and responding, "your mercy is great."

A brief silence.

God of all the saints, we praise you for evangelists and martyrs whose sacrifices witness to your gospel across time and space. Inspire us by their courage to carry our faith to new people and places around us. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of every place, the universe proclaims your greatness from generation to generation. Bless the work of naturalists, conservationists, and park rangers who train our attention to the wonders of the world you have made. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of every nation, guide us so that we may pursue the welfare of all. Kindle hearts eager to understand our common needs and seek our common good. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of every blessing, your Son's blessing came to those living with poverty, grief, hunger, thirst, and persecution. Shape our vision of the saints to match his own. Awaken in us your call to serve all who suffer. We hold in prayer those who struggle with isolation, sickness, and other kinds of pain (*especially those who we name now, aloud or silently on our hearts...* [pause]) Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of every venture, anoint us with the missionary spirit of the early church. Bless all new endeavours in our wider church, especially during this time of physical distancing the creative online ministry that is reaching new people and new places. Empower testimony from new communities of faith to shape a diverse witness to your saving power. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of every time, countless are the multitudes you have called by name and gathered to yourself. Comfort us as we grieve those who have died in the past year (*we name those names on our hearts, or aloud, at this time...* [pause]). In faith, may we join with them in ceaseless praise. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever.

Amen.



An All Saints Day reflection...

Saintly Sinners, Sinful Saints

All Saints Sunday and the appointed readings are pregnant with themes of stark contrast: death and life, condemnation and redemption, sorrow and joy, suffering and relief, present life and future life. Such is life, too, as baptized children of God. The very nature of our lives is of stark contrast.

By virtue of our baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are made saints while we are still sinners. Every day in this nautically juxtaposed life we navigate through rough waters such as sin, evil, pain, heartache, addiction, abuse, hunger, disease, and war. But our bearing is always set, not by the North Star but by the Daystar, who has been the heading for the faithful of every generation. With the scriptures as our compass and the confessions our map, we sail as a part of the great flotilla of saints on the waters of baptism, with the wind of the Spirit at our backs, always pointed in the direction of our guiding Daystar.

Today we give thanks for the saints who have gone before us, for the saints still among us, and for the saints of God still to come. We give thanks for the examples of faithful living that the saints have given us as they navigated the stormy waters of life, and also for the faithful acts of service we are empowered by God's Holy Spirit to do in our own seas. We give thanks, too, for the fullness of eternal life in which the saints of God who have gone before us now partake and which we have yet to fully enjoy.