

Sunday, November 1, 2015

All Saints Day

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading Revelations 7:2-4, 9-14
Responsorial: Psalm 24:1-6

2nd Reading: 1 John 3:1-3
Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12

Honoring the Great Cloud of Witnesses in Heaven

Salvation comes from our God. (Revelation 7:10)

Today we honor all the saints, who form “so great a cloud of witnesses” for us and for the whole Church (Hebrews 12:1). We don’t often think about it, but millions of holy men and women are in heaven right now, praying for us and cheering us on. If you could hear them, they might be saying, “Don’t give up! Stay close to Jesus! It really is worth it!”

For the most part, these saints are people just like us, only now they’re in heaven. Their lives mirrored ours—our desires, our doubts, and our struggles to follow Jesus. Are you a wife, a mother, or a teacher? Then look to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Are you praying for family members who have fallen away from the faith? Ask St. Monica to pray for them also. Do you struggle dividing your time between prayer, work, and play? Let St. Benedict help you.

Today’s feast reminds us that the saints in heaven aren’t just the famous ones like Mother Teresa or Francis of Assisi. The list includes our deceased parents, grandparents, old friends, and former pastors. Those who were closest to us in life are also close in spirit to us now—a sort of heavenly support group! They’re looking down on us with love and concern, and they want nothing more than to see us grow into Christ’s love more and more each day.

Isn’t God’s plan wonderful? He has already given us the gift of life. He has given us families and friends. He has given us our own unique set of gifts and talents, which we can use to glorify him. He has even given us the gift of salvation, along with the sacraments and the life of grace to sustain us. And still that is not enough. In addition to all these gifts, he has called us to be with him in heaven—forever!

“Thank you, Lord, for all the saints who pray for me and help me every day. I praise and glorify you, Lord, for preparing me a place with them, where I can worship you for all eternity.”

(Many thanks to The Word Among Us (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection and Group Discussion

1. The first reading from Book of Revelation is filled with great symbolism. It describes the “great multitude” of people in Heaven who “stood before the throne and before the Lamb” crying out with these words: “Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb.” What do these words mean to you? Why should they be a source of great joy and peace for us as the people of God?
2. The Responsorial Psalm asks these two challenging questions: “Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD? or who may stand in his holy place?” How would you answer these questions? This is how the psalmist answers these questions: “One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain.” Why are the words above from the first reading a source of hope for us as we reflect on these challenging words?
3. The second reading from the first Letter of John begins with this inspiring and uplifting truth of who we are in Christ: “Beloved: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are.” How should the realization that you are a beloved child of your heavenly Father affect the way you think and live? Are there any obstacles in your life or in your thinking that keep you from seeing yourself as a beloved child of your heavenly Father? What are some steps you can take to overcome them?
4. The “Beatitudes” taught by Jesus in the Gospel reading describe a series of blessings that are ours as children of God. Perhaps, the most difficult blessing to receive (or understand) may be the last one: “Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Why is this beatitude a reason to “Rejoice and be glad”? What do you think Jesus meant when he said: “your reward is great in heaven” and why should it motivate us and fill us with hope?
5. The meditation begins with these words: “Today we honor all the saints who form ‘so great a cloud of witnesses’ for us and for the whole Church (Hebrews 12:1). We don’t often think about it, but millions of holy men and women are in heaven right now, praying for us and cheering us on. If you could hear them, they might be saying, ‘Don’t give up! Stay close to Jesus! It really is worth it.’” The meditation goes on to say that the list of those praying for us “includes your deceased parents, grandparents, old friends, and former pastors.” How often do you think about the fact that many saints and deceased loved ones are praying for you in heaven? Why is this important and in what way can it make a difference when you are going through difficult times?
6. Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord that you have many saints and loved ones in heaven praying for you, and thank him that, even now, he is preparing a place for you with them. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as the starting point.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, a director of partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, for which he is currently a Trustee (<http://www.nfcmsusa.org/>). He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]