

St Philip and St James
Palma de Mallorca Spain
31st October 2021
All Saints Day

Theme: A Call to life of Sainthood.

TEXT: REVELATION 21:1-6A

Introduction

In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Today we are celebrating the feast of All Saints day earlier than usual. The feast is supposed to be celebrated on the 1st of November but since it is on a Monday, we decided that we celebrate it today. A day that is convenient for many of us who do not work on Sundays. We are doing the opposite of what should be done in terms of liturgical rules when it comes to celebrating and observing feast days. Sunday is a feast day where we celebrate the resurrection of Christ, therefore whenever a feast falls on a Sunday it should be transferred to Monday. We have done the opposite by transferring a Monday feast to Sunday.

What is All Saints Day? It is a day of commemorating all the saints of the church, both known and unknown, who have attained heaven. As I said earlier on, the official day for celebrating the

feast in the Western churches is November the 1st. In the Eastern churches it is celebrated on the first Sunday after Pentecost. The history of the origins of All Saints' Day cannot be traced with certainty, and it has been observed on various days in different places. The first evidence for the celebration of November the 1st date occurred during the reign of Pope Gregory III (731–741), who dedicated a chapel in St. Peter's, Rome, on November the 1st in honour of all saints. In Spain it is a very important national public holiday when people from all over the country return to their town or village to lay flowers on the graves of deceased relatives. There are few religious days that mean quite so much to the ordinary people of Spain as this solemn festival. Roads around cemeteries will be crammed with traffic, flower sellers line the streets and, in many places, additional public transport services are organized. Although this might sound over-commercialized and hectic it is actually, for most people, a day of high emotions. The Eucharist, or Mass, will often be performed in the cemetery several times during the day. While many canonized saints are celebrated with their own individual feast days, saints that have not been canonized have no particular holiday. All Saints' Day recognizes those whose sainthood is known only to God. The Christian festival of All Saints Day comes from a conviction that there is a spiritual connection between those in Heaven and on Earth. This

theology is also illustrated in our Eucharist liturgy in the following words; **“Through him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, with all who stand before you in earth and heaven, we worship you, Father Almighty, in songs of everlasting praise.”** There is that belief in our liturgy that as we gather for the Eucharist service, we are also fellowshiping with both the living and dead saints.

Exegesis of the Text

I enjoy reading the book of Revelation because of its vivid images and poetic language. It is however, like any other apocalyptic literature one of the most difficult books to read and interpret especially to those without knowledge of its background and use of coded language. **“I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.”** Centuries earlier, God assured the Jewish exiles that he was going to create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things were not to be remembered, nor come into mind. In that context, God was promising the Jewish exiles that he would restore their great city, Jerusalem, which had been destroyed much earlier. The former things—their exile in Babylonia—would fade into distant memory so that they might enjoy their new freedom. This language of new heaven and new earth is common in many biblical books and the author of

Revelation is using the known language but in a different way.

In the book of Revelation the language is appropriated to speak of the heavenly city—the New Jerusalem—the new home for the faithful. The writer has seen it, and describes it to reassure faithful Christians who have endured adversity, people who need to hear that God will make things right. Dying to old life and living into the newness of God is the call and message of Revelation

“I saw the Holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” This is the most striking, beautiful image one could think of. The most beautiful thing a man will ever see is his bride coming down the aisle, ready to meet him. Ask me I can testify to that because I had a similar experience 9 years ago on the 28th April 2012. This is how beautiful the New Jerusalem will be. This is the Jerusalem of hope, Jerusalem above, and the place of our real citizenship. The terms **holy** and **new** distinguish the city because it is **holy** and **new**, it is different from any earthly city. The name **Jerusalem** gives it continuity with earth, especially with the place of our redemption. It is significant that this glorious dwelling place of God and His people is described as **the holy city**. Cities are places with many people, and people interacting with each other. This isn't isolation, but a

perfect community of the people of God. **“The former things have passed away”** The New Jerusalem is distinguished by what it does not have – no tears, no sorrow, no death, and no pain.

Application

In the Jewish scriptures, Jerusalem is the focus of Jewish identity, faith, and hope, but in Revelation, Jerusalem signifies “the election of a new people and the sealing of a new covenant.” These are the people we are remembering today as saints. They are saints because they abide in Christ. They were capable of sinning just like any other human beings but they always repent of their sins and received forgiveness. We become saints not that we live a sinless life but that we faithfully confess our sins to God. In celebrating All Saints Day, Jesus is calling us to a life of sainthood. We are sinners and have fallen from the glory of God, but remember the words of St Augustine who said, “The church is the hospital of sinners.” We are coming to church as spiritual sinners seeking God’s healing and we leave the church as saints. May the almighty God help us to live a life of sainthood so that one day we will be citizens of the New Jerusalem. Amen

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