

## **Homily notes:**

### **1st November 2020 - All Saints**

(1st: Apocalypse 7:2-4.9-14; 2nd: 1 John 3:1-3; Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12)

If the two certainties of life are death and taxes, for us the third is heaven, eternal life and the vision of God.

‘A Glimpse of Heaven’ is a book and two DVD’s about Catholic Churches built following Catholic Emancipation of 1829, as was ours, and I wrote in last week’s newsletter of the link between a Dedication Festival and today’s Solemnity of All Saints, and Heaven where the saints are in glory.

Our churches, where we go week-by-week, even daily, as pilgrims, and especially to Mass, which St John in the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading is caught up ‘on the Lord’s Day’ into the worship of heaven, the Lamb’s Supper, and the Mass as heaven on earth.

Life here is a pilgrimage as we walk each day closer towards its end, which is the vision of God. We are made for that, and life is a preparation for the moment when we move from this situation into eternal happiness.

Joy and sorrow, agony and ecstasy, pain and well-being, walk hand in hand up that hill which is called Calvary. But through and beyond it to a place where there is no more death, no sin, no pain, only empty tombs and life everlasting.

All that we celebrate is what Jesus gives us to feed and nourish us on our pilgrim way. That is the love the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called his children. All the things here about God, about Jesus, the Church, Sacraments, Our Lady, the Saints, is meant to lead us to heaven.

What God finally desires for us human beings is participation in his own Trinitarian life, which is to say, the life of love. Heaven is love in its fullest sense, love completed. St Paul in his great hymn of love in 1 Cor.13 says ‘there are three things that last, faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love.’ In heaven faith and hope will fade away, but love will endure. Heaven is the ‘place’ where everything that is not love has been burnt away

and so heaven is the fulfilment of the deepest longing of the human heart.

There are many different images for heaven in the Scriptures and in Tradition: the banquet, the wedding feast, the wine of the kingdom, life, light, peace, the Father's house, paradise, heavenly Jerusalem, eternal rest, refreshment, the new heaven and the new earth, the city of God, the beatific vision, to name but a few. Though each of these images speaks some truth concerning heaven, the reality itself lies beyond all our imagining, since it is equivalent to the very life of God 'that no eye has seen, nor heard, nor the heart of man conceived.'

Heaven is our spiritual home and home is where the family lives, in this case the family of God. It is why we so often hear at our funerals the words of Jesus; 'In my Father house are many rooms, and I go to prepare a place for you, and take you to myself.'

Death is not the end: we are always alive to God.

The saints are our family. **St Teresa of Calcutta** often said, 'We aren't called to be successful; rather God calls each of us to be faithful.'

This means that saints were sinners, as we all are, but who never gave up and never quit on God. They persevered. They never stopped trying to do and be better; to live those beautiful attitudes Jesus sets before us in the gospel.

**St John Henry Newman** said, 'Heaven is at present out of sight, but in due time, as snow melts and discovers what it lay upon, so will this visible creation fade away before those greater splendours which are behind it.'

Or **C.S.Lewis**: 'A continual looking forward to the eternal world is not a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do.'

Or **Cardinal Basil Hume**: 'The meaning of things, and their purpose, is in part now hidden, but shall in the end become clear. The choice is between The Mystery and the absurd. The One who will understand, who will forgive, who will console, that is my view of God.'