

**...Seeing We Are Surrounded by So Great a Cloud of Witnesses...**



The Feast of All Saints is one of the great moments in the Christian Year, and one of my favourites. It has great hymns, great music, and great scriptures. In the language of our youth, it is “awesome.”

So, let’s take a look at All Saints, and see how it fits with all the rest of our Faith. Because it is worth it.

You all know about Easter, how Jesus rose from the dead, the Resurrection we call it, and promised us that, if we were faithful to Him, we also would share in His Life Eternal. That was His promise to us. And All Saints Day is a reflection of that promise—because it celebrates all those who have received that promise and are now living with Him in Life Eternal. So, Easter and All Saints fit together—one is the Promise, the other is the Fulfillment of that Promise.

Now let’s take a close look at All Saints Day, and the Fulfillment of the Promise of Jesus.

You and I live in a 3-dimensional world—up, down, fore, and aft, and side to side. That covers everything that we see or touch or feel. It is a world studied by science, understood by architects, and written about in books. We know it well. I suppose that we could consider Time as the 4th Dimension. We cannot see it, but day by day, we experience it. So, you could say that we live in a 4-dimensional world.

But that leaves out Love, and God, and the Faithful Departed—they do not live in a 4-dimensional world. Yet we experience Love every day. Love is NOT a feeling, nor is it SEX. It is giving of oneself to another in the deepest way possible for human beings. And though it cannot be found in a 4-dimensional world, we know that it is real.

So, the best way to describe Love is to say that it is a taste of a 5th Dimension—one that is not seen or measured, but just as real as anything else. And God is in that 5th Dimension too—in fact, the 5th Dimension, we could call it the Spiritual or Heavenly Dimension, is more real than our 4-dimensional world, and exists both outside of it, yet touching it. God and the Heavenly Dimension is as close as my skin, yet farther away than the farthest galaxy.

When Jesus was here, in this 3-Dimensional world, He promised Eternal Life for those who accepted Him as Saviour and Lord, and then obeyed Him through life. Now Eternal Life is not found in our 3 (or 4) Dimensional world. In fact, when we leave this life, we leave the bodies we have used behind, to return to the “dust of the earth” as the scripture

so simply says. So, what about us? We, the soul, the mind, the spirit, the person we know, where do we go?

Well, if God is in the Heavenly Dimension (the 5th Dimension), and if we have received the Gift of Eternal Life from Jesus, we must go to be with Him, as He promised. Which means, that when our bodies die, we, who have been given the gift of Life Eternal from Jesus, step out of this 3-Dimensional World directly into the Heavenly Dimension—a Dimension that is greater and more permanent than this world.

This is the promise of Jesus. I believe it because He said it. And though I have not yet experienced it, I look forward to stepping out of this world into the Heavenly Dimension and being welcomed by the Blessed Lord.

But I will not be alone. There are millions who have gone before, (and millions who will come after) all of whom have each received the Gift of Life Eternal from the hands of Jesus, who will be there before me, each progressing closer and closer to the Father—the Father of all Life.

Those who have grown closer to our Lord Jesus in this life, continue their Spiritual Transformation, until they are united with the Father, to be uniquely with Him forever. We call them, the Saints—the Holy Ones—the ones who have made it—and we remember them on earth as good examples for us to follow. The others, who are still continuing to grow even now in their spiritual transformation, we call them the Faithful Departed.

On All Saints Day, we remember and thank God for all those who have “made it,” whose spiritual transformation is complete, who have finally become what God intends us all to become, the Holy Ones of God. You know some of their names: St. Francis, St. John, St. Paul, St. Thomas, St. Benedict, St. Andrew, and on and on. We have special days throughout the year, devoted to them, when we tell their stories, and see them as examples for us of Living the Life of Christ. But there are millions more, who have completed their growth in Christ, whose names we do not know—and so on All Saints Day, we remember them especially, and thank God for them and their holy lives.

The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks precisely of them: ***“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses....”***

Did you get what the scriptures say? These Holy Ones are not far away, they are almost as close as our skin. These Saints are with us, surrounding us like a “...cloud of witnesses...,” praying for us, encouraging us, loving us. When we celebrate the Eucharist together, the Saints are here too—a great number joining us in praise and love—oh, if I could only push the walls of this church out so you could see them all—they are here by the millions, joining with us in the singing and the prayers of the mass. Remember the Heavenly Dimension is not far away—it is right here, just as the Lord is right here with us.

***“... Seeing we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely ...”*** I wish we could put away our sin,

the worry about the “things” of this world, and instead open ourselves to the riches and the love and the joy of Heaven that is so close to us—beyond our sight true, yet here so very close to each of us.

***“... and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith ...”*** There’s the key—in this life, we are “running the race that is set before us ...,” growing more like Jesus, bit by bit becoming like Him, like an athlete running a race, like a child growing each day, learning to walk closer to Jesus. Being a Christian is not something that we put on and say we have arrived—it is being baptised into Christ, becoming faithful to Him, struggling to walk the path with Him, often slipping, falling, getting up again, a day-by-day growth into Jesus, becoming the Saints that God intended us to become from the beginning. Being a Christian is a life of becoming—becoming like Jesus—and it takes a lifetime of “perseverance,” running the race. The Saints are our graduates, those who have made it—and now they pray for us, care for us, support us from the Heavenly Dimension. So today, we remember them, and give Thanks to God for them. Because we are being called to become Saints too.

***“...looking to Jesus, our pioneer...”*** That’s what we learn today. You all know about pioneers—those who have gone before us, and blazed the trail for us to follow? Jesus is our pioneer—He has gone before us into Heaven, to offer the Holy Sacrifice of Himself to the Father for our forgiveness—and He has blazed the trail for us to follow. We look to Him. He has opened the Gate, so that we too can enter. And the Saints are cheering us on, each day. They are our graduates in the Christian Life, they have become what God destined for us all, while we are still struggling on. So do not give up—the Heavenly Dimension, and the Love of the Father is the goal before us, and the Grace and Forgiveness of our Blessed Lord Jesus, strengthens and sustains us in running our race.

Today, as we come to the Altar to offer the Holy Sacrifice of Christ to the Father and receive His Body and Blood to sustain us, do not forget the Saints who surround us. They surround us like a “cloud of witnesses,” urging us onwards, praising God along with us, and supporting us with their Prayers.

So let us Praise God in the multitude of all His Saints—for one day, with God’s Grace, we mean to be one too.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen