

All Saints Day

All Saints Day - November 01 2020

The Book of Revelation is a fascinating book.

Most of it is comprised of a vision, of heaven, that John the Evangelist had.

It seems every few years someone comes out with a book

that claims to have the correct interpretation of the images that are present throughout the book.

When I was young I remember my neighbours really caught up in this imagery.

Someone had it all figured out. Russia figured into the picture.

The unrest in the world centered in Israel.

Even the bar codes that you see on many products were factored in.

All I can say that 100% of these interpretations have proven false.

In response to these claims, I have to say that God does not work that way.

God would not have John the Evangelist write a book that did not speak to people for 2000 years,

and only be relevant for one generation.

This is why it is always important to remember the context of a book.

The Book of Revelation was written to a community experiencing persecution.

At that time the Christian community was being persecuted by the Romans.

There was a good chance that if you were baptized into the Christian faith,
you would be eaten by lions.

John needs to write a book that would give hope to people

and at the same time would be ignored by the Romans.

If he wrote "God will destroy Caesar" every copy of the writing would be destroyed,
and whoever possessed it would be fed to the lions.

But if you had a book that was filled with imagery,

it would not have made any sense to the Romans,

but to Christians, who had a sense of the Old Testament, and Christian symbols,
the book would make perfect sense. It gave them hope.

And this is what the Book of Revelation does, it gives hope.

In the seminary I audited a class on the Book of Revelation and the Old Monk,
who was then teacher, walked into class and said,

"I can summarize the Book of Revelation in two words, "God wins."

It doesn't matter what chaos is happening all around you,

whether it be the Romans, the Nazi's, drugs, war, COVID or even economic collapse—
God wins.

In the end God will prevail.

Maybe not in the immediate future, like we would want it,
as God's time is different than our time,
but in the end God's will, will prevail.

The imagery in the first reading

is a reflection of God's will prevailing

in the midst of all the violence that is happening in the first century.

And it is not just in the first century.

Violence has been a part of our faith since the time of Cain and Abel.

Yesterday (CL-This afternoon) many young people in the community went trick or treating,
and many of them wore costumes that portrayed blood and guts.

If you want to read about some real violence,

read some of the historical books in the Old Testament.

There are all kinds of stories of wars, violence,

and some very graphic means of killing and dismembering one's enemy.

I tell you this not to continue the Halloween theme

But to let you know that God will prevail over all this violence.

The first reading mentions 144,000 that have been sealed with blood.

There have been many who have tried to determine who these 144,000 are.

We can never forget that numbers had symbolic value in ancient Israel.

144,000 is simply 12 times 12 times 1000.

Twelve is the number of completeness...the 12 tribes of Israel, the 12 apostles.

And 1000 is simply the largest number that the ancient people could conceive.

So 144,000 is simply—Completeness times completeness times the largest number possible.

What is more important is that there was a multitude that no one could count

that have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

This is why this reading is read on All Saints Day. It is representative of all the saints in heaven

When we hear the term washed their robes white--in the blood of the Lamb,

our minds should be going, "Where have I heard that before."

Every so often we have a baptism in our church.

And at each baptism the parents dress their child in white.

And at each baptism we immerse the child into the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The white garment is symbolic of the white garment of salvation.

If you remember the prayer that accompanies the white garment: "

You have become a new creation, and clothed yourself in Christ.

See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity.

With your family and friends to help you by word and example,

bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven."

John the Evangelist notes that the people have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb...

as they went through the great ordeal.

That great ordeal could be martyrdom, baptism, or life itself.

One day we too will be part of the great multitude.

If you remember it notes,

"There was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation,

from all tribes and people... that were sealed."

There is the seal, there is a lamb and there is blood.

The whole scene is reminiscent of the tenth plague,

when the whole of the Hebrew people were in Egypt

and were told to seal their doorposts with the blood of the Lamb.

You also see the multitudes with “palm branches in their hands.”

When you heard those words, “Palm branches in their hands,”

your immediate thought should have been...don't we wave Palm branches on Palm Sunday. When the Jesus entered into Jerusalem, on that first Palm Sunday,

the throngs of people, waved palm branches

and laid them on the ground like an ancient red carpet treatment

and they cried out, “Hosanna to the son of David.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven.”

Those same throngs of people are seen by John in his vision,

And they are still crying out, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne.”

Today is all Saints Day.

A day when we remember all the saints,

all of those who have waved palm branches before the Lord.

All of those who have ever waved Palm Branches before the Lord.

Many of these saints experienced a violent death.

And I am sure that if any of these saints were to appear in our midst they would say,

“Don't focus on my suffering, in fact--Don't imitate me, at all

imitate Christ.

He is the original, I am only a pale copy.”

As we celebrate All Saints let us together profess our faith in Jesus—

The original, the one who in the end will prevail,

and the one who will, in the end, reign over the whole universe.

Let us stand as we make our profession in Christ. I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY .

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