All Saints Day **01 November 2026**

- As we celebrate this magnificent feast of All Saints, our first reading from the Book of Revelation gives us a marvelous vision of Heaven!
- St. John sees two groups of people: a group of one hundred and forty-four thousand from every tribe of Israel, as well as a great multitude "which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue."
- As for the 144,000 Israelites that St. John envisions, this is a symbolic number that the early Jewish Christians would have understood as the large number of those from the 12 Tribes of Israel who would receive salvation through Jesus Christ.
- The early Jewish Christians reading this passage would have felt assured that the covenantal promises made to all the tribes of Israel would be fulfilled. In other words, they would have understood that a large and perfect representation of the 12 Tribes would be in Heaven.
- On the other hand, the great multitude from every "nation, race, people, and tongue" refers to all the rest of us throughout the ages, from all over the world, who have joined the Church and through Her are saved.
- Together, the 144,000 and the great multitude are those who have "survived the time of great distress; [who] have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb," and who now enjoy the eternal beatitude of Heaven.
- Years ago when we conceived the idea of our mural, we wanted to have an image of Heaven – just as if you're looking through the arches of the apse wall into Heaven itself.
- Central to the mural, of course, is the Holy Trinity, with the Father at the top, with the Holy Spirit right below Him, and then in the very middle of the mural is Christ the Paschal Lamb.
- Gathered around our Lord are His angels, holding the instruments of His Passion, as well as saintly souls from throughout history who now look upon our Lord for all eternity.
- On the right are those from the 144,000 that St. John mentions, the saints of Jewish origin whom we know from Scripture and Tradition, while on the left is a representation of those from that great multitude from every "nation, race, people, and tongue."
- If you look up on the center panel, you'll find two angels right below the Holy Spirit holding a banner which reads: "Come then, Lord, and help your people, bought with the price of your own blood, and bring us with your saints to glory everlasting."
- This prayerful plea comes from the *Te Deum,* and it reminds us of the deepest longing of our hearts: to be saved by God and brought to heavenly glory with all the saints.
- And throughout our church – in our statues and stained glass – are further images of the "great cloud of witnesses", who by their example, "inspire us to rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us…."
- Of course, all of this artwork of the saints is very much intentional. As your pastor, my hope is that our artwork of the saints will inspire all of us to imitate them, to befriend them, and to rely on their intercession.
- Keep in mind, we don't worship the saints. We venerate the saints; we hold them in great esteem for their heroic virtue. Having statues, paintings, and other works of art depicting the saints is our way of keeping them before our eyes for the inspiration they provide us.
- And in truth, when we come to know the saints and befriend them, they help us want Heaven more! They help us in our pursuit of holiness.

- One of the great spiritual enemies of our day is the vice of sloth, by which we lose ardor for the things of God – so often becoming more enamored with worldly things instead.
- Yet the saints help us to shake off our sloth. They give us hope that sin can be conquered and holiness attained. They show us what humanity is capable of when one lives a life of beatitude. Indeed, the saints are the crowning jewels of humanity.
- And when we invite them into our lives through prayer, the saints come to us and make themselves known.
- Many of you know that I love the saints, and I have ever since I became a Catholic. One of my very favorite saints is St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Dozens of times over the years I've prayed novenas to St. Thérèse for various needs – and she always comes through.
- In fact, when she's going to intercede with our Lord to ensure that your prayer is answered, St. Thérèse will often send you a rose as a sign. And I've gotten roses a number of ways over the years – and in some very fun ways.
- Just to tell you one story, I was praying a novena to St. Thérèse about 25 years ago for something quite important. And on Day 8 of the novena, I was having a lunch with some colleagues at a rather cramped Cuban restaurant in Lansing, Michigan.
- Right after we sat down, I felt this guy leaning over me to put something on the table. It was a waiter, and he placed a single red rose in a vase right in front of me. I smiled knowing that it was a sign from St. Thérèse that my prayer was going to be answered.
- Yet, to test her, I said to her silently in prayer: "Thérèse, I really wanted a white rose." 45 minutes later as we were walking out the front door, I was talking and not paying attention to where I was going, and I walked right into a florist holding an armful of white roses.
- The point here, my friends, is that the saints are real, and they look after us and intercede for us because they want us in Heaven! And by their lives of holiness, they show us the way up that steep and rocky path with its narrow gate that alone leads to heavenly glory.
- Just as our reading from Revelations tells us that those in Heaven come from every "nation, race, people, and tongue," so is there a wide variety of saints from every background conceivable – which means that there's a saint for everyone.
- If you already love the saints, keep loving them and praying for their intercession. Our prayers and petitions are pleasing to them. They want to help us and will do so readily.
- But if you don't have a love for the saints, or if you don't know them well or have never prayed for their intercession, now's the time to start! Do some reading and pick one out that attracts you. Allow yourself to be moved by their life story and imitate their virtues.
- Ask for their intercession and trust in their protective care. Name your children after saints and teach them to love them as well.
- And if you ever get the opportunity to visit the tomb of a saint, do so. I've made that a practice in my life, visiting at this point 100s of saints' tombs, and so many prayers and petitions have been answered, not to mention the inspiration I've derived from them.
- As we celebrate this beautiful feast of All Saints Day, may we give thanks to the great cloud of witnesses that surrounds us, who help us by their intercession and witness to grow in holiness and to run the race of life that lies before us.
- With their help, may we be freed from our sins, run our personal race well, and one day join them in the Heavenly kingdom! All you saints in Heaven, pray for us!