

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Nov 1st 2015

Solemnity of All Saints

“Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.”

Among the marvels of our modern and very rapid communication technology, one of the most outstanding is the ever-increasing ability to not simply speak with someone, but to actually see the person we're speaking with. The advent of “Skype” and other similar technology has transformed our communication possibilities. Grateful as we are to be able to speak with someone, we are all the more grateful to see the face of the person on the other end.

On this Solemnity of All Saints, the Church calls us to open our eyes, to see with the imagination of our faith the “great multitude,” the saints who already stand in the presence of God, who behold him face to face, who “see him as he is.” The deepest longing, the deepest desire of their hearts has already been fulfilled.

As we look into our own hearts, as we look at the world around us, we must acknowledge that the desire to see God “face to face,” waxes and wanes. As we come and go in the midst of daily life, we can all too easily lose even our awareness of the place of God in our lives, much less experience an intense desire to behold him as he is. Perhaps we are aware of individuals who, for whatever reason, seem to have no such desire at all. How can this desire be more kindled in our hearts? How might we help awaken it in those for whom it remains nearly extinguished?

To answer those questions, we might turn to the saints. How is that those we call “saints” have lived and died with this great longing, this great desire? One answer to that question may be found in the Beatitudes. Those who have discovered the blessedness of being poor in spirit, of hungering and thirsting for righteousness, of showing mercy and even of experiencing persecution because of the name of Jesus—they are the ones whose desire for God has also grown.

As we look to the saints today, we ask ourselves: are we among the people that longs to see the face of God? Has our desire for this grown, or has it grown cold? On this blessed day, the “great multitude” who stand before the face of God, stand ready to help us by their prayers. May we sense their overflowing desire that we, too, one day might be where they are. May we entrust ourselves to their loving intercession today and ask for the grace of desire, of longing, to see the face of God.

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