

## Homily All Saints - 31st October 2021

Would I ever lie to you? Let's see! If I told you that I once spent the night with a canonised Saint of The Church would it be true? Those who trusted in me are correct. Back in the early eighties when St John Paul I visited The United Kingdom I was asked to interpret for his Italian body guards at Cardinal Grey's residence in Edinburgh. The Holy Father after dinner, from about 8.30pm till almost midnight, spent the time in prayer and adoration before The Blessed Sacrament in a private chapel. Just before midnight he came out and embraced both of us on 'duty' and thanked us for our ministry. He spent about 5 minutes with us before retiring to his room.

In The Book of Revelations St John speaks of a great throng of 144,000 who have come through the great persecution and who have been immersed in the blood of The Lamb. His vision is that these the saints praise and thank God before the throne of Christ, The Lamb of God. They are of all races and cultures and arguably all creeds and religions. What unites them is that they are all people of deep faith who have, in their lives, responded to God's love by loving in return no matter the personal sacrifice or cost. You might say disappointedly, this vision suggests that only relatively few will be saved by the Blood of The Lamb. However don't fret, we must put ourselves in the literary style and mind of the writer.  $12 \times 12 = 144$  and therefore  $12 \times 12000 = 144,000$ . There are 12 Tribes of Israel (embracing the whole nation and people) times 12000 actually means an unmeasurable number of people, too many to be counted and not a finite number as the text suggests. So take heart all you potential saints out there you might just be in!!

Christ in St Matthew's Gospel teaches us HOW to love God and love our neighbour as ourselves in order to earn the name saint. Matthew was writing for a mainly Jewish Community in Jerusalem and wished to portray Jesus as the fulfilment of The Torah (The Law) and the Prophets of Old Testament Scriptures. Christ for Matthew is The Messiah King of David's line and The New Moses, the great hero of The Exodus from Egypt. Unlike Luke who has Jesus proclaiming four blessings and four woes from the plain, Matthew's Christ proclaims The New Law of The Eight Beatitudes, perfecting The Ten Commandments, from a mountain just as Moses proclaimed The Old Law from Mount Sinai.

What is Jesus actually saying in The Beatitudes?: If you want to be a saint you must put your trust totally in God and accept what suffering that might entail with faith and hope; you must be a peacemaker always ready to take the heat out of volatile

situations and show love and calmness; you must show respect for the dignity of your own body, The Temple of The Holy Spirit, and the bodies of others; infinite mercy, unconditional love, deep compassion and unqualified forgiveness must be your mission in life no matter how hurt or abused you have been; you must show gentleness and understanding in all challenging situations and never resort to trading insult with insult, lose your temper or shout; you must seek justice in all your dealings never favouring one party over another no matter your relationship and/or affiliations; you must get used to mourning and crying in your life and carry your cross with trust and hope; you must find time to nourish your spiritual being in prayer, reading Holy Scriptures and celebrating The Sacraments, especially The Eucharist and The Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Pope St John Paul I was a saint long before he died because he lived The Beatitudes in his life. Many of you out there are already living saintly lives by trying your best to live Christ's New Law of Love. Many of our relatives and friends who have gone before us with the sign of faith are part of that heavenly throng who have come through the Great Persecution and have been saved by The Blood of The Lamb. Every time we celebrate The Eucharist we all are united with Christ and The Apostles around the table of The Last Supper, with those at The Heavenly Banquet of The Lamb and with people of faith throughout the world as we praise and thank God in time and space using signs and symbols in the RELIVING of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection. With these beautiful thoughts we should comfort one another. Praised be Jesus Christ!