

## SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS (2024)

Today is the Solemnity of All Saints, a very great day in the Church year. Over the centuries, this Feast has taken different forms, but it has always been about one thing, honoring all those saints in heaven, especially those who do not have their own individual feast days.

Saint Bede, who died in 735, was an English monk and a Doctor of the Church. He said of this feast,

“Today dearly beloved, on one solemn day of rejoicing, we celebrate the feast of all the saints in heaven. In their communion heaven exults; in their patronage earth rejoices, in their triumph holy Church is crowned with glory.”

In our first reading from the Book of Revelation, we hear more about these saints. Saint John who was the author of the Book of Revelation was given a vision of heaven and of the saints; his vision he saw,

“A great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb (that is, before Jesus), wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne and from the Lamb.’”

So, “Who is a saint?”

In answer, a saint is always going to be a person, either human or angelic; there are no animal saints. Next, a saint is someone who is holy. Finally a saint is a member of the Church, either in heaven, in purgatory or here on earth.

That's in general. Now, when we speak of saints in a more narrow sense (as we do today on this Feast of All Saints), we are only referring to those persons, either human or angelic, who are in heaven with God, and they include not just the saints who have their own feast days, but in fact, all of the saints in heaven, all those people who have died and are now in heaven with God.

We call the saints in heaven “The Church Triumphant” because they have conquered over sin and now live with God forever. We can pray to them and ask for their help, and they can pray for us. There are many Saints in heaven including great ones such as the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph and Saint Anthony as well as saints unknown to the world or to just a few people. These may include grandparents or a child that was miscarried or a brother or sister and so on.

Now I should point out that devotion to the saints is a very Catholic. Writing in the second century, one of our ancestors in the faith said, “[Christ] we adore, because He is the Son of God. To the martyrs, on the other hand, we offer the love which is due to disciples and imitators of the Lord, on account of their unsurpassable devotion to their King and Teacher.”

Our love and respect for the saints has taken many forms. As I said, to help us recall them and their lives, we place statues and pictures of them around our homes and churches.

We name our children after saints, so that they might have a patron saint. We celebrate and call to mind the saints on their feast days throughout the year, and we remember how they won their crown of glory in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We also pray to the saints who have been given special care of those in various professions, Saint Luke, the patron saint of doctors; Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of music and musicians, Saint Lawrence, the patron of cooks and restauranteurs. Saint Joseph, patron saint of carpenters.

Not only are there patron saints for the various professions and vocations which we all have, but there are also patron saints for the various needs which we have. Saint Blaise who is invoked against diseases of the throat, Saint Anthony for lost objects, Saint Jude for hopeless cases. Some saints have been entrusted with the care of various countries. Saint George for England, Saint Andrew for Scotland, Saint Boniface for Germany, Saint Stanislaus for Poland and so on.

These saints as well as many, many others should be familiar to us, because they are part of our families, as much as your children or parents sitting next to you. The saints are brothers and sisters to us united by our membership in the Church and in our service to Jesus Christ.

So, on this Feast of All Saints, let us honor and call to mind all the saints, all those who are now in heaven with God our heavenly Father, and not just the famous, but all of those who served God so well during their lives; our grandparents, brothers, sisters, parents and friends. All those who now live with Jesus Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us and of course the Blessed Virgin Mary who is indeed that saint par excellence. Today is the feast of all the saints great and small. Let us strive to imitate them, as today, we pray to them and honor them on this their feast day. Amen.