

THE GREAT MULTITUDE WEARING WHITE ROBES
ALL SAINTS DAY
NOVEMBER 1, 2009

All Saints Day.

All **Hallows** Day—the day after, of course, All Hallows Eve.
Hallows Eve: **Halloween**, the day that we clearly celebrate

- *all the saints*
- the “great multitude
which no one can count,
from every nation, race, people, and tongue,
who stand before the throne and before the Lamb,
wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.
who cry in a loud voice:
‘Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne,
and from the Lamb.’” (1st reading: Revelation 7:9-10)

This celebration dates back to the beginnings of the Christian community.
The early Christians celebrated the anniversaries of martyrs, i.e. *sure saints*.
Gradually, the community began adding to its list of anniversaries
persons it discerned to be particularly holy.

Gregory III (731-741) consecrated a chapel in the Basilica of St. Peter
to all the saints and fixed the anniversary for 1 November.

Gregory IV (827-844) extended the celebration to the entire Church.

In celebrating all the saints, we really and ultimately celebrate
the Holy One who made them “saints”.

Now, sanctity, holiness may sound somewhat abstract.

To me it sometimes does.

“Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord!”

What exactly is *holiness*?

What is it for God to be *holy*?

What is it for *us* to be holy?

And what does holiness have to do with

- everyday life?
- eating, and commuting, and computing,
and doing laundry or the lawn?

Thomas Aquinas, one of these multitude whom we celebrate,
says “by ‘holy’ we signify the purity of divine goodness”.

Hmm: God *is* goodness.

When we say God is holy, we say that He is pure goodness.

For God to be holy is for God to be Himself, *purely good*.

Aha, now, what is *goodness*?!?

A “good” thing, a “good” is something that attracts
and brings a certain fulfillment.

The greater the good, the more it attracts and the more it fulfills.

There are relative goods: e.g. candy and jewels and cars.

There are “absolute” goods

beyond which we do not desire, which we desire for themselves:
human persons.

The good is God, who forever attracts and perfectly and definitively fulfills.

In celebrating all the saints, we celebrate this Good God

- who cannot but love
- to whose attraction these Brothers and Sisters,
whom we also celebrate, responded
Indeed, “they have washed their robes
and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:14)
In other words, they allowed the excess and overflow of divine love
(signified by the Blood of the Lamb)
to take hold of and overflow in them.

To be a saint is

- to let divine love irrigate every fiber of who we are
- to be *totally* in love with God, with Christ, the God-man
- to be very moved by the Holy Spirit

In celebrating all the saints,
we celebrate this Good God who is also attracting us.

God touches us and attracts us,

such that “we are God’s children *now*” (2nd reading: I John 3:2)

Deep inside, we are saints with the saints because we are loved.

And we are increasingly saints

to the extent we allow Christ to take hold of us.

All this requires is a simple, faithfully repeated “yes”
expressed in and with faith, hope, and love.
This does not translate into some extraordinary feeling.
Holiness is not something that we feel,
but something in which we believe and which we receive.
Holiness in us is the result of being loved by the Holy One.
If so, then holiness has *everything* to do with everyday life,
for we are to be loved in everything:
eating, and commuting, and computing, and doing laundry or the lawn.
How deep the Father’s love...

We, gathered here, participate in God’s own happiness.
The saints in “heaven” do so in all that they are.
We look forward to such plenitude of happiness,
for “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2).

We are carried by all the saints.
They communicate divine happiness to us, and lead us to the fullness of it.
We will thank them from the bottom of our hearts
when we see them face-to-face, and realize that we share in eternal glory
because they said “yes” to helping us.