

## **SERMON 805**

24th Sunday after Pentecost

All Saints' Sunday

November 3, 2013

918th Week as Priest

744th Week at St Dunstan's

9th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee

### **WITH THE SAINTS IN LIGHT**

#### **1**

Imagine, on this All Saints' Sunday, that we are given a vision of the Saints in Light, standing together in the Courts of Heaven, gathered before God the Father with the Lamb. They are clothed in white robes, and they are singing in praise and thanksgiving to the Lamb.

On their heads, each wears a crown of glory, and they are aware of themselves and each other in a way that they never knew while on earth. There is no sense of confusion or anxiety, no pain or sadness, no jealousy, no envy, no strife. There is no need to explain or analyze, no desire to question or criticize.

There is, instead, among them, an understanding of reality which is beyond anything we experience in this reality. There is great clarity, and joy, and a bond of affection which is unburdened by broken relationships, or disappointment, or regret.

There is among them, such a spirit of love that it is beyond our power to describe. This love emanates from the **F**ather and the **L**amb, but it also fills the **C**ourts of **H**eaven and the hearts and minds of the **S**aints in **L**ight. We breathe in, and we are filled with the breath of life. Our souls sing out for joy.

What we are imagining is the fullness of **G**od who fills all in all. These are the words that Saint Paul used in his Letter to the **E**phesians, and they are every bit as true in our heavenly vision. It is for us a vision surpassing wonder. We find ourselves unable, as of yet, to look upon the throne of **G**od, or to gaze upon the **L**amb. **B**ut we feel ourselves filled with the fullness of **G**od, and we are home.

## 2

Now we are standing among the **S**aints, and we are wearing robes of the same beautiful material. They are the whitest of white, and yet, because white contains all of the colors, we see as though we were looking through a prism. The beauty is inexplicable, indescribable, a fullness that fills all in all. **A**ll that is shimmers with the *shekinah*, the glory of **G**od. There is an energy which is of **G**od, from **G**od, with which we are filled.

We see those **S**aints that we recognize from a distant time and place, a lifetime ago, a memory of friends, family members, neighbors, and strangers. Our fathers, mothers, grandparents, great grandparents, all of them smiling, shining in the **L**ight of **C**hrist. They greet us as at homecoming.

They welcome us among them, as though they have been expecting to see us. They have been expecting us; they have been waiting—patiently, calmly, eternally. Now their joy is complete.

There are familiar faces that come to us from a storehouse of memory. They were the poor whom you welcomed, and theirs is now the kingdom of **God**. They were the hungry, whom you fed, and now they are satisfied and content. Some were weeping when last you saw them, but now they are laughing and filled with joy.

You recall the words of **Daniel**: The saints of the Most **High** shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever—forever and ever. Yes, it is true! Just as the sacred stories told us—and even more—that which is beyond words, beyond fulfillment, beyond explanation.

**A**mong those familiar faces are others who were rejected, reviled, criticized, and scorned on earth. They are surrounded by saints who lift them up, hold them close, shower them with love. Perhaps you find yourself surrounded by such saints as well, and you feel an acceptance and a sense of belonging that you have never known before.

### 3

**B**ut wait. You *have* known something very much like this acceptance and belonging. **A**nd then it comes to you. It is the beloved community. It is the **Church**. Yes, I remember now.

God the **F**ather put all things under his feet, and he has made Jesus **C**hrist, his only and eternal Son, the head over all things. It is **C**hrist's **C**hurch, which is **C**hrist's body.

#### 4

We return from the heavenly vision. Once again, we find ourselves in this church, this present reality, in our own space and time. And yet, something is different, and will remain different for us for the rest of our lives. We have experienced the holy, and it has changed us for this life. Now we see that the **C**hurch is a *type*, a shadow, a suggestion of the heavenly kingdom. It is a loving community of friends, family members, neighbors, and strangers—and we are gathered together to worship the Lamb.

The **C**hurch is a foretaste of the messianic banquet, and we know in our hearts and minds that the **B**read and Wine *become* the **B**ody and **B**lood of **C**hrist—an outward and visible sign of **G**od's grace. And we are all welcome at the Table. There is room for us at the Table, with all the Saints in Light. We eat the **B**read of **H**eaven, which is the **B**ody of **C**hrist. We drink from the **C**up of **S**alvation, which is the **B**lood of **C**hrist.

And finally, we realize that the space between here and there, earth and heaven, is very thin, and that in this holy place we experience a prefiguring of the communion of saints. We are home. We belong, and we are loved. We truly are surrounded by angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.  
**AMEN.**