

“What the World Does Not Know”

Folks, please understand that I am not trying to be rude --- but --- why are you here? “I’m here because Mom and Dad said I have to go to church” – “Pastor has says you have to be in church and Sunday School if we are going to be confirmed” – “My whole week is out of sorts if I don’t go to church on Sunday.” “I’m here to make my wife ... my boyfriend ... my grandma ... my family happy.”

On this day as we observe All Saints’ Day – we are shown a picture of the Church – not a building, but “all the saints” – all believers who make up the one, holy, Christian and apostolic Church.

And all three of our Scripture readings for today reveal to us why the Church gathers together. The Church gathers together to “worship” – but what does that mean?

Before we get to the Church and her worship – I want to remind you of something that you may already know. It’s what St. John writes in his epistle: “The reason why the world does not know us [the Church, the “children of God”] is that it did not know Him [God, our Father].

The world doesn’t gather here – in church, around the Word and Sacraments of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Oh sure, the world gathers together – but it has other places to worship – at ballfields, in bed, at the bar, or in the backyard.

The world looks at Christians gathering for worship and says that it is a waste of time. What Jesus calls “blessed” – the world says is naïve – or more sharply, nothing but brainwashing.

“The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.” You, the baptized children of God, know Him. You have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit with respect to Lord and His gifts. The children of God know that there is no life apart from Him – and so they are constantly being gathered to receive life from Him.

As I mentioned earlier, all three of our Scripture readings reveal to us the Church gathered around Jesus Christ. The First Reading asks – “Who are these, clothed in white robes?” They are the Church, the saints (“the holy ones”) who wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The Epistle says they are the ones who are purified because their hope for purification is in Christ Jesus alone. In the Gospel, they are the disciples of Jesus Christ who follow Him in faith – who sit at the feet of Jesus to be taught – to be blessed by what He reveals to them.

Who are these saints? They are YOU who know that you need to be purified by the Son of God – you who eat and drink His Body and Blood – you who are washed in the blood of the Lamb – you who bring your children to be clothed in His robe of righteousness, and to be taught what it means to be “blessed.”

In the midst of the crowds of the world – Jesus goes up on a mountain, sits down to teach – and His disciples come to Him. Only He knows what it means to be “blessed” – and He reveals it to all with ears to hear.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,” Jesus says – “those who mourn ... the meek ... those who hunger and thirst for righteousness ... the merciful ... the pure in heart ... the peacemakers ... those who are persecuted.” The world hears that and says “that’s just crazy!”

“The reason why the world does not know [what it means to be blessed] is that it did not know Him.”

You live in the midst of this world – surrounded by their definitions of blessedness – constantly lured to their places of worship – led away from Christ who reveals and gives life to His Church.

The Gospel reading for today is often referred to as His “Sermon on the Mount” – and while it may not be the first sermon that Jesus preached – it does come at the beginning of His public ministry – but it is a sermon that He preaches again and again to those who are gathered to Him.

We must constantly be gathered to Christ – to wash our robes – to be purified – to be taught what it means to be “blessed” – because we are in many ways just like the world! And so we are gathered.

The “poor in spirit” are blessed to receive the riches of Christ and His kingdom. “Those who mourn” their sin, and the death it brings – are blessed to be comforted by Christ’s promise of the resurrection and the life everlasting.

“The meek” do not come to boast before the Lord – but rejoice that He has “exalted the lowly.” “Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” are satisfied as Christ gives them His righteousness.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” “Blessed are the pure in heart” – for having been purified by Christ alone – “they shall see God.” “Blessed are the peacemakers” – for even though the world despises you – God calls you His sons.

Even persecution is a blessing – persecuted because you follow Jesus – slandered and reviled for the sake of the Gospel – because it reveals that you are in Christ Jesus, united to Him in faith – and as He promises, “your reward is great in heaven.”

What are you doing here? You are being washed in the blood of the Lamb – being made holy in God’s sight – being gathered with the whole family of God around His Son, your Savior, Jesus Christ.

Only those whose robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb will live with Him in heaven. And even now, you are purified through the blood of Jesus Christ.

So “blessed” are you – along with all the saints who lived by faith in Jesus, and now dwell in His presence before the heavenly throne. As one Church we praise God for all His blessings – those here in time, and those for all eternity.

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God and so we are.” Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.