

ALL SAINTS DAY – 2020

Rev 7:2-4;9-14

1 Jn 3:1-3

Mt 5:1-12

The opening chapter of JR Tolkien's book *The Fellowship of the Ring*, describes a scene in which Bilbo Baggins is hosting all the hobbits for a party of grand magnificence to celebrate his eleventy-first birthday. It seems to be the party of all parties and I wonder whether the heavenly banquet will be like that. Just imagine conversations like, "Oh, fancy meeting you here, I thought you would be in the other place." "Funny you should say that, I was thinking the same about you."

Today we celebrate the saints of the Church because in the Apostles Creed we say we believe in the Communion of Saints. Because Christians are united in Christ we are united with each other, whether living or departed, whether in heaven, purgatory or on earth. We will sing in our final hymn:- *"O blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine; Yet all are one in thee, for all are thine, Alleluia"* (CP 232 v4.)

The saints are not just role models for us to look up to. They are not simply holy heroes or saintly celebrities. They are sinners and many have struggled to come to faith in Christ and throughout their lives. When we see the uncorrupted bodies of some saints, a photograph or a statue, there should be a spark of admiration in us reminding us that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. We don't pray TO the saints, we ask them to pray FOR us as together we pray FOR the faithful continuing their purification in purgatory. This we will do tomorrow.

I don't know whether you have ever met a saint, but many who are still alive will have met saints like St Theresa of Calcutta, St John Paul 11 and the 15-year-old Blessed Carlo Acutis a teenager who documented all the eucharistic miracles throughout the world and had a deep devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. We should meet more saints through their writings, life and faithfulness. We will be surprised at how much joy, sorrow, rejection doubt and ecstasy we share with them. We are one big happy family, and a St Josemaría Escrivá said, "A saint is a sinner who keeps trying."

Today we will confirm Thomas Garlick, a young man who has been on his faith journey for some time. He will affirm his baptismal promises and receive anointing on his forehead with holy oil in the sign of the cross with the words, "Be sealed with the Holy Spirit." In the Book of Revelation, God's faithful were sealed with a mark on their foreheads before the tribulations began. To be sealed with the Holy Spirit is a sign of identification of God's people and an assurance of spiritual protection.

We prepare to welcome Thomas into the fellowship of the saints and he has chosen Nicholas as his confirmation name after Blessed Nicholas Garlick, a Catholic priest who was martyred for teaching the Catholic Faith in the reign of Elizabeth I. Thomas, may Our Lady of the Southern Cross and Blessed Nicholas Garlick join with us in praying for you.

Msgr Harry Entwistle – Nov 1, 2020