

ALL SAINTS

LECTONARY #667

READING I Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

A reading from the Book of Revelation

I, John, saw another angel come up from the East, holding the seal of the living God. He cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who were given power to damage the land and the sea, "Do not damage the land or the sea or the trees until we put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." I heard the number of those who had been marked with the seal, one hundred and forty-four thousand marked from every tribe of the children of Israel. After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, 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."

All the angels stood around the throne

and around the elders and the four living creatures. They prostrated themselves before the throne, worshipped God, and exclaimed:

This highly descriptive reading brings the end of time to our attention. Let your proclamation paint a picture of the events. Follow the lead of the text when it says "loud."

Build the excitement as you read through the list. They can't say enough, fast enough. Praise is bursting forth.

READING I

Today's first reading presents John's two visions of God's people dealing with the before and after of their trials and persecution. The sand (twelve times twelve times a thousand) is significant within the Book of Revelation. This figure represents inclusion within the Church, with the twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament and the twelve apostles in the New Testament coming together, forming a unified whole. The second vision further reinforces the universal character of the Church by the use of four terms that are slightly synonymous: nation, race, people, and tongue. In this description, we see that the saints in heaven include people from all nations and backgrounds, united in their worship of God. They are also all clothed in white robes. In Revelation, white represents victory and resurrection. As the elder explains toward the end of today's reading, those clothed in white survived the trials and tribulations of this world. Survival in this instance does not refer to staying physically alive; rather, it refers to remaining faithful to God despite outside pressures and concerns.

The most significant aspect of this great multitude of saints is their continual

“Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

Then one of the **elders** spoke up and said to me, **“Who are these wearing white robes, and where did they come from?”**

I said to him, **“My lord, you are the one who knows.”** He said to me,

“These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress, they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 24:1bc-2, 3-4ab, 5-6 (6)

R. Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

The LORD's are the earth and its fullness; One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean,
For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. He shall receive a blessing from the LORD, a reward from God his savior. Such is the race that seeks him, or who may stand in his holy place? that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

READING II 1 John 3:1-3

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

Beloved:

See what **love** the **Father** has bestowed on us that we may be called the **children of God**. Yet so we are.

The reason the world does not **know us**

is that it did not **know him**.

Beloved, we are God's children now,

what we shall be has not yet been revealed. »

For meditation and context:

Recall the lives of the saints, persisting in their faith despite trial and tribulation.

This is a rhetorical question.

“Beloved,” “love,” and “children” call to mind a tender, loving relationship. Express God's love for us in your tone.

The saints are children of God and so are we. How do you embody this identity in your ministry?

act of worship. They hold palm branches, a symbol of victory as well as an allusion to Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. They are joined by the angels, the elders, and the four living creatures in worshipping God. In Revelation, the number seven represents divine perfection/completeness. Hence the acclamation of a seven-fold doxology (“Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might”) by the angels, elders, and living creatures marks the perfect worship that is due to God the Father and that honors the Lamb.

READING II

Today's reading from 1 John stresses God's love for humanity while at the same time bolstering a community suffering persecution. This passage underscores the reality that we are children of God by the grace of God's love for us. During times of trials and tribulations, this love may not seem evident. For this reason, today's reading reminds us that any persecution we undergo comes from the world's inability to recognize God's love. If they do not recognize God's love, they cannot recognize God, who is love. Consequently, they cannot recognize God's love for us, leading to their rejection of God and us, and to our subsequent persecution. And yet this persecution is not the final word. There is a real sense of justice that awaits both the wicked and the righteous. It is in this justice that we are called to have hope, hope that God will make right the wrongs we suffer. Perhaps we will not witness this justice while we are on earth. If that is the case, then we will witness and receive justice when we are with God in heaven. We are purified as we hold onto this hope. This purification is similar to that which the saints in heaven underwent, as

We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure.

GOSPEL Matthew 5:1-12a

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

There are options for the style of your proclamation of this reading. You could emphasize the first "blessed" and subdue it as you continue. This will make the new idea that follows each "blessed" stand out. Or, if you want to highlight the poetic nature of the text, emphasize "blessed" each time, and exaggerate the comma in each sentence.

Notice the change from "they" to "you."

The last verse, an imperative, breaks the pattern. Deliver these lines with the joy and confidence it speaks of.

described in today's first reading. And then, with those saints, we will be able to offer proper worship to God for eternity.

GOSPEL

Today's Gospel reading comes from the Sermon on the Mount, which teaches us what it takes to be a disciple of Jesus. Matthew's concerns deal predominantly with the spiritual struggles of those who seek to follow Christ. The emphasis on the spiritual realm is evident in the first Beatitude, with the reference to the "poor in spirit" and not simply about the materially poor.

The Beatitudes listed are a source of both encouragement and solace to the oppressed and an exhortation to work towards sanctity. As in the reading from 1 John, this passage manifests a preoccupation with divine justice. Ultimately, people want to know that their suffering has a purpose. Those in the early Church suffered much persecution with the very real threat of martyrdom hanging over them. Today's reading provides reassurance that injustices here on earth will be made right in heaven. Their great reward consists of inheriting God's kingdom, where they will receive divine mercy and see God face to face. As heirs to the kingdom, they are now called "children of God." Those currently undergoing persecution can therefore rejoice and be comforted now, in the midst of their trials, in anticipation of their heavenly reward. By adopting the attitudes described in the Beatitudes, as the saints did, all the faithful are encouraged to remain steadfast in their trust in God, in whatever situation they may face, and to give him continual praise and glory. M.B.