

## ***A Repeat!***

*Revelation 7<sup>9-end</sup>; Psalm 34<sup>1-10</sup>; 1 John 3<sup>1-3</sup>; Matthew 5<sup>1-12</sup>*

*See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called the children of God; and that is what we are. [1 John 3<sup>1</sup>]*

Those of us who watch television have had to watch so many repeats during the C19 period – even the Archers on Radio 4 has had to rework old material.

All Saints Sunday is the Sunday in the year that the sermon is usually the same – we mention a few odd saints and then we remind ourselves that all baptised Christians are saints and all that we have to do is live up to it.

How do we know if we are saintlier this year than we were in previous years? Some indication of progress would be useful as this is one end of course exam none of us want to fail!

Every year one of my colleagues always mentioned the 14<sup>th</sup> century St Wilgefortis' whose father had given her away to a pagan king, despite her protests and so she took a vow of virginity and prayed to be made so ugly that the king would not want her as a wife. God answered her prayer, and she grew a beard, which successfully ended the unwanted engagement and caused some unintended consequences - out of anger, her father had Wilgefortis crucified, making her a martyr.

This year it looks as if Pope Francis will soon make the 15 years old Carlo Acutis a saint. He died of leukemia in 2006 and had, prior to that, used the internet to share his faith and even has a miracle attributed to him.

Most of us would agree with CS Lewis who said, *In our present condition the joy of heaven would be an acquired taste!* To be exactly precise, we aren't growing towards being saints, but we are saints and are growing into it! Our sainthood probably looks to God like the blazer worn by a child on their first day in Secondary School – roomy!

- ✘ What we need to hear and to hear again until it sticks are the words in John's Epistle – **See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called the children of God; and that is what we are.** He goes on to

say that **when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.** There is no question involved, no conditional clauses, just **we are** and **we will!**

Our response is to try to live now as if we want to fit in – **all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.**

- ✘ That high bar set for disciples is set out in the Beatitudes. Every time we do this I try to point out that the teaching in Matthew 5-7 is not general teaching for people who want to live a good life, but it is for Jesus disciples, those committed to Jesus as he is to them. My New Testament tutor, Dr Dick France, called this *Jesus' Upside-Down Kingdom.* The values of success and power make way for the values of service and humility.

When we embrace a **poverty of spirit; mourning; meekness** (nb – *controlled strength*); **hunger and thirst; mercy; purity; peace-making; and persecution** then we are **to be congratulated** (the most appropriate translation of *μακαριοι*, **blessed**) for then we belong in **the kingdom of heaven; are comforted; will be satisfied; will receive mercy; will see God; will be called children of God; will be seen as people of God's Kingdom** and follow in the tradition of the **prophets.**

- ✘ After the affirmation that we are **children of God** and after the instructions in the Beatitudes for how we will increasingly feel like we fit in, John opens up his vision of heaven in the Revelation.

In summary we learn that in heaven the focus is on **God** and on the **Lamb.** The activity in heaven is **worship** and it will be absorbing enough for us not to be concerned about any **tribulation** we may have gone through on earth. In heaven we will be **sheltered, hunger and thirst** will be a thing of the past; and **God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes.**

How many of us are saints? How many of us feel like saints?

Until we have graduated we will keep repeating the same message – odd people who make us feel normal or inspirational ones who make us try harder and above all that **we are children of God** – saints!