

November 1, 2026 The Solemnity of All Saints: Washing Robes in Blood

They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The *Book of Revelations* loves shocking us to get our attention. That is the basic methodology of apocalyptic writing. We hear about the plagues and disasters occasioned by the Seven Seals, the Four Horsemen, the Seven Trumpets, and the Seven Bowls of God's wrath.

Today, on the Solemnity of All Saints, *Revelations* gets our attention with a contradiction. Robes are washed white in blood. Bathing a garment in blood would not make it white. It would stain it even worse. But the garments in *Revelations* become white when washed with blood.

It is actually not the garments that are important. It is the people who are wearing them. They are people from all over the world, and from every age, who wash their baptismal garments, their robes, white. They carry palm branches, signs that they are martyrs, witnesses to Christ. The blood that they wash their garments in is the Blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb. This is the Blood of the sacrifice. By washing their clothes in blood, they are joining the Lord in His sacrifice. They are picking up their crosses and following Him.

Who are these people? Some of them are known to us. We remember their names: Peter and Paul, Ignatius and Polycarp, Felicity and Perpetua, Agnes and Lucy, Issac Jogues and John de Brebeuf, Edith Stein and Maximilian Kolbe, just to name a few of the thousands whose names are recorded by the Church as martyrs. Some of their names have been lost by history, but not by God. Along with the martyrs we know, there are hundreds of thousands more whose names are not recorded. No one knows the number of those who died for the faith in Japan, China, Africa and the Americas. No one knows the names of all those who were killed for the faith by the Nazis or the Communists. The number of those killed for being Christians in Moslem countries is staggering. The Center for the Study of Global Christianity estimates that 900,00 Christians were martyred in Moslem countries between the years 2005 to 2015. Genocide did not end with the defeat of the Nazis. Whole areas of Christians, towns and villages where the people follow Jesus Christ have been exterminated in Africa. These people died because their lives were giving witness to Christ. They are martyrs.

Those who died for the faith take first place among the saints, but today's celebration is not limited to blood martyrs. Included in the celebration of All Saints are all those whose lives proclaimed to the world their witness to Jesus Christ. Many of these names we know, such as Benedict and Scholastica, Francis and Clare, Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross, Teresa of Calcutta and John Paul II. These are the canonized saints or those whose sanctity has been affirmed by the tradition of the Church. But there are millions more whose names may have been lost in history but whose lives gave witness to Jesus Christ. They are also being celebrated today.

What then is a saint? A saint is someone who has lived an authentic Christian life. All who have embraced Christianity have been called to realize the presence of Jesus Christ with his or her own unique reflection of the Lord. Those whom Jesus points to in today's Gospel are Blessed because they have refined and defined their existence into their own unique proclamation of the Kingdom of God. They are authentic, true to whom they were called to be. They are poor in spirit. Their lives proclaim that the Kingdom of God matters, not material possessions. They mourn like the Lord mourned over Jerusalem. They mourn for all those who refused to recognize God, who refuse to respond to Grace. They are meek because they fight with love not with their fists. They hunger and thirst for righteousness because they know that the Kingdom of God is one where all are treated justly. They are merciful because Jesus came to bring God's mercy to the world. They are pure of heart, because they have listened to the Lord's admonition to be sincere and not hypocrites. They are peacemakers because Jesus came to transform the world from hatred to love.

We are all called to be saints. We are called to live authentic Christian lives. We are called to be our best selves, those unique reflections of God's presence that he created each one of us to bring to the world.

We cannot do this alone. We call upon the Lord to help us to be whom God created us to be. We call upon Mary and all the saints to ask Jesus to give us the courage to respond to the Grace that He is continually showering upon us.

The Solemnity of All Saints reminds us of those who have made a decision to follow the Lord even if it cost them their lives. Sometimes this cost was martyrdom in the blood of death. Sometimes this cost was the martyrdom in the blood of sacrifice, the sacrifice of determined and dedicated Christian.

The Solemnity of All Saints calls us to look at our own lives and to seek out our true Christian persona. We ask the saints today to help us have the courage to radiate the presence of Christ.

May **we** give witness to Jesus Christ. May **we** wash our baptismal garments in the Blood of the Lamb.