

*Which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*

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We concluded the Octave of all Saints this past Friday, and it is fitting that we wrap this past week up with an Epistle that summarizes all our Trinity by reminding us to give thanks unto God the Father, *which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*<sup>1</sup> The Scriptures appointed for this morning are beautiful and mystical. The Old Testament lesson, in particular, which includes one of my favorite passages from Malachi, when the prophet and says, that *those who fear the Lord and [meditate] on the name of the Lord...they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels*<sup>2</sup>, points to a spiritual and mystical meaning. This Sunday we are reminded that the saints of God are described as being *in light*, having an inheritance of great value, and elsewhere in Scripture as shining and running *to and fro like sparks among the stubble*. But the imagination is quickened with the words of Malachi, *when I make up my jewels*. To imagine that our calling as Christians is to be compared with precious jewels as we are numbered with the saints is remarkable. We are called not only to be *His very own*<sup>3</sup> but to be of great worth and value, and precious. Our worth and value will sparkle and shine more than costly stones and regal adornment. The great Anglican Priest and Theologian, Fr. Pusey, explains how we are to be compared with precious jewels when he points out a better translation is those who fear God and *esteem, or prize*, his name will be themselves *much prized, made great store of, and guarded. Such are Christians, bought at a great price; but much more evidently such shall they be...in all eternity...[and]...not by their own merits, they shall be such, but by His great mercy.*<sup>4</sup> This is what is so moving about the Kingdom of Heaven. We shall be prized and considered like precious gems because we prized God and treasured our relationship with Him.

In the Kingdom of Heaven, it is the outcast, the belittled, the neglected who are often among the greatest treasures or precious jewels of heaven. We see this in the poor woman with the issue of blood in this morning's Gospel. This woman was an outcast of society because she was ritually unclean. She was likely reduced to a life of poverty; she was probably so impoverished of earthly wealth and even friendship that she could find no one to supplicate Jesus on her behalf. Yet she has great faith and great humility. She is afraid to trouble the Lord, and in her desperation, she realizes that if she could only reach out and touch the hem of His robe she might be healed. She does not ask Him to lay His hand upon her, nor does she ask Him to speak the word only and make it so. Imagine this woman's humility, she has suffered for twelve long years, and she does not want to interrupt the Lord as He goes to raise the dead daughter of the important ruler. Whether or not this is Jairus, the ruler of the local synagogue, the well-known religious leader, or someone even more important, she must have thought her illness less important than Jesus' raising the dead. Her great faith, and her great humility, is rewarded, she is healed, and the Lord stops and turns around and commends her great faith. Here we see the kind of faith possessed by the great saints. This woman had already placed her hope in heaven, she had exhausted the medical knowledge of her day, and so finally, with

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<sup>1</sup> Colossians 1:12

<sup>2</sup> Malachi 3:16-17

<sup>3</sup> Titus 2:14

<sup>4</sup> Pusey, E.B. (1977) 'Malachi', in *Barnes' Notes On the Old and New Testaments*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House (Minor Prophets II), pp. 495–496.

nowhere else to turn to she places her hope for healing, for wholeness, solely in the Lord. She puts this hope into action through faith, and because of the great overflow of Christ's mercy, grace, and love she was healed instantly.

We see this same kind of humility and faith in the ruler who comes to Jesus asking for a miracle. Notice he does not send a servant or messenger but comes to Christ himself. Because his situation has also hit rock bottom, he has no one else to turn to. What faith and hope he must have had to see past the finality of death, and through his fatherly tears, for a glimmer of hope in this man called Jesus. Jesus enters his home, in which the mourners have already been called and the funeral preparations are beginning and takes his daughter by the hand and, she is raised her to life.

What is this *inheritance of the saints in light*<sup>5</sup> that we hear St. Paul speak of then? It must relate to being counted precious because we count God precious. It is God's precious and great overflowing mercy, grace and love. If we had any hope for a worldly inheritance promised to us, we are reminded that material wealth and sainthood do not usually go together. In fact, the saints show us how to order our lives in such a way that we can rise above the material and worldly. Like the woman with the issue of blood, and the ruler who came to Jesus in the Gospel, we are invited treasure and cherish our hope and faith in heaven and in Christ alone. We are reminded that the followers of God, as His prized possessions and inheritors of the saints, will be marked by *patience and longsuffering with joyfulness*<sup>6</sup>. This kind of long suffering and joyfulness are unshakeable. Take for example, St. Lawrence, who refused to turn his parish's finances over to the Roman Emperor and was grilled alive for it. But he did bring the Church's treasures to the emperor, he brought the poor and the sick, the widows and orphans, the true treasures of the Church and of the Kingdom of Heaven. And let us not forget the Apostles John and Peter, who seeing a disabled man begging before the Temple gate, said to him those famous words, *silver and gold have I none, but such as I have given I thee, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.*<sup>7</sup> The man leaped and danced with them as they entered the temple.<sup>8</sup> Let us not forget the long list of saints, down through the ages, who left everything, money, wealth, luxurious and lavish lifestyles for the sake of Jesus Christ, like St. Anthony of Egypt, St. Francis, St. Benedict, St. Clare and St. Scholastica. Even monarchs have earned the halo, like St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. Edward, the Romanovs, and many others, who traded in an earthly crown for an heavenly one.

How could these great saints walk away from such luxurious and wealthy lifestyles? Some even walked away from great fortunes or gave it all away to the poor. They were able to do this because, as the Epistle teaches us this morning, they had learned, and many of them the hard way, to hope in the treasure laid up for them in heaven. They took the admonition of the Gospel seriously, when Jesus said, *lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*<sup>9</sup> The saints forfeited high office,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Colossians 1:11

<sup>7</sup> Acts 3:6

<sup>8</sup> Acts 3:7

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 6: 19-21

turned down honours and rejected favors, fearing it may entangle their souls. Like St. Thomas a Becket, St. John Vianney, and St. Catherine, they took the scripture seriously, *place not your hope in princes, nor in any child of man; for there is no help in them...Blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God.*<sup>10</sup> We are not all called to give up everything, sell everything we have, and give the proceeds to the poor, but we are to place our faith and hope in both the treasure of Jesus Christ, who carries us home to Heaven, and in Heaven itself, which is more precious than any worldly fortune. Where this may hit close to home this morning is the realization of how joyfully elated or despairing, we found ourselves over the results of a certain election this past week. We must always remember that true joy is never found in any political party or candidate, nor anywhere else in this world. Our faith is to be in Christ alone, that come what may, our joy and hope unshaken in Christ our King.

May the Holy Spirit teach us to esteem and prize the Holy Name of Jesus, and to place our faith and hope in heaven, that our faith may be unshakeable. The church prays this for us this morning so that we may one day be numbered among the saints in heaven, among those described as God's precious jewels. Let us remember that the inheritance of the saints in light is indeed all the great spiritual treasures of the Kingdom of Heaven. We take the first steps towards renewing our hope and joy this morning at Mass, remembering that even this, the greatest of graces given to us by Christ, is due to an overflow of God's joy and pleasure towards us. As we remember the words of Dr. Pusey, that the Christian is *much prized...[and]...bought at a great price; [and] much more...shall they be...in all eternity...[and]...not by their own merits, but by His great mercy.*<sup>11</sup> Amen.

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<sup>10</sup> Psalm 146: 2 & 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.