

## 2021 All Saints

1. **Did I ever tell you about the saint who said while he was still a seminarian, “I cannot do without the memory of heaven”?** So intense was his desire for heaven that “his spiritual director prohibited him from speaking of it or thinking of it any further?” This was the beatified first martyr of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions: Blessed Giovanni Battista Mazzucconi (1826-1855). Less than a week ago we celebrated the funeral Mass for our confrere, Fr. Placidus, at which we heard about the groan of all creation awaiting the revelation of the sons and daughters of God. This verse came back to me today as I sat gazing out of my office window looking east. The glorious sunshine began pouring into my room as soon as the sun crested Mount Sumas. But below me all nature was almost stripped of her glory. As Beatrice, in the Divine Comedy would say, beholding the glory of heaven and the saints, the glory of God and his saints is like a smile on the universe. Life is destined to end in joy and glory. Blessed Giovanni was right after all, **“We cannot do without the memory of heaven.”**

2. **But our own desires and dispositions change very rapidly.** “The Church of all the first followers awaits us, but we do nothing about it. The saints want us to be with them, but we are indifferent. The souls of the just await us but we ignore them.” (St. Bernard, Liturgy of the Hours, vol. 4, p. 1526-1527, Office of Readings for Nov. 1). Can you guess the beatitude that is the most readily accessible to us without much effort? Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for holiness, or righteousness; they shall be satisfied. Each day we hunger and thirst, some of us more than three times a day! **How can we maintain and keep strong our desire for holiness?**

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Philippe, *The Eight Doors of the Kingdom: Meditations on the Beatitudes* (New York: Scepter, 2018), 107.

3. **Our first reading gives us a hint.** Two visions are presented to us. One contains the 144 000, a number symbolic both of the twelve tribes of Israel and of the 12 apostles of the Lamb. This refers to the whole Church, both covenants. Israel, too, will one day be saved. In the second vision those around the throne are all the righteous of every tribe and race and people and nation. “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:14) These are those who may not believe or know the Lord but are still able to trust in the goodness of God and not lose hope in their trials and their hour of death. They are still saved mysteriously by the blood of Christ, who alone knows who is joined to his offering of blood for all people. **Keeping our desire for holiness alive has a lot to do with trusting in God even when all the leaves of our tree have fallen to the ground, that is, in the face of suffering and death.** “It is the determination and courage to be formed by God in all the ways he employs in his merciful wisdom: his Word, life’s events, the impact of others...”<sup>1</sup> Our trust enables us to remain in contact with Christ. As long as we are in contact with Christ, holiness is possible.

4. **Our second encouragement to holiness comes from the second reading:** “Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” (1 John 3:2-3) **Sometimes when we look down from**

**the sun pouring into our lives on to our lives as they truly are, our souls are like the trees all stripped of their glory.** In those moments it is easy to believe the lies we tell ourselves: “I am a failure!” or “I am not loved by anyone” or “I do not belong to anyone!” etc. We hold on to these like profession promises! Instead, our desire for holiness increases when in spite of our frequent failings we are more grateful to God who forgives us. In spite of our struggle against our weaknesses, we can accept them and grow in greater compassion for our neighbour. God’s love anchors us in the truth. His word expresses his righteousness, his holiness. “Beloved, we are God's children now.” To be born of God is to be God’s child now, to hold on to his Word of truth and let it anchor our souls in his holiness.

5. In this Eucharistic celebration, Jesus comes to us in a very easily understandable way. He says to us, “Come receive me so that you can become like me.” Our hunger and thirst for holiness then is maintained and strengthened in us when we remain in contact with Jesus, whether by faith or by the sacraments.

5. This fourth beatitude challenges us to dig deep into our desires and ask ourselves, “For what do I really hunger and thirst?” Can I put aside the little things that are not God’s will for me so that the glow of holiness can become a flame? Can I

hope against hope in the midst of my struggles so that the grace of God can become the raging fire of all my desires?

Not long before he was martyred, at Woodlark Bay, Papua New Guinea, Blessed Giovanni wrote:

“I do not know what He is preparing for me in the journey I begin tomorrow. I know one thing only, if He is good and loves me immensely, everything else – calm or storm, danger or safety, life or death, are merely changeable and passing expressions of the beloved immutable, eternal Love. Yes, my beloved brethren, we have another country, another home, a kingdom where we must all meet, where there will no longer be separations or departures, where past sorrows and danger will merely serve to increase our consolation and glory.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> From <https://anastpaul.com/2019/09/07/saint-of-the-day-7-september-blessed-giovanni-battista-mazzucconi-1826-1855-martyr/> (Accessed 2021.xi.1)