

## Fr Prior's Homily for the Feast of All Saints 2015

The liturgy is founded on the celebrations of the mysteries of the Lord but alongside and within this cycle there is a second rhythm: the cycle of the saints. They gravitate as a circle of disciples around the person and the teaching of Our Lord.

In their lives and in their death, the Saints speak of Jesus and bear witness to Him. We should love Jesus in the Saints and the Saints for Jesus. Benedict's humility is an image and a participation of Jesus'. Francis' poverty proclaims a feature which is fully realised in Jesus. Lawrence's or Oliver Plunkett's martyrdoms share in the love of Jesus' death for all. And so on.

When we enter an Orthodox church, we admire and reverence the icons. In the West too, many churches are full of representations, in carving, painting or stained glass. Our Abbey church is very poor in this respect. It belongs to another tradition, in which the stress is on simplicity and directedness. In many monastic churches, the number of images is limited.

The first tradition, with many images of the Saints, seems to announce: "God in all", whereas the tradition this building belongs to says: "God over all". These are two aspects of the mystery we celebrate today, the Solemnity of All Saints. God is great in His saints. At the same time, God is greater than all His Saints. All Saints, already during their life on earth, but now fully in heaven, focus on Him, adore Him, praise Him, and celebrate Him.

The heavens are full of a multitude of Saints, each with her or his personality and history, each of them showing a special aspect of God's greatness: His Mercy, His Love, His Strength, His Patience, His Humility. The communion of all Saints in glory is a harmonious concert of beauty and praise in which the diversity of the spiritual world echoes the infinite Beauty and

Riches of God's inexhaustible Mystery. Fra Angelico painted the Saints graciously dancing in paradisiacal landscapes in circles of love, light, colours and beauty, in the peaceful joy of a redeemed and renewed world.



All this beauty, all this love, all this light and peace come from God and are directed towards Him in an incessant chorus of praise. God Himself is celebrated by His Saints and in His Saints. God alone is manifested in the Saints as the communion He is in Himself. The Saints' dance is an echo and an image – indeed, an icon – of the communion of the Divine Persons in the One God which we call the mystery of Trinity.

And here is one of the teachings of the great feast we are celebrating today. Nobody ever became a Saint alone. Saints are men and women of communion. Holiness is charity, because God is Love in the Trinity of Father, Son and Spirit. We grow in holiness in the exact measure we become more and more women and men of communion. We open ourselves to the deepest mystery of God in the exact measure we make of fraternal love the most important task of our daily lives. May the example and the intercession of All Saints grant us the desire and then the grace to follow their way, to join in their dance of love within the Heart of God!