

Fourth Sunday of Easter C - They washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb

May 11, 2025

In this Sunday's Second reading from the book of Revelation we hear about a **large multitude** that stands before the great throne of God in heaven. These are the ones who have "**washed their robes**" in the blood of the Lamb. What **symbolism** is there in the washing of robes? The symbolism of this action can be interpreted if we understand that the blood of the Lamb is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. By "washing our robes" in the sacrifice of Christ, we are: repenting of our sins accepting Jesus as Saviour, uniting ourselves to the suffering of Christ. Many saints have told us that embracing the **daily sacrifices** that come our way is part of the Christian life. **Calvary** is a mountain we all must climb! To stand before the throne, we must wash our robes! **St. Francis de Sales** in his book *The Introduction to the Devout Life*, has a simple but beautiful passage regarding the daily crosses in life. He writes that we can win the heart of Jesus by accepting the small daily sufferings. He lists some of them: "the headache, the toothache, the heavy cold; the tiresome peculiarities of a husband or wife, the broken glass, the loss of a ring, a handkerchief, a glove; the sneer of a neighbour; the effort of going to bed early in order to rise early for prayer or communion, the little shyness some people feel in openly performing religious duties... Be sure that all these sufferings, small as they are, **if accepted lovingly**, are most pleasing to God's goodness". This week let's make a commitment to embrace a daily sacrifice and begin now to "wash our robes"!

Frank was an everyday, white collar worker, trying to make it in the business world. He wanted to provide the best for his family. And he could have done so much better, but he was usually passed over when it came time for promotions. You see, in the eyes of his colleagues, the other guys in particular, Frank was not a team player. Why? Because he did not join in with the other guys on some of their activities during business trips. Frank wouldn't mind meeting in the hotel bar for a few drinks nor going to a restaurant for dinner. But he didn't want to go bar hopping or to a strip club. He'd go to his room after dinner, checked in with his wife Sally to see how her day was going. Even if he and Sally were not at their best with each other, maybe they had words the night before or that morning, still Frank always called and Sally knew she was loved. Now you would think that Frank's behaviour on business trips would have no bearing on his job, but it did because most of the time one or two of the guys could be Frank's boss or his boss' boss. These guys would be irritated that Frank was not there. Some of his friends told him that he needed to go along, play the game, make believe he was having a good time, if need be. But Frank was not going to get into that stuff. Now he knew there was a possibility that his absence at these excursions into the dark might be in the minds of his bosses when a promotion was being considered, but Frank had a choice to make. He just would not go along. So he did not get the best promotions, or many for that matter. Frank washed his robe white in the Blood of the Lamb. He sacrificed going along with the guys, not joining them in their fun, and he was bloodied for it. But Frank loved Sally, and more than that, he loved the Lord. His robe was white, washed in the blood of the lamb. Now Sally pretty much faced the same situation, or at least one similar to Frank's. Sally's problem involved other girls. Sally needed female friends, and Frank was perfectly understanding that she needed to go out an evening a week to be with other women. Sally found a group that met her needs. She joined a group of quilters. She enjoyed the quilting and being with a bunch of ladies, mostly her own age, and talking and telling stories and laughing. She needed this and loved going. At least for the first six months. That's when Madeline joined the group. Madeline evidently had some issues both at home and outside her home. She would talk about her husband, or about this or that other person. In a short time all the girls were talking about their husbands, or about some other girl that was not there. The gossip became outright malicious. Sally knew this was wrong, but she really wanted to be with the other girls. Finally, after a particular evening when the conversation became outright vicious, Sally decided to quit the group. She really missed her girl time, but she did not want to be drawn into all this negativity. She knew this was wrong, very wrong. So, she stopped going. And it hurt. She got bloodied, because, of course, she knew they all would be talking about her. Sally kept her integrity. She washed her robe white in the blood of the Lamb.

We all have to do this. We all have to wash our robes white in the blood of the Lamb. Sure, we would like a religion that was not demanding, one that would not affect our personal lives. But then we really would not be "tied to God," as the word religion is defined etymologically. Nor would we be allowing the Good Shepherd to protect us from the lure of evil. I speak particularly to myself here, when are we going to realize that there is a cost

to discipleship? When are we going to realize that if we are sincere in our desire to follow Christ, it is going to cost us? We will be bloodied. We will all have to wash our robes white in the blood of the Lamb. Most likely we will not have our lives threatened if we refuse to renounce our Christianity. We will not be burned to death like Lawrence or Polycarp, we will not be thrown to the wild beasts like Ignatius of Antioch or Perpetua and Felicity. We will not have our heads severed like Thomas More or those sixteen Carmelite nuns killed during the reign of terror in France. But there is a high probability, 100% in fact, that every single one of us, has had to or will have to choose to live the Way of the Lord, will have to choose to believe that there is more than the here and now, and will have to sacrifice present pleasure for eternal gain. Every single one of us will have to choose to be bloodied, to feel hurt of some sort, because we are committed to following Jesus Christ. Christ our good shepherd is calling each of us by name as we journey through life by different ways. We are all called to have a special vocation. We need to ask for God's help to make the right choice in our calling. The most special calling facing us all is to be Christ to others in times of need, to be healers in time of sorrow, towers of strength in times of distress and a shoulder to lean upon when support is needed. Every single one of us must choose to wash our robes white in the Blood of the Lamb. May we have the courage to be Catholic, to set a good example of our faith to help the growth of our children's faith.

Fourth Sunday of Easter is also known as Vocations Sunday or Good Shepherd Sunday, and is marked as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. The purpose of this day is to fulfil Jesus' instruction to "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:38). As late Pope Francis wrote: "Dear sisters and brothers, On this, the 62nd World Day of Prayer for Vocations, I wish to extend to you a joyful and encouraging invitation to become pilgrims of hope by generously offering your lives as a gift. A vocation is a precious gift that God sows in our heart, a call to leave ourselves behind and embark on a journey of love and service. Every vocation in the Church, whether lay, ordained or consecrated, is a sign of the hope that God has for this world and for each of his children. Nowadays, many young people feel dismayed as they look to the future. Often they experience insecurity about their prospects of employment and a profound identity crisis, a crisis of meaning and values, which the confused messages of the digital world only aggravate. The unjust treatment of the poor and vulnerable, the indifference of a complacent and self-centred society, and the brutality of war all threaten the hopes for a fulfilling life that young people cherish in their hearts. Yet the Lord, who knows the human heart, does not abandon us in our uncertainty. He wants us to know that we are loved, called and sent as pilgrims of hope. We, the adult members of the Church, and priests in particular, are called to acknowledge, discern and accompany the young on their vocational path. You, young people, for your part, are called to set out on that path, together with the Holy Spirit, who awakens in you the desire to make your lives a gift of love."