

If you pay attention to movie reviews, then you probably know what a Spoiler Alert is. A spoiler is when a reviewer reveals a film's crucial plot point in their review. If you find out what it is before you see the movie, it would spoil the element of surprise. Therefore, the reviewer issues a Spoiler Alert, giving you the chance to stop before you learn too much. Or, if you can't wait to find out how the story ends, you may proceed.

On this Festival of All Saints, then, I need to issue this Spoiler Alert. Today, Holy Scripture is going to reveal how your story ends. It will tell how the story ends for everyone who has been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. I don't know about you, but I think I've read every Spoiler Alert I've ever seen, and I would definitely recommend we go ahead and read this one, too. It is not there for us to ignore. It is there to encourage us. It is there to inspire confidence in us. So let's take a look at the final scene of our story—our story made real through Jesus, our Lord.

You're probably aware that the book of Revelation is filled with bizarre imagery, Hebraic number symbolism and repeated references to the Old Testament. It certainly must be the most controversial book in the Bible. For such reasons, many Christians want to leave the book of Revelation alone. It all sounds too weird and scary. But we dare not ignore it. Believe it or not, there are scenes of astounding beauty to be found in Revelation.

Our First Reading today is one of them. It is a vision of the saints in triumph—a picture of heaven itself. In this vision we see a host arrayed in white—a crowd of people so big that it is uncountable. The people in this vision are wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They are people who have been purified in the blood of the Lamb. They are wearing the robe of holiness that was draped over them at their baptism. And they are holding palm branches in hand—a gesture of praise that happened on earth, remember? Back then it was welcoming the Savior to his holy city—the city where his mission would be completed; here in this scene of heaven, the saints are welcoming Jesus home. And this is their shout of praise: “We are saved by our God who sits on the throne and by the Lamb!”

Here's the Spoiler: **Because Jesus became fully human, lived perfectly and then gave His life as a perfect offering, you will be one of those white-robed worshippers.** The book of Revelation sends the clear message: remain faithful to God, and this is what you have to look forward to: you will see Jesus in person, the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world. You will worship Him with the entire number of believers from every time and place. You will serve the Lord in perfect happiness. You will want for nothing and will lack nothing. Well, that's not entirely true. You will lack sorrow. You will lack grief. You will lack pain and suffering. You will lack sadness, disappointment, worry and fear. Those things you will lack. Those things will be lost forever as you look at the face of your Savior Jesus, the Shepherd and the Lamb, the Alpha and Omega, Your King and your brother. It will finally be Him. Jesus. He's bringing you there. He put the robe on you. He put the song of faith in your heart. He will bring you through the valley of death into a celebration that eclipses your happiest moments here on earth.

That's the Spoiler. This is how your story ends, but as you can see, it's really not an ending at all. Knowing that this is God's promise to you ought to totally change the way your life gets lived. But does it?

All too often, I'm afraid that we are so distracted by life in this world that we don't give much thought to life with Christ that never ends. The cares and concerns that trouble us get right up in our faces, so that we can't see past them. The idea of heaven is pleasant, but distant. It isn't until we come face to face with death that these promises start to really break through to us. But don't you see: what you know your future to be changes your present? For instance, if you're having a bad week, but you know next week you're on vacation, that changes something, right? It makes things easier to handle. Well, we who know Jesus have a far better promise out in front of our whole lives. And what you know your future to be changes your present. Are you living in such a way and making decisions in a way that shows that you really believe that heaven is your destination?

It might be that, for as much time as we've spent in church, we're still not all that clear about how you end up in heaven. We sit here observing an All Saint's Day, but we wear the "saint" title awkwardly, if we claim it at all. It is time to change that. You need to realize that yes, indeed, you are one of God's saints. Why? Because that's what God says you are.

That's what he calls those whom he has chosen and adopted in Baptism and washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. The apostle Paul also does it on numerous occasions in his letters. He calls the members of the congregations he wrote to "saints," which was kind of strange, considering he was usually writing to them to tell them to get their act together. But that's the tension in which we live. We know we don't deserve to be called saints. We don't deserve to be called children of God. We know that when it comes to being holy, well, that's a joke, right? I know that if a judge and jury were ever to sift through the evidence of my life, they would be able to come up with incident after incident that would disqualify me from sainthood.

But here's great news. The only Judge that counts isn't looking at your life that way. He looks at Jesus' cross and empty tomb: He looks at Jesus' actions and His record, and because of those—because of Him—he names us saints. So that's what we must be. Just as he calls ordinary bread and wine his body and blood; just as he calls a bit of water with his name "a washing of rebirth and renewal," if God calls us saints, we must be saints, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Are you going to tell God he's wrong? That he's made a mistake? You are someone for whom Jesus was rejected and beaten and killed. Being called a saint isn't an achievement; it's a gift. Receive it. Wear your robe with distinction.

Spoiler Alert: Jesus has paid your way to heaven with His precious blood. The beauty—the glory—the joy—the perfect love of heaven—it's only a matter of time before you and I will experience it. Let this future change your present.