

Revelation 7:9 (from the First Reading)

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.*

## FAMILY REUNION

Some of my favorite family quotes include ...

- *A tree without roots will fall over.*
- *Every family tree has some sap in it.*
- *I trace my family history so I know who to blame.*
- **Robert Frost** ...  
*Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.*
- **Bill Cosby** ...  
*Human beings are the only creatures on earth that allow their children to come back home.*
- **Bob Hope** ...  
*I grew up with six brothers. That's how I learned to dance -- waiting for the bathroom.*
- **Jerry Seinfeld** ...  
*There is no such thing as "fun for the whole family."*

It has been said that an effective form of birth control is the --  
FAMILY REUNION.

So, what do we make of this heavenly vision? Given our experience or lack thereof with traditional family gatherings held on a grand scale in a large public park around picnic food and a softball game, how many of us are looking forward to the party attended by this overwhelming (Gk: *ochlos polus*) *great multitude*, this huge crowd of baptized believers from every nation, tribe, people, and language of the world?

Most *baby boomers* (60+) would opt for a Star Trekkie Convention, or an Elvis Impersonator Party at Vegas, or an instant replay of their favorite television shows like Bonanza, Everybody Loves Raymond, or NCIS. But *not* this ancient vision of John! No wonder most *millennials* (30-) are done with church. Today's techno-kids see no relevance to antiquated concepts like all the company of heaven praising the Lamb at a --  
FAMILY REUNION.

People don't have time for such things. Our families are too disjointed. Honestly, I can't remember the names of my nephews and nieces (or their kids), and I have yet to meet some of the dozens of cousins in the rest of the family. I see what they look like on *Facebook*, sometimes an e-mail is sent to upgrade current contacts among my immediate siblings, but unless someone is graduating from high school, I never have anything to do with most of my family tree -- unless, of course, someone's child wants a graduation gift. Unfortunately, that's the world of the 21st century.

No wonder we have trouble with this text. Most of us have either never seen or planned, or ever been a part of anything like this celebration we call a --  
FAMILY RENUNION.

Is this one of those things our parents said we would like once we got there?

All Saints' Day is about winning it all, going the distance, and celebrating our salvation by grace through faith in Christ as it is described here (text).

It wasn't always like this. The first day the church gathered to remember those who were *martyred* (Gk: *martureo*) happened shortly after their death at the burial site. There were some prayers and some words for the designated "saints" who died in Christ, those who died because they testified about the Gospel of salvation. Each year there was a special service, which was fine until the list of martyrs, or saints, to remember kept getting longer and longer. Not until 837 AD did the church decide to proclaim a festival day to honor all saints. During the Reformation, this was understood as a day for all baptized believers in the one true Christian Church. It was called *All Hallows*, referring to *the holy ones*. (And the day before was *All Hallows Eve*, or *Halloween*).

The church shares John's vision and compares it to a blessed --  
FAMILY REUNION.

Heaven will be alive with created beings everywhere; millions and millions of them! The music will be amped to the highest degree; the praise will be deafening! We will wake up and find ourselves in a better place, even more glorious than we can imagine! Christ our Lord will be there to welcome us. Everything we have studied and struggled to remember from the Scriptures will make sense; in fact, it will help us to appreciate God's gift of eternal life. Heaven will be a gathering of international saints, covered in white robes symbolic of the blood and righteousness of Christ imputed to us, waving palm branches to proclaim the victory over sin and death by our Savior, accompanied by the loud chanting that all the credit for our salvation goes to God the Father almighty, and to the Lamb. In his glorious presence we will stand acquitted, as washed clean, spotless and wrinkle-free saints.

We will be going to a better place. No more tears. No more fears. No more jeers from an unbelieving world. Only cheers for God and the Lamb!

We will be in the presence of God almighty! No heavy hearts. No grief. No more pain. No sickness. No more medication. No worries. No funerals. No more storms to endure caused by sin. Only safety and security. Standing room only among the saints singing and praising God and the Lamb forever and ever.

According to Scripture, heaven will be absolutely stunning like a beautiful bride (Rev. 21:27; 22:15). The Holy City called the New Jerusalem will shine with brilliance beyond description; she will be like a precious jewel – like jasper – clear as crystal and radiate the glory of God (Rev. 21:9-11). The bride of Christ, or the church of all true believers, will make a grand entrance like a royal princess, stepping down a transparent stairway into the heavenly banquet hall where she will be led to her place at the Lord's Table by the calm reassuring hand of Christ her Lord.

Surrounded by baptized believers everywhere!

- Our joy will be complete (Ps. 16:11; 17:15; Mt. 18:10)
- We will find perfect rest (Heb. 4:9-10; Rev. 14:13)
- There will be no more hunger, thirst, hardships, or tears (Rev. 7:16-17)
- No more sorrow, death, mourning, crying, or pain (Rev. 21:4)
- We will have eternal life (2 Cor. 4:17)
- We will serve God in the church triumphant forever! (Rev. 7:14-15)
- *We will see Christ as he is* (1 John 3:2, *today's epistle*)

One contemporary Christian singer, *Sandi Patti* offers these words (1984) ...

It's a though we see through clouded glass  
Our eyes cannot see past our veil of tears.  
But there beyond the edge of time

Is wisdom so divine.  
And soon in majesty He'll come  
To take His people home.  
And in that bright and glorious day  
We shall see Him as He is.

To me that sounds like a great --

FAMILY REUNION.

In Jesus' Name,  
A M E N



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