

November 1, 2020
Feast of All Saints
Matthew 5:1-12a

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

Background:

The readings for The Solemnity of All Saints are especially chosen for this celebration.

In Matthew’s gospel, this text is from his description of Jesus’ early ministry. Jesus has chosen four to be his apostles, Andrew and his brother Peter, and two other brothers, James and John. Jesus has been in the synagogues proclaiming the reign of God and curing people. With the spread of his reputation, more people are coming to hear him. In the first verse of the text, Matthew states that Jesus took his disciples apart from the crowd to teach them privately.

Being a follower of Jesus means more than traveling with him. Jesus expects the disciples to learn from him and to shape their lives by his teachings. As Matthew describes Jesus’ instruction to his followers, he is drawing on his community’s familiarity with Moses, who went up the mountain and brought back the commandments from God. Here, Jesus takes his disciples up the mountain and sits with them, assuming the position of a teacher. He is laying down a new set of commandments. These commandments encourage behavior that brings a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment and discourages those things that are destructive. Certainly, what he advocates is contrary to the prevailing attitudes of the day. In the wisdom tradition, Jesus presents a way of life that one is to strive after, rather than laws to be obeyed.

The values that Jesus advocates in the beatitudes run contrary to those held by society in general. Throughout Matthew’s gospel, Jesus is described as the one who is poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungering for righteousness, merciful, pure of heart, and a peacemaker. These beatitudes look to a future time when God’s presence will be brought to fullness on earth and in eternity. That future day has begun to appear in the person of Jesus. Jesus teaches his followers, by the example of his own life, how to live their lives reflecting the values of the reign of God. Without a belief in the reign God unfolding now and our future destiny, living the values described by Jesus for his followers would appear to be foolish.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is your gut response when you hear this text?
2. Do you know individuals who you would characterize as poor in spirit, meek, hungering for justice, clean of heart, or peacemakers?
3. What values seem to be most important to them?
4. In what ways are they blessed? In what ways are they foolish? In what ways are they a stumbling block?
5. Who are the people who help you to learn (or mentor you) in your desire to live as a follower of Jesus?
6. Who are the people who remind you that you are among those blessed by God? Are they the same people who mentor you in other areas of your life?

7. Can you take some time now talk to God about what this feast means for you, the saints with whom you have lived, or your desire to live in way that points to God?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

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Excerpts from the readings for November 1, 2020, the Feast of All Saints

I, John, saw another angel come up from the East, holding the seal of the living God. He cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who were given power to damage the land and the sea, "Do not damage the land or the sea or the trees until we put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." I heard the number of those who had been marked with the seal, one hundred and forty-four thousand marked from every tribe of the children of Israel. After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb." All the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They prostrated themselves before the throne, worshiped God, and exclaimed: "Blessing and glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen." Then one of the elders spoke up and said to me, "Who are these wearing white robes, and where did they come from?" I said to him, "My lord, you are the one who knows." He said to me, "These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb."

Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.
The Lord's are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it.
For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.
Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord? or who may stand in his holy place?
One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain.
He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, a reward from God his savior.
Such is the race that seeks him, that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

Beloved: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

Excerpts from Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14; Psalm 24:1-6; 1 John 3:1-3; and Matthew 5:1-12