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All Saints - 1 November 2022

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Tuesday 1 November 2022

All Saints

Reflection by Debra Snoddy

Introduction

The saints represent one of the great gifts in the Catholic tradition. Having exemplified what it means and, perhaps more importantly, how it looks to live a life close to God in their own settings, they provide countless models and points of inspiration as we attempt to live the Christian life in our own time and place. Their lives were rarely without struggle and, especially when we find the Christian life difficult, we can be lifted by their example and encouraged in their intercession for us as we seek to eventually join them in seeing Christ 'as he is'.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lamb of God, you were offered up for our justification.
Lord, have mercy.

You call us to be children of God.
Christ, have mercy.

You are with us in the company of the Saints who pray for us.
Lord, have mercy.

First Reading

Revelation 7:2–4, 9–14

This reading provides us with a beautiful vision of what it might be like when the saints are assembled in heaven. Our human imaginations lift us to see this glory, the power of so many believers, dressed in white, in the sight of God.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 23:1-6. R. cf. v. 6

Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

This is a psalm for going up to the Temple aching to see the face of God, to be in God's presence.

Second Reading

1 John 3:1–3

Even though the world refused to acknowledge him, we acknowledge him. We are children of God and this gives us hope, real hope, as we try to be as pure as Christ.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 5:1–12a

In this reading we hear the way in which Jesus teaches different ways of living that bring us true happiness. While they seem illogical in our present world context, they will be the way to true happiness for us all.

Reflection

The Feast of All Saints celebrates those whom the church has deemed to have attained heaven. The origins of the feast are uncertain, but there are mentions in the writings of Ephrem (d. 373 CE) and John Chrysostom (d. 407) of commemorations for all saints. However, the written record for a specific feast day goes back to Pope Boniface VI. On May 13, 609 CE he dedicated the Pantheon (a shrine to all the gods of Rome) as a church honouring the Virgin Mary and all martyrs and this feast would later become known as All Saints' Day.

It was Pope Gregory III (pope from 731-741 CE) who moved the date to November 1, the date on which he dedicated a chapel to All Saints in St Peter's Basilica. It remained a specifically Roman feast day until 837 CE when Pope Gregory VI extended its celebration to the entire Church. This festal day of religious celebration recognises those whose sainthood is known to God alone and was considered a Holy Day of Obligation but is now celebrated in the liturgical calendar as a Solemnity.

Even after the Reformation, many Protestant traditions continued to keep All Saints' Day. It remains true that Halloween is, in reality, the vigil of All Saints' ('All Hallows Eve' or 'Hallow E'en'). The increased commercialisation of the Celtic rituals around Hallow E'en means that All Saints' Day itself has become a bit of an afterthought.

Everyone from your saintly grandparent to the martyrs facing death for Christ are part of the communion of saints commemorated today. Indeed, the communion of saints is the Church, those living and those who have already attained heaven for their life lived on earth. All who witness for Christ and testify to the grace and mercy of God in the power of the Holy Spirit are esteemed and respected on this day.

It is not often that we get three readings that build on each other. However, this is the case today. Though, to get the most out of them, we need to look at them in reverse order and begin by reflecting of Matthew's beatitudes from the Gospel text. The word beatitude comes from the Latin *beatitudo*, meaning blessedness.

At first glance these blessed sayings make no sense, they may even appear to be contradictory. That is because one needs to share the vision these sayings manifest – a perception of God as revealed by Jesus, the ever-faithful, ever-caring God who

makes salvation possible from the destructiveness of the world. It requires taking risks and seeing the world differently. If one can catch this sense of living in the way of the beatitudes, as Brendan Byrne has said, 'then such a way of living will be something they want – rather than are required – to do.'

The beatitudes do not say 'you must be poor in spirit, you must be gentle ...'. These are not Jesus' version of the Ten Commandments. The 'blessed ones' are those who already embody these attributes, these blessed ones are now being called into the community of the children of God. Though, we voice caution here, the blessed ones are not blessed because of their present state – which is vulnerable and quite disadvantaged. Rather despite their material disadvantage, their fidelity to God is all the more startling and God will act for them in the future. While in the present they experience vulnerability, oppression and loss in adopting a 'beatitude way of life' they are indeed 'blessed'. So, who are we talking about here?

'The poor in spirit' are those who look to God alone for salvation, understanding that salvation is not earned but freely given by God through Jesus.

'The gentle' are those with great inner strength – they do not grasp for things at the expense of others. Far from being passive, the gentle ones work for the benefit and wellbeing of others.

Those who 'mourn' are the oppressed in this world, who long for liberation from poverty, injustice and violence and the calamities that these forms of oppression bring.

Those hungering and thirsting for righteousness do God's will in the here and now because they want to see the reign of God come into being.

'The merciful' are already doing what lies at the heart of what it means to be Christian – showing mercy to both people and planet in the here and now.

To be 'pure in heart' is to be totally dedicated to God and God's will, their singlemindedness on the Lord now is rewarded with the clarity of vision in the kingdom.

'The peacemakers' are those who actively work for peace in this world.

In short, these are the saints whom we honour today, the saints who truly grasped what it means to be a child of God.

The First Letter of John calls us all to be mindful of what it means to be children of God. It means that we are especially loved by God, not because of anything we do, but because of the One in whom we believe – Christ. It is this belief, lived out in beatitude faithfulness that allows us to become part of the vision expressed by John of Patmos in the first reading.

The Book of Revelation paints a picture of the saints in flowing white robes before God and the Lamb singing praises and glory. The angel attending to John of Patmos makes known that these are the people, the saints, whose robes are washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. By living out of a 'beatitude way of life' may we to be numbered among the saints of God and join them in singing God's praise.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

The psalm today names us as the people who long to see God's face. Full of that longing let us turn our hearts to God with the needs of our world and our community.

Petitions

We pray for the continual strength and renewal of the Church and its leaders in challenging times as we work towards the conclusion of the Plenary Council and the Synod in 2023. May our leaders in the clergy, religious life and laity, consciously live their lives through the way of the Beatitudes.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of all nations that they will be inspired by saintly people to lead with love for all and respect for all.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the saints who live among us here and now. May their utter conviction that they have been saved by the blood of the Lamb be an inspiration for us to follow

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the gentle in our local communities. May their great inner strength lead us to be less grasping and to work for the well being of others.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those hungering and thirsting for righteousness. May they do God's will in the here and now and see the reign of God come into being.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the families those who mourn and who are oppressed. May they be blessed with liberation from poverty, injustice and violence and the calamities that these forms of oppression bring.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

As St Paul said to the Thessalonians, "we pray continually that our God will make you worthy of his call". We offer our prayers because we know in faith that God will continue to answer our needs and give us the grace to achieve your will through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, the Christ.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOV2	GA	CWB	CWBII	S&S2
Be not afraid	114		449		653	
Blessed are the poor in Spirit			489	817	456	
By all your saints still striving					423	
Come to me all you who labour	37		228	660		
Father we praise You				675		
For all the saints			551	679	439	
Holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty				712		
I have loved you	126		402		511	
O Christ, the great foundation			483		565	
Priestly people				796	589	
Rejoice with all the saints						331
Table of plenty		20				
The beatitudes			489	817	456	
The Church's one foundation				819	614	
Your hand, O Lord, has guided				868		

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 23: *Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.*

	CWB	JOBC	LPC
Psalm 23	468	pg. 112	pg. 108

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Heaven shall be yours (TCS) *Based on Mt 5:1-12* [Gathering, Gifts, Communion, Recessional]

We are all saints (SYJ) [Recessional]