

### Matthew 5:1-12a

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them: 'How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage. Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted. Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied. Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them. Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God.

Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called sons of God. Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 'Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.'

In today's Gospel, Matthew gives us a summary of Jesus' teaching, in the beatitudes. From the inner circle of his chosen followers to the great crowds that have come from many parts, Jesus recognises them as blessed, from the poor in spirit, to those persecuted for their faith. This is not a belated recognition of the dead, but a joyful recognition of the living people of God.

As was expressed in the second reading, to be a Christian means to live contrary to the ways of this world. The world says success is based on wealth, but Jesus says we are to be "poor in spirit", and to detach ourselves from wealth. Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn.", those who grieve for their sins, who are moved by the affliction of others; they will surely know comfort. The world tells us to seek power, but Jesus says be "meek." Moreover, the world says honour and the approval of others is important, but Jesus says, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness." Simply put, the beatitudes are the "how to" of sainthood. So, if I want to be a saint, these are the things I need to seek and if, as I strive to align myself with the beatitudes, I find it difficult, I just remember, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven." In other words, it's all worth it in the end. Do I desire to be a saint? What steps do I need to take to become more holy?

## *The Feast of ALL SAINTS Year B 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021*



*Today, The feast of All Saints invites us to celebrate and take pride in all those who have gone before us and in those who grace our community today. We rejoice in the saints we have known and know. We bless God for those who attend to the hungry, the orphans, the lonely, the sick, the outcasts, and the overlooked. We thank God for those who out smiled the jibes and taunts of oppressors, for those whose whispered prayers have enriched the holiness of us all, for those who struggle honestly against ending up selfish and unloving. We express our gratitude for those whose lives are welcomed as good news by the poor, for those who confront religious pretense, for those who keep on forgiving with an energy that is worthy of God. For all these people, among us still, we give thanks. (Denis McBride C.SS.R)*

### **Opening Prayer**

Almighty ever-living God, by whose gift we venerate in one celebration the merits of all the Saints, bestow on us, we pray, through the prayers of so many intercessors, an abundance of the reconciliation with you for which we earnestly long.

### **Apocalypse 7:2-4,9-14**

I, John, saw another angel rising where the sun rises, carrying the seal of the living God; he called in a powerful voice to the four angels whose duty was to devastate land and sea, 'Wait before you do any damage on land or at sea or to the trees, until we have put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.' Then I heard how many were sealed: a hundred and forty-four thousand, out of all the tribes of Israel.

After that I saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands. They shouted aloud, 'Victory to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!' And all the angels who were standing in a circle round the throne, surrounding the elders and the four animals, prostrated themselves before the throne, and touched the ground with their foreheads, worshipping God with these words, 'Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen.'

One of the elders then spoke, and asked me, 'Do you know who these people are, dressed in white robes, and where they have come from?' I answered him, 'You can tell me, my lord.' Then he said, 'These are the people who have been through the great persecution, and they have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb.'

The book of the Apocalypse or Revelation uses symbolic imagery to paint a picture of heaven, the Apostle John's vision of heaven. First, the saints are the ones "marked with the seal", just as we are marked with the sign of the cross. Second, John saw, "a great multitude, which no one could count." This is the universal (i.e. catholic) nature of the Church. Heaven is not exclusive to any one group of people, rather, there will be people there "from every nation, race, people, and tongue." This gives us hope that there are many, many saints (more than anyone can count). Third, we learn that the saints endured "great distress" on earth and have been "washed... in the Blood of the Lamb." This teaches us that it is not easy to become a saint, it is a process of purification, which involves going against the grain of the world. and involves us joining ourselves to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross through self-giving love.

### **Psalm 23(24):1-6**

The Lord's is the earth and its fullness, the world and all its peoples.  
It is he who set it on the seas; on the waters he made it firm.

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place?  
The man with clean hands and pure heart, who desires not worthless things.

He shall receive blessings from the Lord and reward from the God who saves him. Such are the men who seek him, seek the face of the God of Jacob.  
When the Lord delivered Zion from bondage, it seemed like a dream.

### **1 John 3:1-3**

Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are. Because the world refused to acknowledge him, therefore it does not acknowledge us. My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is. Surely everyone who entertains this hope must purify himself, must try to be as pure as Christ.

John speaks lovingly here of fellow baptized Christians and teaches us about our identity. As baptized Christians, we are saints in the making. In baptism, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit and become children of God. Therefore, we belong to God and are called to live accordingly. Being a child of God means living contrary to the ways of this world. In Scripture, the "world" represents everything contrary to God. It refers to the sinfulness and dysfunction found all around us. We are called to be holy. This journey of sanctification begins at baptism when we are cleansed of original sin and join God's family. But that is just the beginning. The whole Christian life is about continually turning away from that which separates us from God and giving ourselves completely over to Him, no matter how difficult and challenging that may be.

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

***Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened  
and I will give you rest, says the Lord.***

**Alleluia!**

*(Gospel overleaf)*

**Prayer over the Offerings**

May these offerings we bring in honour of all the Saints be pleasing to you, O Lord and grant that, just as we believe the Saints to be already assured of immortality, so we may experience their concern for our salvation.

**Prayer after Communion**

As we adore you, O God, who alone are holy and wonderful in all your Saints, we implore your grace so that, coming to perfect holiness in the fullness of your love, we may pass from this pilgrim table to the banquet of our heavenly homeland.