

GOSPEL

MATTHEW 5:1-12

“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.’”

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

The Solemnity of All Saints is “our” celebration: not because we are good, but because the sanctity of God has touched our life. The Saints are not perfect models, but people through whom God has passed. We can compare them to the Church windows which allow light to enter in different shades of colour. The saints are our brothers and sisters who have welcomed the light of God in their heart and have passed it on to the world, each according to his or her own “hue”. But they were all transparent; they fought to remove the stains and the darkness of sin, so as to enable the gentle light of God to pass through. This is life’s purpose: to enable God’s light to pass through; it is the purpose of our life too.

Indeed, today in the Gospel, Jesus addresses his followers, all of us, telling us we are “Blessed”. It is the word with which he begins his sermon, which is the “Gospel”, Good News, because it is the path of happiness. Those who are with Jesus are blessed; they are happy. Happiness is not in having something or in becoming someone, no. True happiness is being with the Lord and

living for love. Do you believe this? True happiness is not in having something or in becoming someone; true happiness is being with the Lord and living for love. Do you believe this? We must go forth, believing in this. So, the ingredients for a happy life are called Beatitudes: blessed are the simple, the humble who make room for God, who are able to weep for others and for their own mistakes, who remain meek, fight for justice, are merciful to all, safeguard purity of heart, always work for peace and abide in joy, do not hate and, even when suffering, respond to evil with good.

These are the Beatitudes. They do not require conspicuous gestures; they are not for supermen, but for those who live the trials and toils of every day, for us. This is how the saints are: like everyone, they breathe air polluted by the evil there is in the world, but on the journey they never lose sight of Jesus’ roadmap, that indicated in the Beatitudes, which is like the map of Christian life.

Today is the celebration of those who have reached the destination indicated by this map: not only the saints on the calendar, but many brothers and sisters “next door”, whom we may have met and known. Today is a family celebration, of many simple, hidden people who in reality help God to move the world forward. And there are so many of them today! There are so many of them! Thanks to these unknown brothers and sisters who help God to move the world forward, who live among us; let us salute them all with a nice round of applause!

First of all — the first Beatitude says — they are “poor in spirit”. What does this mean? That they do not live for success, power and money; they know that those who set aside treasure for themselves are not rich toward God. Rather, they believe that the Lord is life’s treasure, and love for neighbour the only true source of gain. At times we are dissatisfied due to something we lack, or worried if we are not considered as we would like; let us remember that our Beatitude is not here but in the Lord and in love: only with him, only by loving do we live as blessed.

Lastly I would like to quote another beatitude, which is not found in the

Gospel but at the end of the Bible, and it speaks of the end of life: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord” (Rev 14:13). Tomorrow we will be called to accompany with prayer our deceased, so they may be forever joyful in the Lord. Let us remember our loved ones with gratitude and let us pray for them. May the Mother of God, Queen of the Saints and Gate of Heaven, intercede for our journey of holiness and for our loved ones who have gone before us and who have already departed for the heavenly Homeland.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Pope Francis describes sainthood as being like the stained glass windows which allow light through. Do you think about becoming a saint? Why/why not?
- Pope Francis reminds us that true happiness is being with the Lord and living for love. It’s not found in having something or becoming someone. What steps could we take each day to more fully live this call?
- Jesus describes the struggles we experience for his sake as being opportunities for grace, blessing and growth. Have you experienced this? What happened?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the ‘Glory Be’ or similar prayer.