

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS, 2017

1st Reading: Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14 - *I had a vision of a great multitude...
from every nation, race, people & tongue.*

Responsorial Psalm 24 "Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face."

2nd Reading: 1 John 3:1-3 – *Beloved, we are God's children now ... one day we shall see God as God is.*

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-16 - *You are the light of the world.*

*♪♪ Lead me, Lord, lead me, Lord, by the light of truth
To seek and to find the narrow way.
Be my way; be my truth; be my life, my Lord,
and lead me, Lord, today. ♪♪*

That is the refrain of a song that sets the Gospel for this feast to music. The verses are the words we call the beatitudes. They are the summary of the Gospel we have promised to live by accepting Baptism and coming together for Eucharist. They are a description of the way Jesus lived, they are the attitudes that reflect his being. In Luke's Gospel, they are addressed directly to the people he is talking to: *Blest are you poor, blest are you who hunger..* And the passage I just proclaimed ends with words that have also been set to music,

*♪♪ Rejoice & be glad, blessed are you, holy are you.
Rejoice & be glad, yours is the kingdom of God! ♪♪*

The Passage from the Sermon on the Mount that is read on the Feast of All Saints can be a way of looking at our lives in the mirror of the teaching of Jesus.

Do you live those words perfectly? Do you live the beatitudes in your day to day life?
I know I don't, even though I work at it.

Most Christians know the 10 commandments by heart but don't know the beatitudes. Yet the Beatitudes and the whole Sermon on the Mount are the way Jesus calls us to live. I think the reason so many don't know or study them is that they describe a way of life that is impossible to live perfectly. The saints are not the ones who were perfect, they are the ones who knew they couldn't even begin to live that way without God's grace and without each other.

The Beatitudes describe a spirituality of imperfection. The spirituality of imperfection is like Baseball. I have really enjoyed this year's World Series, especially because one of the best players on the Astros, Jose Altuve, is my height. But to be a good or even a great baseball player, you do not even approach perfection. That is so very clear this year. A 300 hitter is someone who makes an out 7 out of 10 times. Errors are expected to be a part of the game.

But religion too often makes us feel guilty when we are not perfect. I wanted to be perfect when I was much younger. As I grew, I discovered that I made mistakes, that I was powerless to live perfectly. So now I consider myself to be a recovering perfectionist. I used to be much worse, especially about liturgy.

The saints are the ones who knew they couldn't even begin to live the beatitudes without God's grace & without each other.



Myrna & Mary, Two of my favorite saints – now at the banquet table with Jesus & his mother

The beatitudes are a call to repent of pretending to be perfect and to begin to be holy.

We are all called to be saints, not to be perfect. I have heard it said, and I have experienced the truth that anything worth doing is worth doing badly. In the letters of St. Paul, the living members of the communities he wrote to were called "saints."

We are called to hold the beatitudes up to our lives as a mirror – and to admit that we cannot even attempt to live them without God's help and the support of one another.

But we are also to trust that God can accomplish in us what we cannot do by our own strength. We ask for that grace whenever we pray the Our Father. In a way, the Lord's Prayer is the headline of the New Testament – a condensed version of the beatitudes.

On this feast of All Saints, I would like to share a reflection on the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer that came to me one day as I was praying after Communion.

I am going to address the words of Jesus directly to you and me. As I do that, I invite you to close your eyes and imagine that Jesus is talking to you personally. As you hear each phrase, ask yourself, "Do I live that way?" I will pause after each beatitude and then speak my own response based on the words of the Our Father.



"Saints alive" who live the Beatitudes
Terry & Anna



More "saints alive" Siena classmates & me.

Jesus: **Blest are you when you are poor in spirit – when you are powerless & depend only on the grace of God, yours is the kingdom of God.**

Me: Ah, are you saying that I need to depend so totally on God that I can say:
"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name"

Jesus: **Blest are you when you mourn & grieve, you will be comforted.**

Me: Yes, Lord, I do grieve the incompleteness of your kingdom here, I mourn the fact that your attitudes and values have not yet fully penetrated society, the church or my own heart. So I pray daily,
"Your Kingdom come... on earth as in heaven."

Jesus: **Blest are you when you are gentle and meek – admitting your own weakness and seeking God's way, you shall inherit the earth.**

Me: It's taken me awhile to understand you, Lord. Are you talking about being totally responsive to your Spirit? That's what I pray for when I say,
"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Jesus: **Blest are you when you hunger and thirst for holiness, for justice, for righteousness, you shall be filled.**

Me: Yes, Lord, I am very hungry for you, for your light and for your peace in the world and the unity of all Christians, so I pray:
"Give us this day our daily bread."

Jesus: **Blest are you when you show mercy, when you forgive,
you will open yourself to receive mercy and forgiveness.**

Me: That's one I understand immediately, even though it's not easy to live.
The deepest part of my ministry continues to be the ministry of
reconciliation and forgiveness. I pray from the depths of my being
"Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us."

Jesus: **Blest are you when you are pure of heart, when you are single hearted, you shall see God.**

Me: I long for that gift, that simplicity of heart, the ability to will one
thing, but I get so easily distracted by my own pain and need for control
that I need to pray
"Lead us not into temptation" or "Do abandon us to temptation."

Jesus: **Blest are you when you work for peace, when you make peace, when you build a peaceful world,
you are living as a child of God.**

Me: Lord, your blessing makes it painfully clear that real peacemakers
are liable to become martyrs and that so many nations and even
religious groups are addicted to conflict and war. The prayer that
pours spontaneously from my heart is
"Deliver us from evil" or even "Deliver us from the evil one."

Jesus: **Blest are you when you are persecuted, oppressed or ignored, you are like me – your savior –
you shall live in my kingdom.**

Me: It's strange, Lord, but this final word gives me hope that nothing
can permanently frustrate your plan, so I break into praise:
"For the Kingdom, the Power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen."

*♪♪ Rejoice & be glad, blessed are you, holy are you.
Rejoice & be glad, yours is the kingdom of God! ♪♪*



Saints celebrating a jubilee