

Beatitude and Holiness

November 1, 2020, Solemnity of All Saints – Gospel of Matthew 5:1-12a

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The two pillars of our Christian faith, over and beyond the differences in traditions among our denominations, are founded in the death and resurrection of Christ.

These two realities are the basis of our faith. If we neglect one for the sake of the other, our Christian foundation crumples. Both realities teach us something about what it means to be followers of Christ through this challenging and broken world.

We know that in this world, suffering and death is a reality. And we don't need to help it along, it is just a reality. And uncertainty is in our face at every turn and this pandemic is surely emphasizing that fact. This uncertainty has implications for the way we live now. We don't need to indulge or conjure suffering as good and desirable. Our Creator did not create us so He could watch us suffer - but we must face suffering and uncertainty head on when it happens.

There is a deficit within the human heart without God. And there is that part of us that has been and still is in some ways slightly turned away from God. We all have to contend with our fears, our pride, our egos and self-interest that have been cultivated throughout our lives because of the world we live in. This resistance must be overcome and we can't do it alone. As St. Paul says over and over, our strength is in Christ. We are not equipped to go it alone. And His own suffering and death remind us that he walks with us in our suffering and death.

As well as proclaiming his death, we proclaim the reality of the resurrection of Jesus. This too has implications for the way we live now. Though we continue to face suffering and death in this world, we live in anticipation of the resurrection, to new life beyond what this world alone offers. We have but a foretaste of that new life in this world.

The benefit of living by this reality of anticipation of future fulfillment is that...it allows us to recognize that life itself is infinitely more precious than the worry and concern about crowding every life experience into this life out of fear that that's all there is. With faith in the resurrection, we live life in this world knowing we don't need to grasp desperately at what this world offers, for validation. We don't need to be afraid we are missing out of what the next person is getting and what we are not because in the end, eternal life is the real goal for all. The last thing we need is to clog our lives with 'stuff' that gets in the way of that goal and eventually disappears in all its radiant futility.

The present moment and the time we take to love and be present to one another are precious in God's eyes. And that doesn't require that we rush through it so we can get onto the next thing. We are not called to chase down life but to live it in all the ways it is offered to us.

The first four Beatitudes address states that are not necessarily desirable states to be in: being poor in spirit, mourning, being meek and hungry or being in a state of deficit. These are not prized states in this world's eyes. But remember, God chose those whom

the world considers absurd to shame the wise so that humanity can do no boasting before God.

By Jesus' acknowledging these states as blessed He is saying, look, despite what the world thinks, this is a common condition and a **very human state, an honourable state**, to be in. In fact, these qualities are very compatible with a person who has a loving heart. And in this world, to be in these states is very much a part of what it means to be on a path to God. After all, the things God considers truly honourable are **often** at odds with what human beings of any culture think.

And as members of a culture, there is a part of us that has been conditioned to reject these states because they are manifestations of our brokenness, our incompleteness and not of wholeness...and we desire wholeness because ultimately, that is what we were created for - - to be whole. But brokenness is the state of this world.

The first 4 beatitudes **acknowledge our incompleteness** as human beings but that this incompleteness will not be forever because of **God who has not abandoned His original plan of fulfillment.**

The next three Beatitudes: the blessedness of being merciful, pure of heart, and peacemakers **describe qualities that are of God.** Being merciful is the opposite of being judgemental. Peacemakers will be called children of God. Being pure of heart is a quality that allows one to see God.

This weekend, we celebrate All Saints and then All Souls. We commemorate and ponder the reality of those who have gone before us and have left a legacy of holiness enough to inspire us onward toward holiness ourselves.

We have relatives who have gone before us and who are now experiencing the presence of God in a deeper way than we are in this world. The communion of saints inspires us to ponder that connection we have with God through them and through all the saints as we struggle along in this darkened world.

We are likely not in the state of holiness of many of the Saints who have gone before us, and certainly we may not ever have to face the same persecution in this life that those radical followers of Jesus and Jesus himself faced, but if we **give God something to work with**, that is a start. To be on this path toward holiness gives us and others hope and eventually build on it. But that requires perseverance and patience with ourselves and those around us and it requires faith. In the 2nd reading we hear, 'we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed.'

In the Eucharist, we celebrate the Death AND Resurrection of Jesus and are mindful that in so doing, we recommit ourselves to the life and love of Christ, manifested by the Holy Spirit abiding within us. Amen.