

Living the Word

Matthew's Beatitudes are a perfect masterpiece. They are a blueprint of the Christian life. In this sermon on the mount Jesus was communicating what was at the heart of his teaching. This profound and succinct instruction depicts the face of Christ himself. The Beatitudes also express wonderfully the vocation of every believer. We all want to be happy — this is a basic human desire which is divine in its origin and impulse. The key to finding this happiness is in living as Jesus teaches. The Beatitudes outline the goal of human existence — we are on earth to live out in our daily lives the blessings of the Beatitudes. However, if one actually examined one's life by the standard outlined in the Sermon on the Mount, we would give up before we started. Although we are capable of extraordinary acts of kindness we cannot live the grace of the Beatitudes in our own strength. They are the disposition of the new creation, the new humanity borne from the side of Christ on the cross. Only those who have received God's grace will be empowered to live the Beatitudes in their daily lives. Only those who turn to God each day in repentance asking for his strength will be enabled to live as Jesus lived.

Solemnity of All Saints



Before his martyrdom in July 2016 at the hands of a terrorist, the French priest Fr Jacques Hamel, wrote, 'Do not think holiness is not for us. Holiness does not mean doing extraordinary things. We are sons and daughters of God. It is by living this relationship, day by day, that we become saints.' Whenever Christians celebrate the Holy Mass, they proclaim Christ's death, not in fear but in the knowledge of the victory of Christ over death. Now is the time for us to stop believing that we can't be saints, to stop focusing on what we think of as our lack of holiness, to stop offering ourselves excuses, and to live out the Gospel of the Kingdom, proclaimed by Our Lord in the Gospel passage known as the Beatitudes. The month of November is the Month of the Holy Saints, and of the Holy Dead in Christ. In our worship we share already in the glorious Kingdom to which the saints bear witness, as we pray for God's will to be done in the departed, and in those of us who are still on our earthly pilgrimage. In the Mass, we know that our prayers are united with the whole Company of Heaven.

Today's Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12

Collect

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. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

O Sing Unto the Lord

Perhaps the most well-known hymn associated with All Saints' Day is 'For all the saints who from their labours rest' by William Walsham How (1823-1897). The son of a solicitor, How was educated at Shrewsbury School and after ordination held a number of parish posts before being appointed the first Bishop of Wakefield in 1888. He was a prolific writer (including nearly sixty hymns) and was so highly regarded that he was commissioned to write a hymn for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897. 'For all the saints' first appeared in 1864 and is powerful in its ability to capture the spirit of the Church Militant here on earth, using imagery from the book of Revelation. Most hymn books now omit three of the original verses, including: For Martyrs, who, with rapture-kindled eye/ Saw the bright crown descending from the sky / And died to grasp it, thee we glorify/ Alleluia! Originally sung to the tune Engelbery by Charles Stanford, the now common tune Sine Nomine (without a name) was composed for this hymn by Vaughan Williams. It has been suggested that the name of the tune refers to the countless number of saints who are not remembered by name but who are part of the 'glorious company' we remember this day.