

SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS

November 1, 2020 A

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Holy God, we praise you today for setting before us the witness of so many holy men and women who have gone before us in the faith, and who have modeled for us the ways of Jesus. As we break open your Word, may your Holy Spirit be with us to guide us in our sharing. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator reads focus statement: As early as the fourth century, the saints were remembered during the celebration of the Eucharist. At first, it was the martyrs, then the confessors (holy men and women who were not martyred but who lived a life that imitated Christ). Today, we remember all those throughout history who have allowed the face of God to be seen in them. In the first reading, we have a vision of the victorious followers of Christ rejoicing in his presence. In the second reading, John speaks of us as children of God destined to see him one day as he is. The Gospel introduces us to the Beatitudes which are the essential qualities for all seeking to live holy lives.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm, and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Revelations 7:2-4, 9-14

The Book of Revelation was written to give hope to the early Christians who were experiencing terrible persecution under the Emperor Domitian (81-96 AD). Today's reading contains excerpts from two visions portraying in vivid imagery the salvation of the just.

In the first vision, John has a glimpse of the last terrible days when a final assault on the earth is brought on by every evil power. But before this terror and devastation happens, the faithful will be marked with the seal of God to protect them and bring them home safely to heaven.

The figure 144,000 is symbolic and by no means implies that only 144,000 persons will be saved.

The second vision takes place in heaven. It begins by mentioning *"a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and tongue."* (This speaks to the universality of God's people.) These people standing now before the throne of God are martyrs and those who have remained faithful to God during a time of great persecution and trial. Their salvation comes from God who enabled them to remain faithful during a time of great trial. This vision is intended to give hope to all those currently going through a time of great trial and persecution. It is as if John is saying:

"You remain faithful and you too will stand before the Lamb on the throne of God."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 24

The psalm has strong liturgical features, probably in celebration of the Ark's coming to Jerusalem and God's enthronement in the temple.

SECOND READING: 1John 3:1-3

John probes the mystery of God's love revealed in and through Jesus Christ: *"Beloved, see what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called children of God."* It is amazing to realize that we are God's children: *"Yet so we are."* Our challenge is to become who we are through Baptism.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Matt. 5:1-12

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the

Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

GOSPEL: Matthew 5:1-12

The Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) is considered the heart of Jesus' teaching. The Beatitudes (today's Gospel) are considered to be the heart of the Sermon on the Mount. They list the qualities Christ wishes to see in his followers, qualities exemplified in the lives of the saints. Reflecting on the Beatitudes, Fr. Flor McCarthy writes.

The beatitudes are the badges of a disciple of Jesus. The things they stand for are very beautiful – things such as peace, goodness, joy, love, gentleness, compassion, mercy, integrity.... A person who lives according to the beatitudes is already living in the kingdom of heaven. Eternal life will merely be the full blossoming of a plant that is green with life.

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FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse or image in the readings caught your attention or drew you in. Was there a verse or aspect of the readings that challenged you?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. How would you describe a holy person?
3. Holy people live the *Beatitudes*. Yet when we are asked to describe holiness, few of us would say that it involves living the Beatitudes. Why is this?
4. Which of the Beatitudes do you feel most drawn to? Which Beatitude is for you the most difficult?
5. Who is your favorite saint? Why?
6. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestions: Name one way you can act on today's readings. Choose one thing you can do that would show that you are serious about your call to holiness.

JOURNALING

Having listened to God's Word and listened to others reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

Facilitator: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Glorious Lord, you have placed the saints before us as examples of how to live a good holy life. Help me to be more serious about my call to live a holy life.*

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: What are we grateful for? For whom and for what do we need to pray?

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Jesus, help me to spread
your fragrance everywhere I go:
flood my soul with your spirit and life;
penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly
that all my life may only be a radiance of yours;
shine through me and be so in me
that every soul I come in contact with
may feel your presence in my soul.
Let them look up and see no longer me,
but only Jesus!
Amen.*

- St. John Henry Newman