

## SPIRITUALITY

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Matt 11:28

R<sup>1</sup>. Alleluia, alleluia.Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened,  
and I will give you rest, says the Lord.R<sup>2</sup>. Alleluia, alleluia.

## Gospel

Matt 5:1-12a; L667

When Jesus saw the  
crowds, he went up the  
mountain,  
and after he had sat  
down, his disciples  
came to him.

He began to teach them,  
saying:

“Blessed are the poor in  
spirit,  
for theirs is the Kingdom  
of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and  
thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.

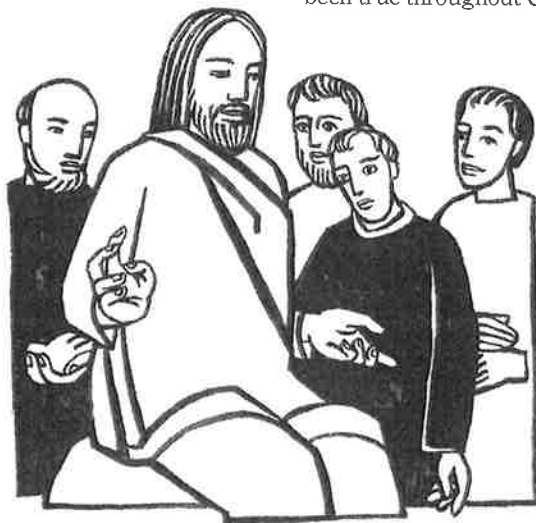
Blessed are the clean of heart,  
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of  
God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted  
for the sake of righteousness,  
for theirs is the Kingdom of  
heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you  
and persecute you  
and utter every kind of evil against  
you falsely because of me.

Rejoice and be glad,  
for your reward will be great in  
heaven.”



## Reflecting on the Gospel

The popular book *My Life with the Saints*, by the Jesuit James Martin, is an introduction to certain saints told through memoir. Some of the most famous and most well-recognized saints are there, including St. Peter, Mary, the mother of Jesus, St. Ignatius of Loyola (the founder of the Jesuits), even Joan of Arc, Mother Teresa, and more, as well as some of the lesser known saints. Most of the saints he discusses, as reflected in the sample selection above, and as has been true throughout Christian history, were celibates.

But the fact that most saints were celibates does not mean that one needs to be celibate to be a saint, or that those who are not celibate have a more difficult time becoming a saint. Instead, it's a reflection of the kinds of people with whom the church is familiar. Even when married people are recognized as saints by the church, it's most often because they lived as celibates after having children (e.g., Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi) or one spouse lived as a celibate after the other died (e.g., Elizabeth Ann Seton). This can make it seem like the only way to become a saint is to become celibate!

Because so many whom the church names as saints were priests, religious, or consecrated people, it can make these people seem far re-

moved from the daily life of a vast majority of people. One

estimate, for example, lists a total of ten married couples who have been recognized as saints in the two thousand years of Christian history. And the Quattrocchis, mentioned above, led a family life almost as if it were a small monastery with daily Mass, daily rosary, and regular theology classes at the Gregorian (Jesuit university in Rome). Not many of us maintain that kind of home life, and it certainly is not the only way to sanctity.

So it's critically important that we have the words of the Beatitudes in today's gospel to remind us of what holiness looks like. Nowhere in the Beatitudes is a word about celibacy or, frankly, about sexuality at all. There is certainly nothing about one's vocational state (priest, sister, etc.). Instead, we have attributes such as "poor in spirit," "meek," and "merciful." These are the hallmarks of sanctity. And they can be practiced by anybody, religious or lay, Catholic or Protestant, even Christian or non-Christian. We recall that the Gospel of Matthew is much more about actions than words. And those actions have to do with mercy rather than celibacy.

## Living the Paschal Mystery

Holiness and sanctity can seem so out of reach when we have as examples those whose lives are so different from the vast majority. Sanctity is not a prize given to those who complete a marathon, something most people cannot do. Instead, sanctity is something each of us is called to. Holiness is something each Christian can live. It is nothing more than living the paschal mystery, a daily dying to self so that we put others before us. Family members practice this daily! (Or at least they have many chances to practice this each day.) When parents sacrifice their own wants for the sake of their children, or when siblings put the needs of their brothers or sisters before their own, these are acts of

sanctity. It is through such acts that we live the gospel passage today as “peacemakers.” Division and strife are not marks of sanctity; unity and peace are. Let us live the gospel message today and, in so doing, live the paschal mystery into our own sanctity.

### **Focusing the Gospel**

**Key words and phrases:** He began to teach them

**To the point:** Away from the crowds, Jesus sits down with his disciples and teaches them the path to holiness. These are the ones who have already decided that they will follow Jesus and have left family and livelihoods to do just that. Now, before they go farther, Jesus will lay out what it means to join him on this journey. In his apostolic exhortation *Rejoice and Be Glad*, Pope Francis tells us, “The Beatitudes are like a Christian’s identity card. So if anyone asks: ‘What must one do to be a good Christian?’ the answer is clear” (63). Like the initial twelve disciples, we are to embrace and live the Beatitudes. On the journey of faith we will mourn, face persecution and insult, be called to align ourselves with the poor, hunger and thirst for righteousness, exercise mercy, be purified of heart, and bring peace. In these Christian attitudes, we proclaim our identity as followers of the Lord of life.

### **Connecting the Gospel**

**to the first reading:** From the small group of twelve disciples who join Jesus at the top of the mountain two millennia ago and receive the Beatitudes from his lips, the number of Christians has grown and grown. In the book of Revelation, the picture painted of those who have “washed their robes / and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb” are too numerous to count and hail from “every nation, race, people and tongue.”

**to experience:** Throughout the church year we celebrate the lives of the saints whose names are known to us. In a particular way, today’s feast is for the saints whose names we do not know, but who are in heaven and joined to us in the mystical Body of Christ. From the book of Revelation, we know that these holy men and women are not isolated to a particular “nation, race, people [or] tongue”; instead they reflect the beautiful diversity of God’s creation.

### **Connecting the Responsorial Psalm**

**to the readings:** Today’s psalm refrain connects us to the holy ones in heaven by our same desire to see the face of God. The middle verse asks, “Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord? / or who may stand in his holy place? / One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, / who desires not what is in vain.” In the Beatitudes, Jesus gives us the formula for this holiness that brings us close to God.

**to psalmist preparation:** On the earth we find revelations of God’s presence in creation, the people around us, the word of God, and the sacraments. Each nourishes our hunger for the living God, and yet, we long for the fullness of time when “we shall see him as he is,” as the first letter of St. John tells us. In your own life of faith, how do you foster and live out this desire to see the face of God?

### **PROMPTS FOR FAITH-SHARING**

The second reading from St. John tells us, “Beloved, we are God’s children now; / what we shall be has not yet been revealed.” What do you think God’s dream is for your life?

On this feast of All Saints’ Day, how have you been inspired by the lives and example of the saints?

How do you strive to embrace the Beatitudes in your life of faith?

Which beatitude is the most difficult for you to live out? Which is the easiest?