

All Saints' Day (transferred)  
St. Matthew 5:1-12; et al.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

There was an All Saints' Day at the beginning of my ministry when I called it one of the happiest days in the church year. All Saints is a day set aside to recall with thanksgiving the faithful past—that is to say, those who have died faithful. All Saints is also a day set aside to be thankful for those faithful who are still here. Today is a day to be thankful for the faithful, and in case I'm not perfectly clear: it's a day to be thankful for the gift of faith—thank God for pillars of the faith to look up to as examples of Christ's work on and in them, be they dead to earth yet alive in Christ or alive on earth and alive in Christ. It's not about worshiping or elevating saints to some undeserved (and, dare I say, unwanted) status in the Church, but about worshiping and thanking God for His work in, on, and for the Church for Christ's sake. Today is All Saints' Day, a day to gaze upon the effects of Christ work, as He died and rose again, establishing the Church, His Bride, and granting entrance into her for many millions upon millions of saints—is there anything greater to be happy and overjoyed about?

St. John recorded in his last tome a look at the multitude of saints as the angel shows him the bride of the Lamb. He described the greatest of cities, the Holy City, Jerusalem, wherein all the saints dwell, descending upon the Mountain of God. He related the millions of voices singing all the great songs that are still sung to this day in the liturgy. He described the saints and martyrs praying under the altar: "How long, O Lord?" He showed that in the end, all of the blessed, all who have lived and died in Christ, will forever be in the Light of His face and sing praise and worship Him.

The prophet Isaiah also had and saw the great city, with salvation its walls. All who would enter are those who enter by faith in God and His Christ. By faith, you see and know that all who have died in Christ are indeed alive and well in the eternal life they have gained through the righteousness that He has won and given.

Then, you can look around and remember blessed dead from this place. Even though you might still be in the throes of grief, you can recall with great joy the life in Christ that they had *and still have*. Rejoice that their robes have been washed clean, made white in the blood of the Lamb.

But, as mentioned, today is not only about those who have gone before, but also about everyone here, right now. It is also about those who are yet to come, like the children of those mentioned in the prayers in this place, that they may hear the Word, though unborn, and be baptized and come to know the salvation found in Jesus Christ. For it is on All Saints' Day that you rejoice not only to call the blessed dead saints, but also in the fact that you are made saints, and you rejoice to know that, Lord willing, there will be those who follow you who will also know the joy of being made and called saints of God.

You should see from all of this that the Church is a much bigger than what goes on here for an hour or so every week. This may be a small congregation by man's standards, but *the* Church is actually quite large. And, in fact, when you gather here to worship, you gather not only with those who are in this place with you, but also with your brothers and sisters of sister congregations around the world, even though the meeting times differ vastly. When you gather to worship, you are joined in the songs of praise and thanksgiving with all the saints on earth who share those songs. More than that, however, you gather with all the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven who join in your songs of laud and magnification of God's glorious name. You gather with all the saints on earth and in heaven and sing the same song. Though you may not see it, it is a glorious picture, a picture you get a glimpse of through the prophet and the apostle.

This glorious picture is what the evangelist St. Matthew refers to when he recounted the words of Christ: "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets

who were before you.” Jesus said this after a list of signs that mark a saint on earth. He tells the saints to rejoice, despite the trials and hardships of this life, because eternal life in Christ is waiting, in which the prophets are living, who endured such hardships. These prophets and martyrs wait for you, they sing with you, they worship God with you, they rejoice in the life of Christ you have been given.

Dear saints of God, you rejoice this day that you have such a great and large family to be part of. Rejoice and be glad that eternal life awaits you. Rejoice and be glad, because the prophets, martyrs, angels and archangels, apostles, evangelists—the whole heavenly host—sing with you a song that will not die, a song that cannot be muted:

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!

Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!

To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!

Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!

Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.

So you sing with them, as their songs are recorded in the books of Isaiah and Revelation.

These are indeed the songs they sing with you, but they sing them for you as well. For as they once were, you are now walking the path of faith—the same one they once walked. It is a treacherous path, to say the least, filled with many holes and covered with numerous stumbling blocks of sin in which to fall and over which to trip.

As an example, look at that list recorded in today’s Gospel. Blessed are the meek...the merciful...the pure in heart...the peacemakers. Not an extensive list, to say the least, but can you say that you are always perfectly meek or merciful or pure in heart or a peacemaker or...or...or... If you’re being honest, you’d have to say that you’ve never perfectly been any of these. On the contrary...

Meek? Given the chance, your sinful nature seeks to indulge itself, over and above, and often at the expense of others. No, you are not meek.

Merciful? Why should you show mercy to those who seek your harm? No, you seek revenge and demand what we are owed by those who are indebted to you. No, you are not merciful.

Pure in heart? Well, this one’s easy. Have you ever hated your parents or other authorities or been angry at them? Ever hated someone so much you wished them harm? Ever had any lustful thoughts? Ever lied about anyone or anything? Ever desired the spouse, house, animal, land, or anything that belonged to someone else? No, you have no purity of heart.

Peacemakers? Well, there’s nothing like a good fight...either to be in one or watch one. Besides, it’s not your place to get between a fight, right? Sometimes, you need to vent your anger, and the best way is to yell and shout all manner of evil at someone, maybe even to hit or punch the person. No, you are makers of no peace.

Where, then, is meekness? Where is mercy? Where is purity of heart? Where is peacemaking? It is only in Jesus Christ! He who knew no sin—who remained meek, who was always merciful, the most pure in heart, the ultimate example of making peace—became sin for you. That is to say, he takes your self-indulgence, your revenge and greed, your impurity, your anger and hate upon himself, and he took

it to the cross and there died with it, destroying it. He took the death you deserved, destroying the sins you commit.

But He does so much more. He was meek; His inheritance was the earth. He was merciful; His reward was mercy. He was pure in heart; His gift was to see God. He was the peacemaker; He is called the Son of God. Having taken your sin upon Himself, He gives His meekness, mercy, purity of heart, and peace to you. Where, then, is meekness, mercy, purity of heart, and peacemaking? It is in Christ Jesus, who gives Himself and of Himself for and to you.

By His grace, your inheritance is the earth—the new earth and the city of God, Jerusalem. By His grace, your reward is mercy—God is indeed merciful to you, never punishing you for your offenses. By His grace, your gift is to see God—St. John the Apostle says of you later in Revelation, “They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.” By His grace, you are called sons of God—in the waters of Holy Baptism you are adopted as sons of God, with every right and privilege. These are the rights and privileges He has given to the saints who have gone before and now wait for you. These are the rights and privileges He has given to you, saints of God!

By God’s grace, and only by God’s grace, you are called saints. As saints, your song is the same as those saints who have gone before. With them, with the whole glorious band of angels, archangels, prophets, martyrs, apostles, and with all the saints on earth, you sing these songs of thanks and praise to God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For it is He alone who is worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise! To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever! Amen! This is your song, dear assembled saints, because you are forgiven for all of your sins!

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.