

What Jesus gave us: The “Be-Attitudes”

Throughout the year, parishes around the world celebrate the feast days of many of the **CANONIZED** saints. Our Mother Mary, in her many guises and roles, her faithful husband, Joseph – **TWICE**, each of the apostles and evangelists, Benedict, Francis, Clare, Augustine, Dominic, John of the Cross, Helen – who led her son to legalize Christianity in the Roman Empire, Ann and Joachim – for whom our own parish is named, and ... just recently ... Damien of Molokai – who sacrificed himself to serve the lepers in Hawaii ... to name just a very few.

Then there are those who are on the **WAY** to canonization ... that is, those whom have been **BEATIFIED** – such as Mother Theresa of Calcutta – and those declared **VENERABLE** – such as Fr. Vincent Cappodanno, the “Grunt Chaplain” who saved the lives of so many Marines in Vietnam ... at the cost of his own.

Of course, there are **MANY** more canonized saints than there are days available for feasts.

That's **WHY** we have **ALL SAINTS DAY** ... to cover the bases so to speak ... so that each and every saint can be remembered, if not by name or what they did, then for what they have **BECOME** ... our predecessors in Heaven.

We celebrate what is called in the Book of Revelation, the “great multitude which no one could count, from every nation, race, people and tongue” ... those who the scriptures call the “ones who ... have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.”

In a way, today's celebration could be called “the Feast of the Unknown Saints” because – while there are **THOUSANDS** of canonized saints – there are **UNTOLD NUMBERS** – that “great multitude” which no one can count – who are **ALSO** saints.

Who **ARE** they?

Well, they include **ALL** the Faithful Departed – our parents and grandparents who followed Christ included – who are **ALREADY** there in Heaven with our Lord.

You see, while we often talk of the saints who have been **CANONIZED** – that is, who have been **RECOGNIZED** as saints by the Church – the **TRUE DEFINITION** of a saint is **EVERY** man, woman and child who is in Heaven!

The path to sainthood, then, is that narrow way we often speak of ...
the way we follow when we proclaim Jesus as Lord and follow His words, His
commandments, and the example He set for us during His life here on Earth.

In today's gospel, Matthew reports the guidance Jesus gave to his disciples
and the crowds who followed him up the mountain.

We call them "The beatitudes."

When I am teaching, I often refer to them as the **"BE -ATTITUDES"**
because they give us the way Jesus wants us to **ACT** ... the way we are
SUPPOSED to act ... the way we are supposed to **BE** ... those **ATTITUDES** that
we are supposed to have ... a **ROADMAP** to the Kingdom of God.

They are as important to our lives as the **TEN COMMANDMENTS**.

But many of these beatitudes ... these **BE-ATTITUDES** ... seem – on first
glance – to be largely **NONSENSE!**

Our **OWN** observation of the world is that it is **NOT** the poor or the meek who are in **CHARGE** ... but rather the **RICH** and the **POWERFUL**... and – for the most part – they got there ruthlessly ... perhaps through no-holds-barred politics which not only hurt their opponents but the people they claim to serve ... or – in many parts of the world – through murder, war and corruption.

Hungry? Thirsty? In mourning? Put upon by others?

How is **THAT** blessed?

Be merciful and others will be merciful to you? Maybe they didn't have newspapers back then because from what I read **THAT** doesn't seem to be happening either!

But Jesus is not discussing the world as it is **APPEARS** now ... or even as it appeared in His own earthly lifetime.

He is not talking earthly wealth but, rather, having a **NEED** for God's help to get us through life. So many people will haughtily proclaim that they don't need God in their lives ... that they can – and do – succeed without Him ... and “Isn't life wonderful without having to follow those silly Christian rules made up to scare the masses?”

But should a calamity befall them, they are likely to shout “**WHERE WAS GOD?**” when tragedy strikes!

And how will He comfort us when we are mourning? Has that **EVER** been a happy experience?

The mourning He is talking about is **NOT** the mourning for the loss of a loved one but mourning for the sake of our sin and all the sin in the world. In Psalm 119, it says “My eyes shed streams of tears because your teaching is not followed.” We **MOURN** because God’s will is not being followed.

And we mourn for all the senseless murders in our city, country and world, not the least of which are the millions of innocent children who have been murdered in their mother’s wombs.

We are blessed for our meekness, gentleness and compassion as God comforts us with His touch because we have seen the world as it **SHOULD** be.

We are blessed when we hunger and thirst for what is **RIGHT** ... not what is expedient or “politically correct” in the popular culture.

We are blessed when we are merciful ... when we forgive even when the crime is horrific. Remember that Christ Himself asked for forgiveness for those who were **CRUCIFYING** Him ... torturing him to death on the cross.

We are blessed when we are pure in heart. Not because we are not sinners, but that we live our lives according to our beliefs, not what is permissible – or even encouraged – by modern society.

We are blessed when we seek peace when peace may be the **LAST** thing on our minds and in our hearts. We may feel that our enemies don't **DESERVE** peace ... and, perhaps, by our reckoning, they don't ... but if we don't offer it to **THEM** we certainly won't have it for ourselves!

The last two can be taken together.

We're blessed when we **STAND UP** for our faith even in the face of ridicule and persecution.

Here in the U.S., we are very fortunate. We may have to suffer ridicule from those who hate us because of our Catholic faith, but many followers of Christ **DO** have to physically suffer at the hands of others, sometimes even resisting oppressors and torturers to the point of **DEATH**.

Certainly, those **MARTYRS** are saints.

But so are all those others in Heaven we talked about earlier.

Here's a good example.

Like many people, I get a **LOT** of e-mail. As a website manager, I probably get more than most. Of course, a large portion of it is pure junk ... fake drugs, "free money" from non-existent lotteries, inheritance scams and the like ... but once in a while, a real gem comes in that's worth sharing.

This poem is one of those:

I was **shocked**, confused, bewildered
As I entered Heaven's door,
Not by the **beauty** of it all,
Nor the lights or its decor.

But it was the **folks** in Heaven
Who made me sputter and gasp.
The **thieves**, the liars, the sinners,
The alcoholics and the **trash**.

There stood the kid from seventh grade
Who swiped my lunch money [...] **twice**.
Next to him was my old neighbor
Who **never** said anything nice.

Herb, who I always thought
Was rotting away in **hell**,
Was sitting pretty on cloud nine,
Looking incredibly **well**.

I nudged Jesus,
"What's the **deal**?
I would love to hear **Your** take.
How'd all these **sinner**s get up here?
God **must've** made a mistake."

"And **why's** everyone so quiet,

So somber - give me a **clue**."

"**Hush**, Child," He said, "They're all in **shock**.

No one thought they'd be seeing **you** [here]."

From that, we have to **REMEMBER** that **EVERY** saint has a **PAST**....

And even if we are **SINNERS** ... we have a **FUTURE!**