Beatitudes and All Saints

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Saturday, October 31, 2026 • 5:30 PM Vigil Mass
Solemnity of All Saints • Matthew 5:1–12a

Tonight is Halloween, which means literally All Hallows' Eve, and the hallows are the holy ones, the saints. And so tonight, on the eve of All Hallows' Day, or All Saints' Day, we celebrate the Vigil Mass for All Saints, and then tomorrow we celebrate—all our Masses will be All Saints' Masses.

That's good for you; it's a two-for-one deal, because All Saints' Day is a holy day of obligation, and because it falls on a Sunday, you only have to go to Mass once. You fulfill your holy-day obligation and your Sunday obligation. This doesn't happen too often, so let's enjoy it.

This is, whenever it falls, one of my favorite feast days, because I love the saints as our spiritual heroes, and they just show us so many ways to live in grace and friendship, and their powerful intercession helps us as we struggle here below.

We always have that Gospel reading of the Beatitudes on All Saints' Day, and I'm going to read to you what Pope St. John Paul II wrote on All Saints' Day in the year 2000.

This is what he says about the saints and the Beatitudes: "The saints took these words of Jesus seriously. They believed that they would find happiness by putting them into practice in their lives, and they realized their truth in everyday experience, despite their trials, moments of darkness and failures. They already tasted here below the deep joy of communion with Christ. In Him they discovered the future glory of God's kingdom."

And so the Beatitudes were, for the saints, their blueprint, their blueprint for leading a holy life. Every saint that ever walked the face of this earth used that blueprint to grow in our Lord's grace and friendship.

The Beatitudes—sometimes we find it hard to describe them to others. How would you describe the Beatitudes? What are they about?

And sometimes that's hard for us to put into words, but I'll tell you what: we know someone who's living the Beatitudes in their life when we see it.

One example of that is when funerals happen here at St. Mary's, and the family picks out the reading for the funeral Mass. So often, when they see one of the selections as the Beatitudes, they choose that.

Why? Because they know their deceased loved one has lived that kind of a life. So even though the Beatitudes may be hard for us to define, we know them when we see them.

The saints pray for us that we will strive to live them—which is not always an easy thing to do—because the Beatitudes are very, very countercultural. They were at the time of Jesus, and they are especially countercultural in our world today. Because Jesus is preaching to the crowd kingdom values, kingdom-of-God values, not secular values.

Jesus is preaching compassion, humility, righteousness, mercy, peace, purity of mind and heart, and courage and perseverance in the face of persecution. We can see how important they are in our spiritual journey.

Another important point of these Beatitudes is that Jesus is redefining what happiness is. And that's an important topic for us today, because, as I have preached before, one of the great errors of our time is that young people are taught that happiness is allowed to be a goal in life. I'm telling you, young people, you're not allowed to put down happiness as your goal in life, because happiness is not a goal. Happiness is a byproduct.

For a Catholic, it's a byproduct of a life lived in Christ, of striving to live our lives in our Lord's grace and friendship. And that's what Jesus is saying, and that's what the saints have shown us: that when we live these kingdom-of-God Beatitudinal values, that's when we really find fulfillment and meaning, happiness, and peace in life.

Thomas Merton, the famous monk, once said that really becoming a saint simply means becoming fully the person God created us to be. And if we do that, that's where we find our happiness.

Saint Catherine of Siena said it more famously: "If we become who we ought to be, we will set the world on fire." And that's what the saints did.

One more quote from people who knew what they were talking about when it comes to holiness.

It was Léon Bloy, a French writer and a mystic, who said—get this—"The only tragedy in life is not to become a saint." Now, we don't have to get canonized, but what he means is: we find our fullest meaning and happiness in life when we grow to become what the Lord wants us to be, and that's to live and die in His grace and friendship, to attain the level of holiness that the Lord needs us to arrive at.

The Beatitudes are not just these kind of throwaway nice things that Jesus said once in what a beautiful setting—if you've ever been to the Holy Land and you saw where Jesus preached this, it was absolutely a gorgeous setting.

Yes, it was beautiful. The Beatitudes are beautiful, but they are very radical as well.

As we celebrate the feast of All the Saints, we pray through their intercession that they will help us to embrace the Beatitudes as our blueprint and our roadmap to a life of holiness on our way to heaven.

So may these Beatitudes be for us a reality check and a blueprint for a life of holiness. And through the intercession of all the saints, may we experience in them our deepest happiness, holiness, and blessedness.

Happy Feast Day to all the local saints.