Homily for the Feast of All Saints 2026 Year A

Today is the Feast of All Saints. It is a day when we remember and give thanks for all the incalculable number of souls who graced and enriched the human race by their presence, especially those we knew and loved, and who are now with God.

As the readings tell us, their number is countless. What they now enjoy and experience "the eye has not seen nor the ear heard". All human language is inadequate to express it, except to say that they now see and participate in the Fullness of God. Where they have gone, we will most certainly follow.

But all of that is in the future and will come about one day, when for each of us, the busy beat of time comes to an end and eternity begins.

But for Christians, the future is already with us in a mysterious hidden way. We can shape and determine the future by how we act and behave now. The future, our future, grows out of this present moment.

There are not two sorts of time in History. The human sort, the here and now, and God sort at some future point that we will share. It is all one. Just as at the Incarnation, God became man and joined us in time in history, so too the future, Heaven, God's Kingdom, is present in a special way in the here and now. In the intervening time, before we each meet and face God, we have to work and pray to establish his Kingdom, and the values of that Kingdom here on earth.

That is the task that all Christians share by virtue of their Baptism.

But if, as a condition of our full sharing in God's Kingdom in the future, we do have to work to establish the values of it here and now. We have to be able to read the signs of the times and see where those values are springing up, and then do what we can to encourage them.

The values outlined in today's Gospel, the Beatitudes, are a very good example.

Let us look at them.

"Happy the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven".

There is nothing noble about poverty and all the ills and deprivations that go with it. That sort of injustice is not a sign of the Kingdom and must be eliminated. But to be poor in spirit means simplicity of life, and to start to lead a simple life means rediscovering the values of many things that we have come to take for granted in our prosperity. If there is any blessing at all in a time of hardship and recession, it is that we can learn to clear out some of the unnecessary clutter in our lives and learn to travel light. We open up our eyes, perhaps for the very first time, to focus on what we have, and not upon what we do not have.

“Happy the gentle, for they shall have the earth for their heritage”.

Aggression, violence, brute force, might is right. These can never be signs of the presence of God’s Kingdom. Power may conquer and subdue lands and peoples, but it can never conquer hearts. The truly gentle person always acts from enormous reserves of strength and security. They are not afraid to risk showing vulnerability. We have to learn that we can risk being gentle with ourselves and with others.

“Happy those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”.

Mourning, the terrible pain of loss, can only be experienced by those who have risked loving somebody else. That pain is caused by the depth of one’s love and nobody can shelter or protect you from it. To have given love and to have received love is to be fully human and alive.

To be afraid of loving or of being loved falls short of the values of God's Kingdom, because it means that we have chosen, for whatever reason, to focus upon just ourselves. But today's feast, All Saints, reminds us that we never lose those we love. The pain of loss is always tempered for Christians by the bright promise of immortality.

“Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right, for they shall be satisfied”.

We live today in a world of public lies, propaganda, double talk, distortion of the truth and manipulation. These can never be signs of the Kingdom of God.

But love and respect for the Truth; to create in others a thirst for knowledge; to encourage freedom of thought and expression of ideas; to promote both public and private morality; to liberate people’s minds, all of that is to work to establish the values of God's Kingdom.

“Happy the merciful, for they shall have mercy shown to them”.

If I am so hard hearted that I never make a real effort to understand other people’s reasons and motives, never make the effort to forgive, nor be prepared to grant second chances, then I am far from the Kingdom of God. Forgiving and forgetting are not the same thing. I may never be able to forget a particular hurt, but if I will not forgive, then how can I ask for God's mercy and forgiveness in turn.

“Happy the pure in heart for they shall see God”.

Purity of heart here is not a sexual thing, it is rather a spirit of integrity, wholeheartedness, a certain clarity of vision that cuts through any attempt at deception with God or with us. It is loving and living in the truth. People who choose not to do so cloud over the capacity they have to see God, who is all Truth.

“Happy the peacemakers, for they shall be called Sons of God. Happy are those who are persecuted in the cause of Right for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”.

The Kingdom of God is not gained by peace at any price. There is never true lasting peace without justice, whether it be in the areas such as international politics or industrial relations. You cannot have one if the other is absent.

Those who pay lip service to one and choose to ignore the other cannot help to establish the Kingdom of God and its values. You cannot lock up peoples’ minds and bodies and really believe that the ensuing silence can be any lasting peace.

The Injustice roars in such a silence, and sooner or later will be heard. A man must be free to work for the Kingdom of God. Liberating ourselves and others is putting into effect one of the values of God's Kingdom.