

Reflection All Saints 2024

When I first heard the beatitudes in my early years, each beatitude began with the word **Blessed**. This has always been a much richer word than happiness, containing a far deeper meaning than the word happy which can be a fleeting experience. Elizabeth greeted Mary with the words "*Blessed are you among women!*" And blessed she was and still is! Yet, from the moment she accepted to become the mother of Jesus, she had to take a low profile and be on the move to avoid trouble. Her life after the annunciation was anything but what one might call happy.

So, we gather today to celebrate all those blessed by God and who shared their blessings selflessly. The word "*all*" is significant because we celebrate not only the canonised saints but also those who lived holy lives - a considerable number - and who are now with God in heaven, many of whom have never been formally recognised and remain unknown to the Church. This vast, uncountable multitude is described in today's first reading as coming from "*every nation, race, tribe, and language.*" In their own unique way, they lived by and reflected all the values and qualities of true discipleship which Jesus describes in the Beatitudes that we heard in the Gospel.

The Beatitudes that Jesus presents to us offers a vision of the many different qualities that can be found in the saints and by which we are called to live. Each beatitude can be seen as a piece of coloured glass in a stained-glass window, collectively forming the image of a true community. No one person necessarily emulates each of the beatitudes equally, some are strong in one particular beatitude and less strong in others. It is only together that we are able to truly reflect the beauty of the God in whose image are made. We do well to remember that God is a community of persons. While recognising Jesus as the perfect embodiment of the Beatitudes, they also outline the kind of person we are called to emulate, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Some of us may naturally resonate with certain beatitudes more than others and, by living one of them well, often leads us to live the others better. For instance, those who hunger for righteousness may also mourn over the world's sinfulness and show mercy, seeking peace and reconciliation. Each beatitude is interconnected, forming a complete picture of the Christian life, like the facets of a diamond reflecting different angles of the same light.

A sonnet by Malcolm Guite

*Though Satan breaks our dark glass into shards
each shard still shines with Christ's reflected light,
it glances from the eyes, kindles the words
of all his unknown saints. The dark is bright
with quiet lives and steady lights undimmed,
the witness of the ones we shunned and shamed.
Plain in our sight and far beyond our seeing
he weaves them with us in the web of being
they stand beside us even as we grieve,
the lone and left behind whom no one claimed,
unnumbered multitudes, he lifts above
the shadow of the gibbet and the grave,
to triumph where all saints are known and named;
the gathered glories of His wounded love.*

A Russian couple was walking down the streets of Saint Petersburg on Christmas Eve

And they felt a slight precipitation on their heads.

"*I think it's raining*" says the man

"*No its snowing*" says the woman

"How about we ask this communist officer here? He is always right!" The man exclaims.

"Officer Rudolph, is it raining or snowing?"

"Definitely raining" he said before walking away.

The man turns to his wife and says with a smile. *"See? Rudolph the Red knows rain, dear!"*