

Introduction to All Saints Day

It is the custom to remember and to give thanks for beloved people in our world and in our lives—the ones we call saints. There are the canonized saints and those for whom churches are named. There are the saints who have made us better people and have made society better. There are also saints whose names are forgotten. Saints of all sorts from all times and places share one thing in common: God's love touches all their lives.

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. 8“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

SERMON-

We heard these words—these beatitudes just before Lent late last winter and have returned to them many times since as we reflect on what Jesus is

all about. The beatitudes might sound a bit different as we remember by name people in our lives who have died.

Jesus' culture was all about one's place in the community and one's status and the honour or shame that go with it. One commentator puts the beatitudes in sharp relief by saying God values what society de-values. God honours where society has shamed.

It's in God's subversion of our attempts to order the world that we can speak of Holy things and of saints.

It's good to expand our view of saints and of what is sacred and what isn't. The way the word "Holy" is used in the New Testament and even Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount invite us to recognize Holiness in the ordinary and saintliness in all sorts of people. Wherever God's love has been, holy imprints are left-so places become sacred and lives become 'sainted'.

The beatitudes remind us that God remembers those who've been pushed aside and those who are forgotten. The beatitudes read this time of year invite us to consider how far God's memory and love can reach. We might get distracted, forgetful or neglectful. Yet God remembers. God blesses. God loves.