

There have been numerous times and in numerous homilies I have used the expression 'Christ-like'. As Catholic Christians being brothers and sisters of Jesus through our baptism, we are expected to be, not only mere followers of him but, his disciples too sharing our faith in the risen Christ. In doing so then we are expected to be 'Christ-like' in our actions and words. In Baptism not all are named after someone in scripture or some existing canonised saint: we are not all Mary or Joseph, John or Elizabeth or Paul – these are sometimes retained for confirmation. Nevertheless, all of us are called to be saints. Paul in the opening to his first letter to the Corinthians says, *'To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.'* Fr Adrian Dixon once said that whatever name they are given they become saints at Baptism however unique that name may be. None of us would consider ourselves to be a saint but there is one saint we are expected to be and that is Saint You.

Today we celebrate the feast of All Saints, the day dedicated to honouring and praying to all saints, known and unknown, who have attained heaven. Many are those canonised saint by the Church often many years after their deaths and for whom we may hold special days. There will be millions of unknown saints throughout the centuries who have been faithful to Jesus and now enjoy heaven.

These saints have been faithful to Jesus despite all the difficulties of living the Christian life and being a follower of Jesus; many are martyred for their faith. For all it was the grace of God working in them; for us it is that grace working in us. We see among ourselves those whom we consider to be saints on earth, in their daily living and the trials they endure; these and the saints in heaven inspire us to see our own possibilities. Today we are thanking God for what he has done in the lives of all the saints who are now in heaven.

So what ways enable us to be Christ-like and saintly? In Matthew's Gospel we listen as Jesus teaches the crowds through the beatitudes in the familiar sermon on the mount and through the words of the Gospel teaches us also. Beatitude means blessing or happy. Each has two halves: the first a human condition and the second a divine promise in it **shall** happen.

When reflecting on the Gospel a thought struck me, and I may be completely wrong, but is Jesus showing us a way because he is talking about himself foretelling some events yet to happen in his life?

Picture his words: apply them to Jesus then reflect on your own unique situation:

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

God the Father sent his only Son into the world for our salvation and through his humble willingness to die for us he reached absolute rock bottom. This is the state of 'poor in spirit' where only total reliance on God can save. Jesus cried to his Father in the garden of Gethsemane, '*Father let this chalice pass by me, not my will but yours be done.*' And on the cross he cried, '*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*' How many times do we pray to God in simpler words for his support we depend on to get us through life? Our blessing is in reaching heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Jesus we know was fully human except sin; he showed us his humanity when he cried at the death of his great friend Lazarus. He mourned as we mourn at the loss of a loved one. We also offer repentance and seek forgiveness. Our blessing is the comfort we receive from others and the forgiveness we receive from God.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Meekness is not weakness; it is the opposite, the ability to be strong in the face of hardship and to submit yourself to God's will. The blessing is to 'inherit the earth', to live with God's strength, to be rewarded by God. Jesus cried from the cross, 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do.'

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. We may not have experienced true hunger or thirst as we witness from a distance in the poor and oppressed people in the world. But to hunger and thirst for food and drink to allow us to live physically, expresses a longing to be nourished and to be satisfied requires a dependency on others. To seek righteousness is to hunger and thirst for what is right to live spiritually according to the will of God. We are dependent on him. The blessing is the promise God makes us to satisfy us who express a longing to be nourished and who receive divine fulfillment in the heaven we yearn for. Jesus fasted for forty days in the desert immediately after his Baptism spurning the devil's temptations and

affirming his obedience and his dependency on the Father. While on the cross Jesus said. 'I thirst'. This was a desperate call of the human Jesus but he is saying also, 'I thirst for you, come to me.'

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. This emphasises our need to acknowledge the faults of others and not to be judgmental. Jesus on the cross showed mercy to the criminal on his right who asked, "*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*" And he said to him, "*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.*" We can say too that where God grants us mercy we in our turn are expected to show mercy to others.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Jesus was free of sin but we are not. However, in daily living we can try not to break our relationship with God and so come closer to him.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Jesus sought to bring peace through love of God and neighbour. Jesus is the mediator between us and God, his very reason for his death and resurrection.

Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. What better example of this is Jesus' death on the cross? He would attain heaven returning to his Father in his ascension. We hear of many examples of Christians persecuted for their faith. We do not expect persecution in our daily Christian lives but we often give our willingness, our time and our energy for others and our blessing is the reward of an eternal life.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you...linked to the blessing before but pointed at you and me. Again, when we are acting in Jesus' name and criticised for it our blessing is the joy and gladness in the reward waiting for us in heaven.

These are the qualities I see in Jesus speaking of himself, mainly of future events, and personified in the saints to whom we pray.

If we to wear a pin badge as a disciple of Christ it would contain these blessings, but already we often wear crucifixes which say everything about us to others.

Finally, remember we are moving to the season of Advent and the birth of Jesus. Christmas begins with Christ – perhaps that is a good model for us to live our Christ-like lives, to live as day-to-day saints.

Deacon Rob

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