

All Saints Day, 1 November 2020

Scriptures: Revelation 7:2-4,9-14; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12

Homily: Fr. Ken

This year All Saints Day falls on a Sunday. The scripture readings are unique for its theme. The readings focus on our status as the daughters and sons of God. We are called into a loving and eternal relationship with God, and with all who belong to God.

The responsorial we prayed, Psalm 24, invites us all to pray: Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face". Together we express our longing to be face to face with God, as we strive to live Jesus' lifestyle and values.

The Gospel reading from Matthew specifies those values in terms of the beatitudes. We are to live with total reliance on God, no matter what life may bring.

Jesus invites all his followers to embrace values and lifestyles that are essential to making real the Kingdom of God in our everyday life.

The beatitudes counter the typical manner of thinking that we often appropriate from our culture and surroundings. Such counter-cultural statements seem so unrealistic and foreign to us that we often wonder whether Jesus knew what he was talking about.

Yet these are the very values that are essential for all who claim to be the Lord's disciples.

The scripture readings help us to realize the significance of the feast day of All Saints, and of the whole month of November which is dedicated to the memory of all the faithful departed.

Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the feast of All Souls, corresponds with the feast of All Saints. We remember all the faithful departed,

those who have died with hope and trust in a loving God. The saints, our models of Christian living, are one with God in heaven.

We look to those who have gone before us for strength and guidance, as we continue in our lives. They are with our God who calls us each day to greater growth, greater intimacy, and greater development.

The three Masses this weekend together also serve as our St. Rita parish's annual Memorial Mass. In our Church tradition, it is a fitting practice to pray for the dead and to ask them to pray for us. Because of our strong bond in faith, we believe that those who have died continue to be connected with us, and are as concerned about us as we are about them.

In Mexico and Latin America, and in various parts of California, November 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> are celebrated as "*Días de los Muertos*". On these two days, relatives and friends gather to remember, pray for, and celebrate those who have died.

It is a common practice in various ethnic traditions to celebrate by visiting cemeteries, and by sharing food, beverages, stories, pictures, and other items associated with the dead. Some people construct private altars in their homes decorating them with pictures of the deceased family members, along with the persons' favorite food and drinks.

When we read the lives of the saints, we can find great inspiration, but we can also find it hard to see how we, with all our faults, can ever approach their holiness. The essential thing in reading the lives of the saints is to focus on Jesus Christ, for the lives of the saints are always to be seen in his light. In Jesus Christ we are all invited to share in a mystery of love that goes beyond our understanding and imagination. It is by welcoming this mystery into our lives that we are able to follow the example of the saints.

We often misunderstand the nature of sainthood. Sainthood is not something reserved for a select few within the Church, but it is the calling given to all. As we pray, as we celebrate the liturgy of the Church, as we try through God's grace to live the Beatitudes in our everyday lives, it is important to see all of this as a sharing in the mystery of Christ's love. At those times when we fail, we are called not to lose hope, but to find in our failure the opportunity to encounter Christ's love, a love on which we can never place limits, a love that calls each one of us to holiness.