



THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

CYCLE C

Revelations 7:2–4, 9–14

1 John 31:3

Matthew 5:1–12

GATHERING

(Place pictures of deceased and living members of the families of the group on a table where they can be seen by the entire group. Have a lighted candle in the center of the pictures.)

When the community has gathered the facilitator asks what they remember of last week's discussion on the Pharisee and Publican, and what their response to the cry of the poor has been during the week.

OPENING PRAYER

(The song, "We Are the Light of the World", is played. It can be found on Utube. When the song is complete, the community pauses for a few moments in silence.)

FOCUS QUESTION

What does it mean to be good?

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

Matthew 5:1–12

COMMENTARY

John was a sophomore in high school. One year, the day before Thanksgiving, he arrived in class carrying all he owned in a little bundle, much the same as one might see in a picture of a youngster running away. He had no father. His mother took off, abandoning him that day, leaving only John's belongings in the middle of the floor of one room. He lived out of his locker for the next week. One of the teachers took him home with her for the Thanksgiving holidays.

After that, for the next week, he went to various friends' homes for the night. Finally, his best friend told him that his mother had agreed to let John stay with them. This family was on welfare and had five children of their own. The mother was called by the school to verify if this was true. Indeed it was! When she was told how great she was to do this, all she said was, "What is there to do? I cannot just see him being thrown away."

A poor family takes in another poor boy. Yes, those who are poor are blessed. They see the needs of others and show them the face of God.

This kind of story seldom makes news. For news to be news it must be spectacular, spectacularly evil it seems at times. Reading the daily news can be a depressing thing to do each morning. Outside of the comics, it is filled with stories of suffering, misery, injustice, abuse, and oppression. Accounts of the greatness of people seldom make the headlines.

This Gospel reading show us Jesus' humanness in every way like ours. He looked out over the crowd and saw their misery and suffering, especially among the poor, of whom he was one. He saw the evils and oppression right down to our very own day. That is when, in his great hope and exuberance over the presence of God in all of life he proclaimed his "I have a dream" speech. He was saying that if we believe in him, those who are hungry will be fed by us. His dream would be fulfilled if we, seeing others suffer because of injustice, will extend them mercy, or food, compassion or whatever they need to have them see the goodness of God.

Jesus is trying to change our image of God, and our vision too. He is not preaching *pie in the sky*, but telling us, emphatically, that if we share his vision, we will embrace his dream and do what he did. This is a different

kind of God from the one many Americans espouse. This God is here to lift us up, to be his people of compassion. We all need this hope, and at the same time we are meant to be the *epiphany* of God for others. We have to show those we meet what God is like. Yet, this is not the way of much of our contemporary culture. Jesus knew that too, because he immediately warns his disciples that they would be persecuted because of identification with him.

Realizing all this, it is evident why the Beatitudes were chosen as the Gospel for the Feast of All Saints. Saints come from everywhere, and although not listed in the book of the canonized, they have lived the Beatitudes, lived Jesus' vision. They have done it in a matter of fact way, and took it for granted that this is what a Christian life is all about. They have seen that in the Beatitudes Jesus draws us together in the realism of our daily lives and shows us the opportunity of sanctity right here. The promise of the Beatitudes comes true when we live as a family of faith.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

1. Where do you see glimpses of holiness in members of your family, or in those with whom you associate?
2. Which Beatitude challenges you the most?
3. How do you see any of the Beatitudes calling you to an action of justice?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

1. In your everyday experience choose someone who has lived the Beatitudes. Recognize him/her in some tangible way.
2. Live a Beatitude. Write to your congressperson regarding the plight of the homeless in our state. Take a specific stand for low income housing, and be present at a hearing concerning this issue.
3. Plan a *hunger banquet* (rice meal or bread and broth) to get people in touch with servicing the needs of others. For help in planning,

contact OXFAM America, 115 Broadway, Boston, MA 02116,
(617482-1211.)

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader invites the group to spend two minutes of silent prayer for those who are suffering or oppressed in any way; and for ourselves and those among us who are slow to respond to Jesus' vision.)

Leader: We say, "Blessed are the achievers."

Group: God says, "Blessed are the poor of heart."

Leader: We say, "Blessed are the self-fulfilled."

Group: God says, "Blessed are those who mourn."

Leader: We say, "Blessed are the powerful."

Group: God says, "Blessed are the meek."

Leader: We say, "Blessed are the unrestrained."

Group: God says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice."

Leader: We say, "Blessed are the manipulators."

Group: God says, "Blessed are the merciful."

Leader: We say, "Blessed are the uninhibited."

Group: God says, "Blessed are the pure of heart."

Leader: We say, "Blessed are the strong."

Group: God says, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Leader: We say, "Blessed are the expedient."

Group: God says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake."

All: Lord, this is the people who longs to see your face. You allow us to seek you and find you in the pathway of our daily lives. May we emulate those blessed, who have gone before us, who lived your vision in their daily lives. Amen.