

NOVEMBER 1, 2020
Solemnity of All Saints
Matthew 5: 1-12a

“WHY CAN’T I?”

“Julius Caesar, the founder of the Roman Empire, history's most expansive and longest-lasting Empire, was a selfish, dissipated, mediocre government bureaucrat until he was 40 years-old. At that time, he was stationed in Spain. One day he was walking across the city center to his offices and he noticed a statue of Alexander the Great, the young Macedonian who had single-handedly conquered and ruled the entire Near East, from Greece to Turkey to Palestine to Egypt to Arabia to Afghanistan, all the way to India, before he was 33-years-old. For some reason, seeing the noble statue of that amazing man on that particular day made Julius Caesar think about what little he had done with his own life. And it was the beginning of his incomparable military and political career, one that helped forge the civilization we still enjoy. He needed an ideal to strive for, and he found it in Alexander that Great. As human beings, we all need an ideal to strive for; otherwise our lives stay mediocre. As Christians, following Christ is our ideal, and the saints are the ones who show us how to follow Christ. St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, began his remarkably fruitful spiritual journey while he was stuck in bed recovering from a second surgery following a cannonball wound. He had nothing to do but read, and the only books in the house were a biography of Christ and the Lives of the Saints. As he read, the thought came to him: "If St. Francis and St. Dominic did it, why can't I?" And thus, was born one of the most influential saints who ever walked the earth. He discovered God's plan for him by studying the lives of the saints. We can do the same.”¹

¹ www.stories4homilies.co

My brothers and sisters, today we are celebrating the Solemnity of All Saints wherein we remember all those holy men and women, people we don't know but now 'residing' in heaven. In our first reading taken from the Book of Revelation, the book was written when Christians were persecuted by the Roman Empire for the purpose of strengthening the faith of these Christians. The Apocalypse depicts the battle with the Roman Empire as the fight between good and evil, Christ and Satan. This reading gives a hope that those who believed in Jesus will be the victors of this encounter, the holy people who are sealed by the mark of the Lamb and forever be protected by Him, the Master and Lord, the One who sacrificed His life for the ransom of many.

While our gospel for today, the famous and most loved quote of Jesus, the Beatitudes, centers on the characteristics and attributes Christ wishes to see in us, His disciples and followers, traits that are exemplified in the lives of the saints. If we look at it, the Beatitudes are complete opposite of the conventional values and standard that the world symbolizes. "Worldly wisdom says, 'Blessed are the rich for they can have everything they want.' But Jesus says, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' The world says, 'Blessed are those who live it up.' But Jesus says, 'Blessed are those who mourn.' It is only those who are capable of loving who are capable of true mourning. The world says, 'Blessed are those who are tough.' But Jesus says, 'Blessed are those who are gentle.' Gentleness is not weakness, but a form of true strength. The world says, 'Blessed are those who hunger for power, status and fame.' But Jesus says, 'Blessed are those who hunger for justice and what is right.' To live rightly is what life is all about. The world says, 'Blessed are those who show no mercy and give no quarter.' But Jesus says, 'Blessed are the merciful.' Happy are we who make allowances for the weaknesses of others, and whose greatness is in their ability to forgive. The world says, 'Happy are those who have clean fingernails, clean teeth and clean skin!' But Jesus says, 'Blessed are those who have clean hearts.' The world says, 'Blessed are the fighters and the bullies.' But Jesus says,

‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ Happy are those who spread understanding and bring reconciliation, they are true children of God. The world says, ‘Blessed are those who lie and cheat and get away with it.’ But Jesus says, ‘Blessed are those who make a stand for what is right, no matter what the cost.’ The beatitudes are ultimately the attitudes of Christ and the saints which all of us are meant to have in our daily life.”²

My brothers and sisters, we can make a difference in this world by living the Beatitudes everyday. We can be a light in the darkness by doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, the ‘Little Way’ of St. Therese of the Child Jesus. We can do it because others did it as St. Ignatius of Loyola said ‘If St. Francis and St. Dominic did it, why can't I?’ little or ordinary in the eyes of men and women but we do it with love and humility, it is huge in the eyes of God. Let us live the Beatitudes, make it our mantra, our slogan, our habit, and our life. For example, be patient with your children, be understanding with your husband or wife, even if they are so annoying, and repeatedly do things improperly. To your neighbors, friends and relatives that you don't talk to or smile with, give them a loving smile or chat with them – be an instrument of love and peace. Serve those who are in need in your own little way – give food to hungry people in the street, clothing to those who are homeless, and be considerate while driving. My brothers and sisters, little act of charity makes a difference how much if we do it frequently and everyday.

“Shortly after World War II, early one chilly morning, an American soldier was making his way back to the barracks in London. As he turned the corner in his jeep, he spotted a little lad with his nose pressed to the window of a pastry shop. The hungry boy stared in silence, watching every move. The soldier stopped, got out, and walked quietly over to where the little fellow was standing. Through the steamed-up window he could see the mouth-watering morsels as they were being pulled from the oven, piping hot. The

² Fr. Jude Botelho, www.stories4homilies.co

boy salivated and released a slight groan as he watched the cook place them onto the glass enclosed counter ever so carefully. The soldier's heart went out to the nameless orphan as he stood beside him. "Son...would you like some of those?" The boy was startled. "Oh, yeah...I would!" The American stepped inside and bought a dozen, put them in a bag, and walked back to where the lad was standing in the foggy cold of the London morning. He smiled, held out the bag, and said: "Here you are." As he turned to walk away, he felt a tug on his coat. He looked back and heard the child ask quietly, "Mister... are you God?" My brothers and sisters let us be the face of God for others.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, You gave me the Beatitudes, the mantra that I must live and follow. Help me to live that everyday and be Your face to others by sharing, loving, and giving myself for the service of others. Teach me to be simple, and modest as You are humble and to love others generously with selfless service and kindness. May I imitate holy men and women who followed you by living the Beatitudes. Amen."