

Homily, Feast of All Saints
November 1, 2011
Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul
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Where are you? Are you here or there? Are you living in the past, the present or the future? At first hearing, these may seem like silly questions. And yet, they are very much related to the Beatitudes proclaimed in the Gospel of Matthew for this Feast of All Saints.

St. Matthew was writing to a group of Christians who were caught between the past, the present and the future. Some of his Jewish listeners wanted to remain in the past with all their Jewish observances in tact. If any “outsider” wanted to join them, they had to accept all of Judaism as well. Gentiles who were interested in following Jesus wanted to move forward into the future, and were not at all interested in taking on Judaism as well as Christianity. The community of St. Matthew was divided. Matthew and some of his followers wanted to hold the community in a kind of balance recognizing in Judaism the roots of their faith in Jesus Christ.

The Beatitudes challenge us to live in the present moment looking forward to the Kingdom promised us. The life that the saints enjoy in the Kingdom of God is intended for us as well. Like the saints who lived their lives on this earth like us, we, too, are called to seize the opportunities of this present life and respond to the call to holiness that is given to each of us and to the entire community of faith.

The Second Vatican Council in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church known in Latin as “Lumen Gentium” or Light of the Nations, clearly states that all persons are called to holiness. Specifically, the Constitution states in Chapter Five that “...all in the Church...are called to holiness according to the apostle’s saying, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification.” Eph. 1:4.

The saints became holy in the same manner in which we must become holy. They lived in the presence with an eye to the future. As Moses received the Law of old on Mount Sinai, now Jesus as “the new Moses” gives the new law of holiness and love from the mount. His teaching lays out for us the challenge of being detached in this present world so as to enjoy the fullness of the Kingdom later; to accept the realities of life when they come our way, the realities of grieving, of simplicity, of hungering and thirsting for justice in the midst of this worlds inequities in order to know the completion of our satisfaction, our true inheritance, God’s mercy and His peace in the fullness of the kingdom. In other words, our path to holiness lies in our leaning into the day to day situations of our lives and seeing in their the tools for becoming holy if only we can enter into that kind of prayer that speaks directly, simply and humbly to the Lord from the heart.

When we sometimes consider the saints we think of the heroic martyrs of ages past. However, we must also remember that the saints were students, lawyers, housewives, mothers, fathers, and all manner of ordinary folks just like us. Reportedly, when St. Philip Neri was once asked while playing cards with his community members at recreation what he would do if he suddenly knew he was to die. St. Philip’s answer was that he would try to finish this game of cards!

The difference for the saints was that they took this life seriously enough to recognize God in their midst, accepted His grace through prayer, sacraments and charity and lived the blessed life of the Beatitudes here in this world so as to know the fullness of blessedness in the world to come. Like the vision in the Book of Revelation in the first reading today, we are called to give glory, wisdom, power, and honor to our God each day by the way we live.

We have at our disposal the same tools as had the saints. Today let us prayer through their intercession that God will continue to shower upon us the grace of a

strong desire to want to live the life of the Beatitudes. In so doing, we are all saints-in-training. Then, what we long for will truly be revealed.