

Solemnity of All Saints, Year B – November 1, 2018 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Cathedral of St Paul, Birmingham, AL – 5:30pm Vigil & 6:30pm Feast Day Masses – 675 words

On this Solemnity of All Saints we honor and give thanks to God for those who, as St. John recounted in his apocalyptic vision, are “the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.” In other words, their lives took the same path that the Lamb’s – that Christ’s – did; they took up their crosses, they suffered to one degree or another with him, and thus they followed after him. Contemplating it through the lens of the gospel, we can say that they lived out the Beatitudes, those counsels of our Lord that predict difficulty, privation, or delayed gratification in this life, but complete fulfillment in the next.

“Why did God make you?” That was the question that many learned, along with its answer, in studying the *Baltimore Catechism* back in the day. “God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him for ever in heaven.” Notice that happiness was not mentioned in connection with this life, but only with the life of heaven. Not that our lot in this life is to be miserable – but that our happiness is not constant, nor does it ever totally fulfill. It always fades to one degree or another, and there is much sadness and pain besides. But St. Paul taught about this in his Letter to the Romans: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us.”

Living out the Beatitudes are part of the “sufferings of this present time”. It is not easy to have that detachment that makes us poor in spirit – especially in our materialistic age. No one wants to mourn, but we are regularly confronted with mortality and loss. Meekness is not one of this world’s values, and those who are meek may be ridiculed by the proud and the haughty. We do quite often hunger and thirst for righteousness – but we see and experience so much injustice as well. Being merciful is often easier said than done. The fight for cleanness of heart is at times quite intense, especially in this time of seemingly unbridled lust. Being a peacemaker is being in the minority in our war-torn world. And who wants to be persecuted?

But if we seek these values, we will succeed in imitating our Lord Jesus Christ, who did not merely teach them to us by word but also embodied them in his own person – in the example he gave us. And he attached a promise to those who live the way he did: “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.” The countless saints whom we honor today experience that reward already, the tribulation they suffered in this world now being, as it were, a faint memory compared to the all-surpassing happiness of the blessed – a happiness which, moreover, shall never be taken away. And they are rooting for us, helping us with their prayers and their noble examples, so that we may one day join their number.

Think of how many people over the centuries celebrated this feast day while on earth – now to be among those who are in heaven and are being honored by us here! Could you or I be a saint? Yes, certainly – and we must! This is our call. May we be among those whom future generations honor on this day; may we look forward, even now, to assisting them by our prayers from heaven and by the good and holy example we shall have left behind. St. John in the second reading said that in heaven we will be “like God” – we do not know fully what that means, but we know that God is good and that in him are total fulfillment and peace. What joy we will have in learning the “rest of the story” – but not only in learning it; also in experiencing it forever.