

Liturgy of the Word with Children
All Saints Day, Year C
2 November 2025
Matthew 5:1-12a

Catechist Background

Today we celebrate the Feast of All Saints, usually celebrated on 1st November. (When a Holy Day of Obligation occurs on a Saturday or a Monday it is transferred to the Sunday). This feast is to remember the many saints whose names and stories we do not know, but from whose lives and prayers we benefit. The number 144,000 'sealed' in the First Reading at Mass today (in Revelation 7:4) should be seen as a symbolic number, and not a restriction on heavenly occupancy. We are *all* called to be saints, - saints in this context means 'Holy Men and Women of God'.

Today's Gospel reading is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and is frequently referred to as 'The Beatitudes.' Beatitudes occur in other parts of the Bible, for instance, in Psalms, and begin with 'Happy [also translated as "blessed"] are they who...' (or similar). 'Blessed' is a better translation than 'Happy' in this passage, as otherwise we have to get our heads around "happy are those who mourn"(!) 'Blessed' means they have been given a blessing from God, rather than being in a state of happiness. If the translation you will read uses the word 'Happy' then you might want to swap that word for 'Blessed' when you read it out, to avoid confusion.

In his words to children and young people at St Mary's College in Twickenham in 2010 Pope Benedict said that he hoped that among those who were listening to him that day there were some of the future saints of the twenty-first century. You might remind the children about this today. The full text of the speech is at the end of this document.

Setting the Scene

The liturgical colour for today's feast is white, which means 'Jesus is here'; you may choose to use this in a focal point. A mirror that you can pass around would be helpful for the activity.

We Say Sorry

Leader: For the times we have followed bad examples, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: For the times we have been hurtful to others, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: For the times we have not been loving, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God, we are thankful for all the holy men and women and children who have lived before us. Help us to follow their example in loving you, so we may join them with you in heaven. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12a

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- Some of the things Jesus said in this Gospel reading sound a bit peculiar, a bit upside-down.
- Did anyone hear anything that was unusual? (e.g. 'Blessed/happy are those who mourn...')
- What do you think Jesus meant? (It may help to read and discuss each Beatitude in turn.)
- What does 'blessed' mean? (God has given you a special blessing to help you know God better and love others – one type of blessing is the one we get when we are baptised).

Response

The saints were people who spent their lives paying attention to God and trying to live in the way that God wanted them to, even if that made their lives hard.

- They don't do this to make themselves look good, but so that they could tell people about God and help them live the way God wants them to live.
- You and I can do that too, in our own ways;
- And there are new saints everyday – one young man called Carlo who was born near us but died when he was a teenager became a saint just a few weeks ago!

The Gospel reading we heard today gives us examples of how God wants us to live:

- People who want what is right, who are merciful, who are peacemakers are all living the way God wants them to live.

Some saints had really horrible things happen to them, and so did Jesus.

- They probably weren't happy about being eaten by lions or crucified, but they *were* happy to make the truth about God better known.

When we act in the ways described in this Gospel reading, we are acting like a mirror to God.

- Pass a mirror around and ask the children to look at the mirror and see their reflection;
- Ask them to think about how they can reflect God to people they know
- Invite suggestions at the end about how they can reflect God's love to other people.

We Believe

Relate the Creed to what you have shared with the children by asking these questions and inviting the children to reply, 'I do.'

- Do you believe in God the Father who created a beautiful world?
- Do you believe in God the Son, Jesus, who came to earth?
- Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit who gives us what we need to live as saints?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying, 'The saints have always brought their prayers to you, our God, and we follow in their footsteps as we pray...'

Leader: We pray for people in the Church today trying to live holy lives. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people all over the world who are faithful to you, especially if it is difficult for them. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people who are unhappy. Send them friends who can show them that true happiness comes from following you. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people who we will see this week. Help us to encourage each other. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, help us to follow the good example of the saints, holy men and women who have gone before us. We make our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.



Pope Benedict's address to pupils (St Mary's University College, Twickenham, 17 September 2010)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, dear young friends,

First of all, I want to say how glad I am to be here with you today. I greet you most warmly, those who have come to Saint Mary's University from Catholic schools and colleges across the United Kingdom, and all who are watching on television and via the internet. I thank Bishop McMahon for his gracious welcome, I thank the choir and the band for the lovely music which began our celebration, and I thank Miss Bellot for her kind words on behalf of all the young people present. In view of London's forthcoming Olympic Games, it has been a pleasure to inaugurate this Sports Foundation, named in honour of Pope John Paul II, and I pray that all who come here will give glory to God through their sporting activities, as well as bringing enjoyment to themselves and to others.

It is not often that a Pope, or indeed anyone else, has the opportunity to speak to the students of all the Catholic schools of England, Wales and Scotland at the same time. And since I have the chance now, there is something I very much want to say to you. I hope that among those of you listening to me today there are some of the future saints of the twenty-first century. What God wants most of all for each one of you is that you should become holy. He loves you much more than you could ever begin to imagine, and he wants the very best for you. And by far the best thing for you is to grow in holiness.

Perhaps some of you have never thought about this before. Perhaps some of you think being a saint is not for you. Let me explain what I mean. When we are young, we can usually think of people that we look up to, people we admire, people we want to be like. It could be someone we meet in our daily lives that we hold in great esteem. Or it could be someone famous. We live in a celebrity culture, and young people are often encouraged to model themselves on figures from the world of sport or entertainment. My question for you is this: what are the qualities you see in others that you would most like to have yourselves? What kind of person would you really like to be?

When I invite you to become saints, I am asking you not to be content with second best. I am asking you not to pursue one limited goal and ignore all the others. Having money makes it possible to be generous and to do good in the world, but on its own, it is not enough to make us happy. Being highly skilled in some activity or profession is good, but it will not satisfy us unless we aim for something greater still. It might make us famous, but it will not make us happy. Happiness is something we all want, but one of the great tragedies in this world is that so many people never find it, because they look for it in the wrong places. The key to it is very simple – true happiness is to be found in God. We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone, not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.

Not only does God love us with a depth and an intensity that we can scarcely begin to comprehend, but he invites us to respond to that love. You all know what it is like when you meet someone interesting and attractive, and you want to be that person's friend. You always hope they will find you interesting and attractive, and want to be your friend. God wants your friendship. And once you enter into friendship with God, everything in your life begins to change. As you come to know him better, you find you want to reflect something of his infinite goodness in your own life. You are attracted to the practice of virtue. You begin to see greed and selfishness and all the other sins for what they really are, destructive and dangerous tendencies that cause deep suffering and do great damage, and you want to avoid falling into that trap yourselves. You begin to feel compassion for people in difficulties and you are eager to do something to help them. You want to come to the aid of the poor and the hungry, you want to comfort the sorrowful, you want to be kind and generous. And once these things begin to matter to you, you are well on the way to becoming saints.

In your Catholic schools, there is always a bigger picture over and above the individual subjects you study, the different skills you learn. All the work you do is placed in the context of growing in friendship with God, and all that flows from that friendship. So you learn not just to be good students, but good citizens, good people. As you move higher up the school, you have to make choices regarding the subjects you study, you begin to specialize with a view to what you are going to do later on in life. That is right and proper. But always remember that every subject you study is part of a bigger picture. Never allow yourselves to become narrow. The world needs good scientists, but a scientific outlook becomes dangerously narrow if it ignores the religious or ethical dimension of life, just as religion becomes narrow if it rejects the legitimate contribution of science to our understanding of the world. We need good historians and philosophers and economists, but if the account they give of human life within their particular field is too narrowly focused, they can lead us seriously astray.

A good school provides a rounded education for the whole person. And a good Catholic school, over and above this, should help all its students to become saints. I know that there are many non-Catholics studying in the Catholic schools in Great Britain, and I wish to include all of you in my words today. I pray that you too will feel encouraged to practise virtue and to grow in knowledge and friendship with God alongside your Catholic classmates. You are a reminder to them of the bigger picture that exists outside the school, and indeed, it is only right that respect and friendship for members of other religious traditions should be among the virtues learned in a Catholic school. I hope too that you will want to share with everyone you meet the values and insights you have learned through the Christian education you have received. dear friends, I thank you for your attention, I promise to pray for you, and I ask you to pray for me. I hope to see many of you next August, at the World Youth Day in Madrid. In the meantime, may God bless you all!