

A Reflection Matthew 5: 1-12

- With all the wonderful technology today, it is easy to go online and research your family tree.
- I'd like to tell you about a couple of members of my family. I found out about Augustine. He was a soldier, a heavy drinker and a ladies man. Monica, his mother had her hands full with him. But she never gave up on him. She prayed for him every day.
- Paul was another relative. He was hired to go and kill an entire village. But had a horse back riding accident that changed his life
- Then there is Damien; he went to live in a leper colony.
- I could go on and on. ...But before you think I have the world's most dysfunctional family, I need to remind you they are *your* family too. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ after all – aren't we?
- Welcome to All Saints Day 2020! A day we remember very special members of our family – we call them Saints, holy people. And we look to their lives as examples and for encouragement.
- St. Augustine, that soldier, had a dramatic conversion and became one of the greatest writers and teachers of the Catholic faith – proof our lives can turn around.
- St. Monica, his mom, shows us prayer works! We can pray for each other and those prayers are heard- and answered!
- St. Paul, you know his story. Never did make it to kill that village of Christians – instead he converted a nation to Christianity and founded the early Catholic Church.
- St. Damian spent a lifetime bringing the love of Christ to the poorest of the poor and sickest of the sick in Leper Colonies.

- Today we celebrate with all the saints because they made it!! They have entered the Kingdom of Heaven. Our first reading this Sunday from the Book of Revelation tells us about those folks in the “white robes” who passed the test, endured the trials and are now in the presence of God. These are not some “mystical creatures” – they are our brothers and sisters – they lived here where we live!
- And the test they passed, the trial they endured was this: They passed thru this life we are now living – and amidst all the same temptations and sin and craziness they heard God’s call and put Jesus at the center of their lives. They worked hard at following Jesus’ teachings and so they are examples for us follow.
- In our second reading this Sunday, St. John reminds us we can follow in the footsteps of the saints. He reminds us who we are: “Children of God” and where we are headed: “into the Kingdom of Heaven”. John encourages us to do what the saints did – follow the roadmap Jesus gives to us!
- That road map is laid out for us in Chapter 5 of Matthew’s Gospel. Chapter five presents “The Sermon on the Mount” On that mountainside our Lord gives His disciples (that includes each of us) the most extensive, intimate, specific details on how to follow Him – on how to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.
- The road map Jesus gives to us is summarized in the first 12 verses of Chapter 5 – the verses we just read in this Sunday’s Gospel. We call these 9 directions the “Beatitudes”.
- The beatitudes describe the path that leads to heaven; and they are the best way to know who Jesus really is.
- The Beatitudes hold out not only the actions but also the attitudes we Christians must possess. They teach not only a way of behaving but also a way of thinking about things.

- Since the Beatitudes are the roadmap to heaven followed by the saints, let's spend a moment looking at these directions.
- First, notice the word "Blessed" is used repeatedly by Jesus as He gives us these directions. The word "blessed" has two meanings in scripture. If you are blessed you have received a divine favor. So living out these directives leads to divine favors being given to us beyond this earthly life (we will see God in heaven).
- Blessed also means someone who is "happy". So living these teachings out leads to happiness here and now. So what is Jesus telling us we need to do to be happy in life both now and in eternity? He said this ...
- "Be poor in spirit". Simply put, prefer God and His will for you above everything else. Happiness is not found in an abundance of material things. True happiness is not found in riches, fame and power. It is ok to own things just don't let them own you. Don't let them crowd out God. Our relationship with God is the source of all happiness.
- "Mourn". It's ok to grieve, to hurt – but the Lord means a little more here. Jesus tells us to enter into loving relationships, allow yourself to care deeply for others-care for their needs, are for their pain. Don't let the fear of disappointment or hurt or loss stop you from loving deeply. It is the essence of life's happiness.
- "Be Meek". Sometimes the word meek is equated with being weak. That's not the type of "meek" Jesus is talking about. Meek is not always being quiet and passive. It can mean being active. Being a teacher, a listener, and a healer. It means looking at our lives and our world and realizing that everything and everyone is a gift from God. It means being amazed at God's love and His wonderful works. Being meek means not taking God's gifts for granted – it means being deeply thankful. Meek means

loving and caring for others without expecting anything in return.

- “Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness”. Work to carry out God’s will in the world. Work for: equality, care for the poor, fair wages, good housing and proper health care for all. Fight to protect the sanctity of life from conception to natural death. Pick a spot and go for it... and never give up hope.
- “Be Merciful”. This is a challenging one. Forgive; don’t hold grudges – no matter how much you hurt. If we want God’s forgiveness we must do the same.
- “Be Clean of Heart”. God has written a law on each of our hearts: Love God and love each other. Our hearts should be clean of everything else.
- “Be Peacemakers”. We are called to think carefully about what disturbs the peace in our families; our workplace; and all of our relationships – and then work hard to keep the peace. Most times this does not involve breaking up physical altercations. Most times it involves preventive work like not spreading rumors; holding our temper and tongue; listening more closely and trying to understand; picking up the phone and being first to apologize.
- The remaining two directives involve stepping out boldly and standing up for what is right – defending your faith even when there is a price to pay. But doing this with the full trust that you are following a roadmap to heaven. Many of the saints, our brothers and sisters, that we honor today, took those risks and many paid a price. But look at the results of their efforts. On their way to heaven they preserved the faith: lived out our Lord’s teachings, passed them on to us and showed us how to do the same.
- And we too are called to be saints. What does it mean to be a saint in the year 2020? The saints of old were placed in the world at a particular time, in a particular place and in particular situations – so are we. But the one thing they

all had in common was this: They followed the roadmap and were God's love in their world.

- Look around; saints are out there still. They are out there today – modern day saints bringing God's love into our world. Saint Therese of Lisieux once said: Grow where you are planted. Great advice for us we try to live saintly lives.
- So today on All Saints Day we thank them, all the saints past and present. And we ask them to pray for us as we continue on our journey to heaven.