

# Sunday, November 1, 2020

## All Saints Day

### Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

#### Mass Readings:

1st Reading Revelations 7:2-4, 9-14

2nd Reading: 1 John 3:1-3

Responsorial: Psalm 24:1-6

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12

## Honoring the Great Cloud of Witnesses in Heaven

*Blessed are you. (Matthew 5:11)*

Stroll the halls of any maternity ward, and you'll see parents beaming with happiness over the birth of their child. You'll also hear them saying things like "I hope he grows up to be successful in life." "I'm going to make sure she has every opportunity I never had."

Here are a few things you probably won't hear them say: "I hope she finds her way to sadness." "I'm going to make sure he gets picked on in school." No one wants that for their children! But these are the very types of characteristics Jesus blesses in today's Gospel.

Now, Jesus doesn't want us to actively seek out persecution and sorrow. But he wants us to know that following him may lead to such challenges. That's because the way of discipleship is often at odds with the ways of the world:

- In a world marred by resentment and vengeance, Jesus wants us to forgive and turn the other cheek.
- In a world focused on money and power, Jesus wants us to live humbly and give generously.
- In a world wounded by wars and divisions, Jesus wants us to love our enemies and work for peace.

Every saint, both known and unknown, has experienced this tug-of-war between the world and the kingdom of God. And that's precisely why we celebrate them today: they "have survived the time of great distress" with their faith intact (Revelation 7:14). It's not just the saints. Every believer has their own times of "great distress" as well.

Isn't it helpful to know that you aren't alone in the struggle? All the saints are praying for you. The Holy Spirit is in you to empower and guide you. And you have your brothers and sisters in Christ. It truly is possible to "survive" even the greatest of temptations and take your place with all the saints in heaven.

*"Holy Spirit, give me the grace I need not only to survive but also to thrive as a disciple of Jesus!"*

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**Questions for Reflection or Discussion:**

1. The first reading from Book of Revelation is filled with great symbolisms. It includes “*a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb.*”
  - What do these words mean to you?
  - Why should they be a source of great joy and peace for us as the people of God?
  
2. The Responsorial Psalm begins with these words: *The Lord’s are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it. For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord or who may stand in his holy place? One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, a reward from God his savior. Such is the race that seeks him, that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.*
  - How would you answer these questions from the psalm: *Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord or who may stand in his holy place?*
  - This is how the psalmist answers these questions: *One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, a reward from God his savior. Such is the race that seeks him, that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.* Why are the words from the first reading a source of hope for us as we reflect on the challenging words of the psalm?
  
3. The second reading opens with these inspiring and uplifting truths: *Beloved: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure.*
  - How does the realization that you are a beloved child of your heavenly Father affect how you think and live?
  - What are some of the obstacles in your life or in your thinking that keep you from seeing yourself as a beloved child of your heavenly Father?
  - What are some steps you can take to overcome them?
  
4. The Gospel reading describes the “Beatitudes” taught by Jesus. It ends with these beatitudes: *Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.*
  - Why are the “Beatitudes” considered a series of blessings that are ours as children of God?
  - Why are perhaps the most difficult blessings to receive (or understand) may be the last two beatitude? Why is the final beatitude considered a reason to *Rejoice and be glad?*
  - What do you think Jesus meant when he said: *your reward is great in heaven?* Why should it motivate us and fill us with hope?
  
5. The meditation ends as follows: “Every saint, both known and unknown, has experienced this tug-of-war between the world and the kingdom of God. And that’s precisely why we celebrate them today: they “have survived the time of great distress” with their faith intact (Revelation 7:14). It’s not just the saints. Every believer has their own times of “great distress” as well. Isn’t it helpful to know that you aren’t alone in the struggle? All the saints are praying for you. The Holy Spirit is in you to empower and guide you. And you have your brothers and sisters in Christ. It truly is possible to “survive” even the greatest of temptations and take your place with all the saints in heaven.”
  - In what ways have you “experienced this tug-of-war between the world and the kingdom of God”?
  - During your times of “great distress,” how important is it to know that “All the saints are praying for you. The Holy Spirit is in you to empower and guide you. And you have your brothers and sisters in Christ”?
  - Do you believe it is “It truly is possible to ‘survive’ even the greatest of temptations and take your place with all the saints in heaven”?

Take some time now to pray and ask the Holy Spirit for the grace and power to be the disciple he has called you to be. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

*“Holy Spirit, give me the grace I need not only to survive but also to thrive as a disciple of Jesus!”*

[Maurice Blumberg is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization ([www.christlife.org](http://www.christlife.org)), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal ([www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org)), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National Fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He is also a current leader of his parish ChristLife, Healing, and Men’s Ministries. He can be contacted at [mblumberg@aol.com](mailto:mblumberg@aol.com).]