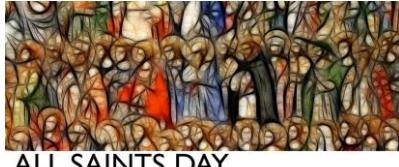


ctkAlive! Scripture Study

Feast of All Saints

2020—A Cycle Readings



Source: [St. Benedict Parish, Chicago, IL](#)

Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, you will find links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.

Caution: Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links.

Exception: In the course of these reflections, you may have an opportunity to watch or listen to a relevant song or video.

Opening Prayer

(edited for use here)

A prayer as I put on my mask . . .

Creator, as I go into the world,
help me to see a sacrament in the wearing of this cloth—
let it be an outward sign of an inward grace—
a tangible, visible way of living love for my neighbors,
as I love myself.

Risen Christ, since my lips will be covered, uncover my heart,
that people may see my smile in the crinkles around my eyes.
Since my voice may be muffled, help me to speak clearly,
not only with my words, but with my actions.

Holy Spirit, as the elastic touches my ears,
remind me to listen carefully—
and full of care—to all those I meet.
May this simple piece of cloth be a shield and a banner,
and may each breath it holds, be filled with your love.
In that love, I pray. Amen

— [Rev. Dr. Richard Bott](#), Moderator of the United Church of Canada
Source: [U.S. Catholic](#) magazine

Introduction to the Feast of All Saints

In Rome, Pope Boniface IV initiated what would later become All Saints Day (May 13, 609 AD/CE). The occasion? Dedication of the former Roman Temple—



the ancient [Pantheon](#) (shown here) as a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary and all martyrs, both known and unknown.

A century later, Gregory III (pope from 731 to 741) set [November 1](#) as the Feast of All Saints but *only* in Rome. He dedicated a chapel in Rome's *original* St. Peter's Basilica in honor of all saints.

In 837, Pope Gregory IV extended the annual observance to the whole Catholic world.

(In 1506, Pope Julius II began construction of the current St. Peter's. It took 120 years to complete.)

Readings:

Book of Revelation 7: 2-4, 9-14 “Salvation comes from our God who is seated on the throne; and from the Lamb.”

Using poetic imagery and mystical language, St. John the Apostle describes his vision of God's blessings and favors for the chosen people. The text is difficult for 21st c. Christians, because most “moderns” are more comfortable with facts and precise data.

Since the Jews, as a whole, did not accept Jesus as their Messiah, we might wrongly assume their complete disfavor. John presents a more optimistic vision for the Chosen People. His Angels point us to a broader view of “election,” described as 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes. But remember, numbers in Scripture have their own, non-literal [meaning](#).

Psalm 24: 1-6 “Who will ascend the mountain of Yahweh? Those with clean hands and pure heart.”

David wrote this psalm for a special occasion, the ceremony of God's entry into the Temple (invisibly enthroned within the ark). The people entered after the ark. The Temple itself represents the *creation of the world* (verses 1 and 2). David called on the people to affirm their fidelity to Yahweh and the scrolls of the Law before stepping into the sanctuary (verses 3-6).

I John 3: 1-3 “See what love the Father has bestowed on us!”

We are God's children. We must live as children of God. But how can we *prove* we are God's children? The many ways we can claim God as Father include breaking away from a sinful life, keeping the commandment of love, and openly proclaiming our faith.

Matthew 5: 1-12 “Blessed are...” (the Beatitudes)

Matthew places the “Sermon on the Mount” somewhere in the hill country bordering the [Lake of Tiberias \(Sea of Galilee\)](#). The reason for mentioning a “mountain” is to remind us of [Mount Sinai](#), where Yahweh gave Moses (and his Hebrew tribes) the original law ([Exodus 19](#)).

A Reading from the Book of Revelation (7: 2-4, 9-14)

“I (John) saw another angel, ascending from the sunrise, carrying the seal of the living God, and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels empowered to harm the earth and the sea, ‘Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads.’

“Then, I heard the number of those marked with the seal: a hundred and forty-four thousand, from all the tribes of the people of Israel: After this, I saw a great crowd, impossible to count, from every nation, race, people and tongue, standing before the throne, and the Lamb, clothed in white, with palm branches in their hands, and they cried out with a loud voice, ‘Who saves, but our God, who sits on the throne, and the Lamb?’

“All the angels stood around the throne, the elders and the four living creatures; they bowed before the throne with their faces to the ground to worship God. They said, ‘Amen. Praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power, and strength to our God forever and ever. Amen!’

“At that moment, one of the elders spoke up, and said to me, ‘Who are these people clothed in white, and where did they come from?’

“I answered, ‘Sir, it is you who know this.’

“The elder replied, ‘They are those who have come out of the great persecution; they have washed and made their clothes white, in the blood of the Lamb.’”

Personal Reflection

(The angels sang) “Amen. Praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power, and strength to our God forever and ever. Amen!”

St. John’s vision presents a good model for my own daily prayer and behavior.

— *Let me consider each word in the angels' song and measure my faith accordingly. Amen (let it be done . . . today)—How am I doing TODAY at letting God take care of me . . . and this bewildering world in which I live?*

— *How am I living each of these words—praise . . . glory . . . wisdom . . . thanks . . . honor . . . power . . . strength?*

Antiphon: Psalm 24 (1-6)

A psalm of David to Yahweh, the ruler of the universe, upon entering God’s chosen dwelling place.

Lord, this is the people who long to see your face.

The earth and its fullness belong to Yahweh,
the world and all that dwell in it.

He has founded it upon the ocean and set it firmly upon the waters.

Who will ascend the mountain of Yahweh?

Who will stand in his holy place?

Lord, this is the people who long to see your face.

Those with clean hands and pure heart,
who desire not what is vain, and never swear to a lie.
They will receive blessings from Yahweh,
a reward from God, their savior.
Such are the people who seek him,
who seek the face of Jacob's God.
Lord, this is the people who long to see your face.

Personal Reflection

“The earth and its fullness belong to Yahweh, the world and all that dwell in it.”
— *Since everything in the world, animate and inanimate, living and thinking, is Yahweh's creation and under Yahweh's protection—including me and my “enemies”—how can I hate anyone?*
What will I do today to reign in my wrath on people and countries I “hate,” “despise,” and “wish ill” for.

“Lord, this is the people who long to see your face.” Yes, even the people I might list as despicable “long to see” the face of God. Maybe they just don't know how to recognize it.

— *How willing am I today to look at my “opponents” (whoever they are) and discover that, even in their current behavior, they long to see the unrecognized God who loves them?*
— How am I responding to the challenge of living in such a way that, when my “opponents” see me, they might get a glimpse of their loving God?

From the First Letter of Saint John (3: 1-3)

“See what singular love the Father has for us: we are called children of God, and we really are. This is why the world does not know us, because it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children, and what we shall be has not yet been shown. Yet, when he appears in his glory, we know that we shall be like him, for then we shall see him as he is. All who have such a hope, try to be pure, as he is pure.”

Personal Reflection

“This is why the world does not know us, because it did not know him.”
In John's first letter, the Beloved Disciple—surrounded by threats of persecution—assigns the reason for hostility toward Christians to their ignorance of God.
— *What is my obligation to witness to the love of God, so that nonbelievers may see God in me by observing how I live and daily comport myself?*

— *How am I currently giving public witness to God's loving care for me and my family?*



You can find John the Evangelist's tomb near the ancient city of Ephesus (Turkey), where he lived with Mary the mother of Jesus until she died. Their home lay outside the city in the shady hill country. John's fellow Christians buried him in Ephesus, in the early 100s AD/CE. Unfortunately, his body disappeared sometime around 300 AD/CE and has never been found.

Mary's House (near Ephesus)



Restorationists rebuilt Mary's House on its original foundation after excavating the site on July 29, 1861. Three modern popes—Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI—have visited the site.

—Photos by AJG, July 6, 2016.

Take a [3-min. video tour](#) of the area and the house. (Note: All Mary's House-related videos on YouTube are by amateurs).

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Matthew (5: 1-12)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain. He sat down, and his disciples gathered around him. Then he spoke and began to teach them:

“Fortunate are those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Fortunate are those who mourn; they shall be comforted.

“Fortunate are the gentle; they shall possess the land.

“Fortunate are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.

“Fortunate are the merciful, for they shall find mercy.

“Fortunate are those with pure hearts, for they shall see God.

“Fortunate are those who work for peace; they shall be called children of God.

“Fortunate are those who are persecuted for the cause of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Personal Reflection

Jesus calls his followers to become poor “in spirit.”

— *What does ‘poor in spirit’ mean to me in the context of my daily life?*

— *How merciful (compassionate/loving) am I toward those with whom I live?*

Who in the broader world needs my mercy today, whether they want my love . . . or even know my feelings and attitudes?

Shelter-in-Place

Election Day is only days away. One thing is certain. When a presidential winner is declared. Some Americans will rejoice. Others may suffer a great letdown.

As for Jesus, himself, his only concerns are for *justice, compassion*, and the *common good* of all races, nationalities, genders, fiscal status, etc.

It's a given that no political party or candidate is perfect. My votes for each national and local office, state propositions and local measures, call for thoughtful discernment. I may end up having to choose what I consider the “lesser of two evils.”

This creates a major decision point for Catholics. To vote sensibly, I need to weigh both the good and not so good in each candidate and issue.

(A greater civic—possibly moral—fault might be my decision not to vote at all!)

— *How willing am I to vote for a candidate I consider the lesser of two evils in his or her approach to addressing civic, national, and international issues?*

Our late pastor, Fr. Brian Joyce, left us this challenge: “What would Jesus want *me* to do?”

— *How can I be sure my voting decisions represent what Jesus really wants *me* to do? (My answer reveals my basic values, positive or negative.)*

Write about your feelings and lived experience of these issues during your journaling time (below).

Journaling Prompts

What insights into my current social demands and restrictions have I gained from reflecting on this weekend’s liturgical readings? Suggested prompt:

— *After reflecting on this weekend’s scriptures, what impressed me the most?*

We mustn’t simply be grateful “recipients” of God’s good gifts. We also need to “give back.”

— *How will this week’s Scriptures and current societal events impact the way I think, live, love—and “give back”—during the week ahead?*

For Inspirational Listening / Reading

Videos:

“[The Beatitudes](#): The Key to Joy” by [Bishop Robert Barron](#) (8 min.)

[The Beatitudes](#) (a unique 5 min. approach worth watching) by [Screenwriter’s Bible](#).

Books:

If you are interested in the construction and amazing artwork of St. Peter’s, here is a wonderful novel about the 16th century in Rome: [Rafael: Painter in Rome](#) by [Stephanie Story](#).

For an equally fine book about Renaissance masters in the same century, try Story’s companion novel, [Oil and Marble](#) ([Leonardo DaVinci](#) and [Michelangelo Buonarroti](#) vie for supremacy and commissions in Florence, Italy).

(I especially enjoyed being in the workshop as Michelangelo sculpted his amazing David and as Leonardo painted the Mona Lisa.—AJG)

Preview of Next Session

32nd Week in Ordinary Time

Wisdom 6: 12-16 “Whoever watches for (wisdom) at dawn shall not be disappointed.

Psalm 63: 2-8 “O God, you are my God whom I seek.”

First Thessalonians 4: 13-18 “We do not want you to be unaware . . . about those who have fallen asleep.”

Matthew 25: 1-13 “The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.”

Closing Prayer

(adapted and abridged for use here)

[“Changing Ourselves—Reflecting God”](#)

by Lynda Palazzolo via [Catholic Health Association](#)

The Beatitudes express the love that Jesus lived out in his daily life. They shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of Christian life. Their promises sustain hope in the midst of troubles. They also proclaim blessings already received.

For all the times I gave up, because the task was too hard or would take too long . . .
Lord Jesus, give me courage to persevere.

I recognize what it means to be a friend of Christ and to show this in my life and relationships . . . Lord Jesus, give me the courage to love.

Help me to surrender, so I may let go of my need to control . . . and allow you to raise new life within me . . . Lord Jesus, give me the courage to change.

Grant me grace to be strong for others by sharing my gifts . . .
Lord Jesus, grant me humility to empty myself of selfish desires.

I pray this in your name. Amen.

Also check out: “Beatitudes Prayer Service” on the Ave Maria Press [website](#).

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

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(follow this link to my novel, [Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words](#))