The Rev. Dr. Mary Barber
The Feast of All Saints
11.1.26

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn.
Blessed are those who hunger for what is right.
Blessed are you when they persecute you.

But how blessed do we really feel when we are the poor in spirit? How blessed did many of us feel last Monday to watch Saquon struggling with his hamstring, and no Jalen because they risked his life on the plane with that blood clot, and the Cowboys' quarterback having a great run? How blessed did many of us feel that our team was not in the World Series? Yeah, none of that felt like a blessing.

We want our team to win, we want our cause to succeed, we want the result we want in the election. We want to rejoice and not mourn.

And not only for selfish reasons. We want our loved one to be healed. We want the movement to succeed, for others who are suffering. We want the election result for the sake of all that is right and good.

Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Today is All Saints Day.

Today we celebrate the saints with a capital S, Saint Martin and Saint Francis and Saint Absalom Jones and Saint Martin Luther King and Saint Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Saint Frances Perkins and Saint Florence Nightingale and Saint Paul Murray. And yes, all of those folks are saints in our Episcopal tradition.

We celebrate these big-S saints, and we also celebrate the small-S saints. Your great-aunt who was always so loving and giving to her family and neighbors. Your ancestor who sacrificed everything to come to this country in hopes of a better life for the next generation. Your personal mentor or hero, now gone but living in your heart and motivating your work still.

Now these saints, the big-S saints and the small-S saints, went through times of feeling poor in spirit, times of mourning, times when they hungered for what they knew to be right but the opposite was happening. These saints went through their times of being persecuted. Some of them were killed for what they said and did. And because of what they said and did, we live in a world that is a bit more just, a bit more loving, a world that is closer to God's kingdom. Because of what these folks said and did, we now call them Blessed.

Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Today is All Saints Day. And today we will baptize Natalie. All Saints Day is a particularly appropriate day to have a baptism, to remind ourselves that we are God's beloved. To remind ourselves of the call we all have to be saints. The call we all have to grow into the person God made us to be, not perfect but perfectly us.

Natalie will be baptized in the same font where her siblings and future saints Bo and Kai were baptized, and where many saints gone before were baptized. Jesus' words to us are especially meaningful as we prepare to witness Natalie's becoming a part of the community of Christians and a part of this St Martin's community. Because Natalie, at her young age of two, is an example for us of someone being her full self. She is too young to help it, too young to have a facade. She is just happy, or not happy as the case might be, to be alive, and not afraid to show it.

And there is more that Natalie can teach us this day.

Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those that mourn. Blessed are the vulnerable. The poor. Those who need others. The babies and young children, like Natalie.

The Saints we celebrate today had their times of feeling poor in spirit, or mourning, or hungering, of being persecuted because they loved, because they cared, because they spoke out and acted and gave of themselves. The Saints we celebrate had their times of being vulnerable and dependent, when they felt they could not go on. The Saints needed help, from others and from God.

And that is not just true of the Saints. That is not just true of babies. It is all of us.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. The vulnerable. Those who need others.

We may think we are independent. We may think we can do it ourselves. We may think that all we want is to be left alone and to have our stuff and watch our team win the game. But the truth is, we all need each other. The truth is, we are all poor in spirit. And the truth is, that is a blessing.

The more we accept God's invitation, the more we let go of the illusion of our achievements, our independence, our status and comfort, the richer we are. The more we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, to be poor in spirit, the more we see the truth that the same love that makes us hunger and hurt and mourn is the love that makes us rejoice, makes us whole, makes us Blessed.

We are all poor in spirit. We are all thirsting for what is right. And we all need each other. It is when we let down our guard and live into these truths that we really get a glimpse of all the abundance God has given us.

We all want our team to win. And it is the same team. We don't need to root for them, for us, alone. We have the saints, all around us, cheering alongside us, when we are winning, and when we are poor in spirit.

Blessed are we. Amen.