

Blessed are...

All Saints' Day

Homily, November 1st, 2020

Mt 5,1-12

father G. Paparone o.p.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who have hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

This evening I am a guest in the parish of Molassana, where my sister lives, and I'd like to remind you about the norms that regulate the Eucharistic celebration: you need to keep the mask on your nose too; these are the basic norms that we have to defend ourselves from being infected.

I know it isn't easy, but think of how hard it is to adhere to the Gospel.

Wearing a mask means being respectful of our neighbor; when we take it off, we are not only doing something wrong, because we are being disrespectful to the person who is next to us, but we are also being harmful to their health.

We had started with one thousand infections and we have now almost reached thirty thousand, what is the cause of these infections? The lack of these basic hygienic norms.

I started the homily in this way, because this can help us understand **what is the meaning of our being Christian believers.**

There are two ways of living our faith: one is the routine way, the standard way, the one related to the adherence to a series of rituals. Even the Mass, the Rosary or the pilgrimages, can become rituals; they are celebrated because we know that God exists, He can help us, therefore it is better to please Him.

There can be many reasons why a person has faith: the fear of hell or of punishment, or the idea of a psychological help; many among us find a lot of solace, fortunately, in taking part in the Eucharist and in other rituals.

However, Christian religion doesn't have to give a generic comfort (it is not by chance that today many people prefer looking for comfort in a psychologist rather than in a church).

Our religion is there to make us become and live as children of God.

The second reading reminds us of this huge mystery, which is inconceivable for us.

After all, none of us really wants to live as a child of God; the best we can aim for is to live as honest citizens, as members of a family who love each other, but to live as children of God is something that we don't even know the meaning of!

*Beloved, see what kind of love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God. Beside the specific content, which is too complicated to talk about today, **to live as children of God means to live as if God were our actual father, as if God were our real family, it means to live in***

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communion with Him, it means to look for His friendship and His love in the first place, and it means to live in communion with all the other children of God.

Each of us who are here tonight, we are all children of God; but not only us: all those who were baptized are children of God [but we need to better understand this point].

We don't become adults automatically. With time passing by, we become biologically mature, but psychologically we become adults only if we make an effort, otherwise we keep being children; as a matter of fact, how many "children" with a white beard, how many "teenagers" who have a husband, a wife and children, how many of these kinds of people do we meet in our life!

The same happens with becoming *children of God*: **we have been regenerated through Baptism, but we do not automatically become children of God.** The efforts in our faith should not only be on a Sunday basis, but on a daily basis; that is to say, the time our Lord gives us to live should be used to become children of God: *for the time being, we are children of God, but what we will be in the future has not been revealed yet.*

My dearest, today we celebrate the important solemnity of **All Saints**. This celebration is here to remind us that **sanctity is the common root of all of us** and the necessary condition of all human beings; the first reading was chosen to tell us how we should use this time that has been given to us.

I, John, saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun rises with the seal: this verse comes from the book of the Revelation, where there are angels carrying the plagues (we can think of what we are experiencing with the Covid-19 pandemic as one of the plagues, even if in quite a light form). The angel cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who were given power to damage the land and the sea. "Do not damage the land or the sea or the trees until we put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."

In these words there are two truths that can be very useful for us now.

You see, the plague can arrive all of a sudden, as well as the end of times. An example is a situation like the one we are now experiencing. No one could expect it. Not only, but also nobody really wants to believe it is actually true; we are still stubbornly convinced that it is like a seasonal flu, something that will soon be over. On the contrary, if you carefully listen to the talk shows, scientists believe we will still need two years before it is really over.

The plague arrives all of a sudden and the Lord says: stop this plague until we have the time to put the seal. I could also say: My Lord, will you just put the seal? Why should we wait? If you want to put the seal, you can do it in a second. What do we need to wait?

But He says: *you have to wait until the seal has been put.* This means that **this act of putting the seal is not a mechanical act that God carries out, but it is an act that He carries out only if we allow Him to work on us.**

When will this seal be put on our foreheads? **When we will be saints and purified from evil.**

After all, my dearest, this life is intertwined with evil.

We can clearly see it, it is sufficient to read the newspapers: our world is full of evilness, stupidity, ignorance, misery.

Paradise cannot be like this; it wouldn't have sense; it will be different.

But how can it be different if human beings will not be different?

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How will we be able to access Paradise, if we inside us have evil, envy, resentment, rancor, malice, indifference, selfishness? It would be impossible, even if God wanted it.

Being able to live in love is something that you learn.

The same happens when you fall in love or become a parent: if you want, you can learn to love your child; in the same way, we can learn to love each other in God, if we want, if we make an effort.

In this moment we are not yet, we still have to recognize it; this is why at the beginning of the celebration we say the penitential act and we ask for mercy.

The Gospel reminds us **that we will be ready, we will have the seal on our foreheads, when we are able to live our Beatitudes.**

Let's ask our Lord, in this Eucharist, to help us **use the time we were given as the most precious gift that we have.** We cannot just wait for the pandemic to be over, but we have to use this time to love, and also to donate a small effort to respect all the rules that we are asked to follow for our wellbeing, and for the wellbeing of our community

May the Lord be praised