

“Your Blessed Life Now!”

All Saint’s Day

Matthew 5:1-12

“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” Matthew 5:3

A little over two months ago while walking down a hallway I saw a saint and the sight brought me joy and gladness. Now, I admit that this “saint sighting” is not what I expect or anyone usually expects when they think of a saint.

Today we are celebrating All Saints’ Day in the Church. Typically when we think of saints our minds drift not to people who are alive but to people who are dead. We think of those who have died in the faith. We might think of the great saints of the Christian Church like the Apostles, early Church Fathers, or even later Church Fathers like Martin Luther, whose work of the Reformation we remembered last week. For those of a Roman Catholic background like myself, you may think of statues or necklaces devoted to different patron saints. Some people may wear a St. Christopher necklace around their necks since St. Christopher is believed by many Roman Catholics to be the patron saint of protection. You may even think of prayers that are prayed to saints. To be sure, there are many saints or Christians who have died in the faith and are now at peace with Christ, resting from their labors, and eagerly awaiting the return of Christ. We even have a name for these saints. They are the “saints triumphant.” But while I was walking this particular hallway over two months ago I saw a real, living saint.

I was at a convalescent home visiting a fellow parishioner, a saint of Atonement Lutheran Church. I was there most especially to give her the Lord’s Supper. So there I was, on a Sunday afternoon, walking down a hallway in my clerical collar with my communion kit and a Bible in one hand and a cross in the other. As I passed by the room of one of the residents I heard these words, “Father, come and give me a blessing.” I have found that in a place like a convalescent home most people call you “Father” if you are wearing a clerical collar. So upon hearing the request, I backed up and looked into the room from which I heard the voice. There I saw a frail, elderly woman on her bed staring up at me. She repeated the words, “Father, come and give me a blessing.” I leaned over her, put my left hand on her forehead and with my right hand I made the sign of the cross and said, “The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you his peace.” A frail, elderly woman admitting that she is poor in spirit and in need of a Spirit-filled blessing from God. A picture of a saint.

Today, as we observe All Saints’ Day, we remember that the faithful saints who have died in the faith and gone before us. Today, we come as those who are poor in Spirit in need of God’s blessing in Christ

to live as the faithful, baptized, believing, repentant saints of God in this world and in our various vocations and callings in life. Today Jesus comes to give us his blessing.

In the Gospel reading we saw a picture of Jesus coming in the midst of his disciples to give them blessing. Seeing the crowd of people Jesus went upon on the mountain. When he sat down on the mountain his Twelve Disciples came to him. He was in their midst. They were in the midst of him. He opened up his mouth and he spoke a word of blessing, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3). Frail, tired, wearied-by-the-ways-of-the-world disciples who are poor in spirit and receiving a blessing from their Lord. A picture of saints.

But is this a picture of us as Christians? Are we really poor in Spirit? We are baptized and have received the Holy Spirit. We are in Christ and in the Spirit. We even pray in the Spirit of God when we do not know what we ought to pray (Rom 8:26). We come to Church regularly on Sunday mornings to receive a dose of the Holy Spirit when we hear the Gospel read and preached, sing songs, pray prayers, and receive the body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper. We attend Bible Studies and read Christian devotions. We feel like we are spirit-filled. Do we *continually* need to receive God's Spirit? This blessing of Jesus must be for someone else. I no longer need it. This is what we might think. "Thanks, but no thanks, Jesus."

Let us think again. "Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm ("Confession" from Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*, LSB 326)? If so, you are poor in Spirit. You, like I, need to come to our Lord in repentance, crying out in confession, "Father, give me a blessing"!

So let us confess our sins to God together as those who are poor in Spirit. I invite you to turn to page 292 in the *Lutheran Service Book* in the pew racks in front of you. Being poor in Spirit let us confess our Sin to God using the bold words in the middle of page 292: "**I, a poor sinner, plead guilty before God of all sins. I have lived as if God did not matter and as if I mattered most. My Lord's name I have not honored as I should; my worship and prayers have faltered. I have not let his love have its way with me, and so my love for others has failed. There are those whom I have hurt, and those whom I have failed to help. My thoughts and desires have been soiled with sin.**" I ask you now to think silently and name silently in your heart and mind one particular sin that is troubling. Let us conclude with the words in bold at the bottom of page 292, "**I am sorry for all of this and ask for grace. I want to do better.**" God be merciful to you and strengthen your faith. For, we truly are poor in Spirit.

Do you actually believe that the forgiveness and blessing that I have to give you here and now in your midst as your Pastor, is really Jesus' blessing and forgiveness intended for all the saints of God who are poor in Spirit? Then let it be done for you as you believe. In the Stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Atonement Lutheran Church
Spring Valley, CA

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Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Your blessed life *now*. Go in peace.
Amen.