

ALL SAINTS

BLESSED ARE THE BEGGARS

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www.sjti.ac.za/resources_homily.htm

First Reading: Apocalypse 7:2-4,9-14
Response: **“Such are the men who seek your face, O Lord”** (Ps.23:6)
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23:1-6
Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-3
Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12

We are not born to die. We are born to eternal life, to be saints in heaven. In the resurrection of Jesus we see our own resurrection, our true glory. The Risen Lord beckons us to his glorious state. He became one like us so that we may be one like him.

A saint in heaven is the glory of God. They are innumerable, **“a huge number impossible to count, of people from every nation”** (Apoc.7:9).

The Bible lists saints as those **“who have been brought through the great persecution”** (Apoc.7:14) and **“have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb”** (Apoc.7:14).

“Such are the men who seek your face, O Lord,” is the encouraging response of the Church (Ps. 23:6).

They are the ones **“who shall stand in his holy place. The man with clean hands and pure heart”** (Ps.23:3).

“Blest are the pure in heart,
For they shall see our God,
the secret of the Lord is theirs,
their soul is Christ’s abode.”

(John Keble, who wrote this hymn, was invited to hear a school’s rendition of his hymns. Demurring from any tribute to himself, he said: *“My dear children, you sang most beautifully in tune; may your whole lives be equally in tune, and then you will sing with the angels in heaven.”*)

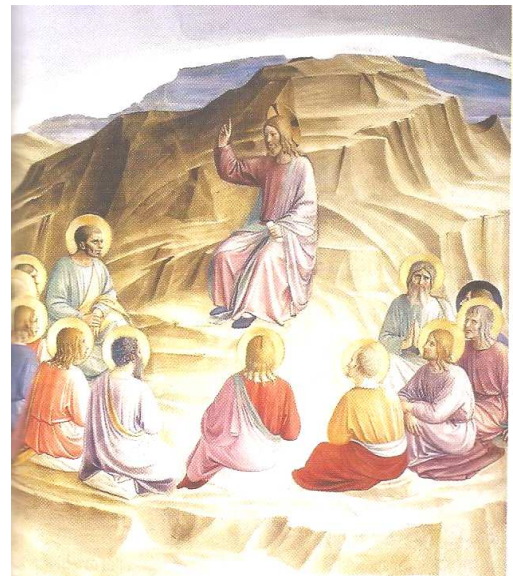
St. John, the evangelist, acknowledges our call to holiness. He writes **“we are already the children of God”** (1Jn.3:2), being faithful to Christ in the test of time; and promises that **“we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is”** (1Jn.3:2).

In the Gospel, Jesus shows the way to sainthood. He spells it out in the beatitudes which ends with the assurance that **“your reward will be great in heaven”** (Matt.5:12).

Each beatitude warrants a sermon. Focus here will be on the first one: **“How happy are the poor in spirit”** (Matt.5:2). This was originally written in Greek: *Makarioi hoi ptochoi to pneumatī.*

The operative word here is *ptochoi*.

The original sense of word *ptochoi* comes from ‘being dependent on’ or ‘to beg’ which generally translates as ‘poor.’



(Sermon on the Mount)

Interestingly, my Afrikaans Bible gives the most favourable interpretation, using the word

'*afhanklik*'* 'to be dependent' on God, not necessarily a pietistic emphasis on pauperism or poverty. *(See Watchword below).

More imagination and use could be made of the original sense of *ptochoi*, poor, where the beggar is seen standing with open hands, full of expectation. Poor in spirit thus captures the sense of open heart and open mind.

Read the beatitudes. Pay special attention to the first: "**Blessed are the poor.**" **Scripture**

Consider the times we stand, full of expectation, with open hands before the Lord. **Liturgy**

Jesus tells us to "**Ask and you shall receive**" (Matt. 7:7). Keep begging, like the widow worries the judge (Lk. 18:3). We are built for prayer and God loves to hear our voices. **Doctrine**

Be humble and empty of self in order to be full of grace. Be open and full of expectation.

Witness

"Still to the lowly soul
He will Himself impart
And for His temple and His throne
will choose the pure in heart."

(Third verse of hymn above)

FOR THE CHILDREN

Read the beatitudes. Explain them. **Is this what makes a saint?** Bible

Teach the children the proper attitudes for Mass: open hands and open minds. Eucharist

What is a beatitude? What does it mean to be holy, to be a saint? Teaching

Children must learn to praise God and talk to him, to beg and pray earnestly. Witness

FOR TEENAGERS (Shared Christian Praxis)

My Present Action: **What does being poor in spirit mean to you?**

Your Story and Vision: **What have you done? Any plans to do anything?**

Church's Story: Give the Church's teaching on being poor and poor in spirit.

Church's Story and Your Story: Consider what is your and Church's commitment to the poor.

Your Vision and Church's Vision: **What is the Church's vision and yours of the Kingdom of God?**

RCIA

In the early Church, its members were called saints (the baptized). There are the saints in heaven called the 'Church Triumphant,' the souls in purgatory called the 'Church Suffering,' and we on earth, the 'Church Militant,' still on the march. The Catechism refers to these 'Three States,' viz. as "the pilgrims on earth, the dead being purified, and the blessed in heaven, who all together form the Church," of which Christ is the head.(i)

(i) CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. # 962. Geoffrey Chapman, London, England. 1994. P.220.

LIFE EXPERIENCE

The 'Litany of Saints' takes me back to my childhood days. I recall the moments we prayed as a family at home and at Church, saying the litany, during devotions and Benediction. I had no problem imagining the awesome array of saints in heaven, each so different and unique and I wondered when and if I would join them. Later, I learnt that we become saints already on earth through baptism and actually join the hosts of heaven in the celebration of the Mass.

I found it more inspiring to sing the litany than to say it. I preferred the Latin plain chant, although I understood less. It was the language of the early Church fathers and mothers, and I was feeling closer to the roots of the Church and to the saints.

One of my most inspiring moments of the Litany was when it was sung in Zulu, at the Easter Vigil and once again at the ordination of a priest. There were alternating voices calling on the saints, then the whole congregation thundered with one accord: "*Nina bacwebileyo sikhulekeleni!*" (O you great blessed ones, pray for us!).

I realized later that in the early Church, the litany had a place in the Mass. The *Kyrie eleison* is a witness to that. It was a litany that began with an invocation to the Triune God, then the intercessions to the Blessed Virgin Mary and finally the angels, martyrs and all the saints to pray for us. This is the Church. This is our liturgy. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. This is our faith in action.

LITTLE ANGELINA

Angelina was telling me about her little friend who likes to swear and use bad language. "What about you?" I teased her. "Don't you swear?" "No, I don't," was her curt reply, "I'm a Catholic."

IMPORTANT WORD: "Saint"

The veneration of saints dates back to the early days of the Church, especially of the martyrs, those who died for Christ like Christ died for us. The imitation of Christ, seen in all forms of holiness, is not just a question of how we die but also how we live. Basic holiness is in all the baptized, with the life of the Triune God. Living it to the full is the real challenge of our faith. Those who succeeded are an inspiration to us and since their death are more alive in Christ. Our veneration of them is called **dulia**, a form of admiration and calling upon them to pray for us. The highest respect on this level is given to the Blessed Virgin Mary, called **hyperdulia**. Supreme adoration and worship is given to God alone. This is called **latria**.

Vatican II explains "the authentic cult of saints, as intensifying our love by their example and aiding us by their intercession"⁽ⁱ⁾

Leon Bloy, French novelist and spiritual writer, wrote: "*Il n'y a qu'une tristesse, c'est de n'être pas des saints*" i.e. "There is only one sadness - not to be a saint."⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

And Georges Bernanos reminds us, in his 'Diary of a Country Priest,' that "the grace of God is everywhere."⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾

(i) **Lumen Gentium** (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) no.50.

(ii) **BLOY** Leon. *LA FEMME PAUVRE – Episode Contemporain – Cinquante-Cinquieme Edition*. Paris, Mercvre de France, xxvi, Rue de Conde, xxvi. 1946. p.299. (last page).

(iii) **BERNANOS** Georges. *JOURNAL D'UN CURE DE CHAMPAGNE*. Paris. 1936. Translated from French by Pamela Morris. *THE DIARY OF A COUNTRY PRIEST*. Boriswood, London. 1937. p.317, (also last page).

Watchword:	“Blessed is the <u>beggar</u> (poor) in spirit” (Matt.5:3)
Hebrew:	Ashrey ‘ <u>aniyey ruah.</u>
Greek:	<u>Makarion hoi ptochoi to pneumat.</u>
Latin:	Beati <u>pauperes spiritu.</u>
Portuguese:	Bem-aventurados os <u>pobres</u> de espirito.
French:	Heureux ceux qui savent <u>pauvres</u> en eux-memes.
Zulu:	Banenhlanhla <u>abampofu</u> ngokomoya.
Sotho:	Ho lehlohonolo ba <u>futsanehileng moyend.</u>
Afrikaans:	<u>Geseend is die wat weet hoe afhanklik hulle van God is.</u> (DIE BYBEL Nuwe Vertaling. NUWE TESTAMENT. Bybelgenootskap).

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CATECHETICS

Lesson 46:

THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CONTENT

- *Apostolic Constitution “Fidei Depositum.”*

FIDEI DEPOSITUM (APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION)

1. The Process and Spirit of Drafting the Text
2. Arrangement of the Material
3. Doctrinal Value of the Text

PROLOGUE:

1. The Life of Man – to Know and Love God.
2. Handing on the Faith: Catechesis.
3. Aims and Intended Readerships of the Catechism.
4. Structure of this Catechism.
5. Practical Directions for Using this Catechism.
6. Necessary Adaptations.

- **PART ONE – THE PROFESSION OF FAITH**

SECTION ONE: *“I BELIEVE” – “WE BELIEVE.”*

Chapter one: *Man’ capacity for God.*

Chapter two: *God comes to meets Man.*

Chapter three: *Man’s response to God.*

SECTION TWO: *THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH – THE CREEDS*

Chapter One: *I believe in God the Father*

Chapter Two: *I believe in Jesus Christ*

Chapter Three: *I believe in the Holy Spirit*

• **PART TWO – THE CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY**

SECTION ONE: *THE SACRAMENTAL ECONOMY*

Chapter One: *Paschal Mystery in Age of the Church*

Chapter Two: *Sacramental Celebration of Paschal Mystery*

SECTION TWO: *THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS*

Chapter One: *The Sacraments of Initiation*

Chapter Two: *The Sacraments of Healing*

Chapter Three: *The Sacraments of the Service of Communion*

Chapter Four: *Other Liturgical Celebrations*

• **PART THREE – LIFE IN CHRIST**

SECTION ONE: *MAN’S VOCATION: LIFE IN THE SPIRIT*

Chapter One: *The Dignity of the Human Person*

Chapter Two: *The Human Community*

Chapter Three: *God’s Salvation: Law and Grace*

SECTION TWO: *THE TEN COMMANDMENTS*

Chapter One: *Love God with all your heart*

Chapter Two: *Love your neighbor as yourself*

• **PART FOUR – CHRISTIAN PRAYER**

SECTION ONE: *PRAYER IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE – WHAT IS PRAYER?*

Chapter One: *The Revelation of Prayer*

Chapter Two: *The Tradition of Prayer*

Chapter Three: *The Life of Prayer*

SECTION TWO: *THE LORD’S PRAYER: “OUR FATHER”*

N.B.: *Masculine language in the Catechism is not general consensus but persistent use of the curia.*