

Solemnity of All Saints

November 1, 2012

The Beatitudes reveal a great deal about Jesus. As we go down the list, we have people who have fallen through the cracks of human life. In effect, Jesus is saying, “I’m concerned about these people. They have my compassion, they have my thoughts, they have my concern, and they have my blessing.”

And so he’s speaking about the poor, the sorrowing, the lonely, the hungry, the thirsty, the single-hearted, the peacemakers, and the persecuted. All those people who don’t quite make it in life. All these people are basically out of the mainstream. And yet he says, “This is my concern,” and the implication is that “this is what you should be about as well.”

But the scope of God’s concern is even wider than that. In that first reading, you witness the very grand and panoramic sweep of John’s vision. He speaks of the countless holy ones – he says 144,000. Of course, the biblical number of fulfillment and perfection is twelve. This says, “This is twelve times twelve – perfection times perfection. You can’t count the number of people that are among the holy ones.”

And this in turn reveals something about God. The Feast of All Saints is basically not only of the compassion of Jesus, who is concerned about the marginal. It is also about the love of God that is so universal and beyond our wildest dreams that, as the reading says, God has found the way to redeem “people from every race, language and walk of life, perfection times perfection, countless upon countless.” And it would seem that among those countless, countless people are those who hunger and thirst, the persecuted, the lonely, the meek, the single-hearted.

As we reflect upon this feast, I believe we tend to think only of the great saints and the saints that we have known in our lives. But we should not forget to go further. Behind it is this incredible love of God which is so vast it can collect 144,000 people, and is so deep that it will slip between the cracks and get even the marginal.

So this is my reflection about All Saints. It's not just all those wonderful people that we trip off in our litanies. It is the feast, as every feast is, of God. It's a feast of God's love. It is horizontal, if you will, and it is vertical. And the feast of All Saints and the Feast of All Souls are meant to tell us that truth.

Beyond our wildest imaginings God's love will find what we could never find, redeem what we would think is irredeemable, and collect what we would throw away – 144,000 from every tribe and countless people. This is the feast of God's love and, therefore, a feast of hope. If God's love will go to the marginal and the in-between people, then it turns this feast into a feast of Christ Our Hope. Let's contemplate today how marvelous God's love is. How wildly wide, how profoundly deep, how incredibly comprehensive, how wonderful this God of ours must be.

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