

## Homily for All Saints

In front of the altar today is a photo of Fr Ernesto Cardenal whose life touched so many people in different ways. Ernesto died on the 1<sup>st</sup> March this year and many people who were influenced by him personally and those who came to know him from a distance regard him as a saint, not one who has gone through the lengthy process of canonisation, but one who like so many other people, have tried to put the words of today's gospel, we call the Beatitudes, into practice. Central to his ministry was to encourage people to engage with the scriptures, in order, to use one of his favourite phrases to 'join heaven and earth.'

The opening beatitude speaks of the poor in spirit already enjoying the kingdom of heaven, reminding us that what we call heaven is not just some after death experience but a reality in our lives in the here and now. We might call the poor in spirit those who see beyond amassing possessions or wielding power, or thinking they have all the answers, but who recognise a presence greater than themselves, a presence we would, in the Christian tradition, call God. The poor in spirit also recognise that they have a responsibility to other people and for the planet which we inhabit for a relatively short amount of time.

Towards the end of the beatitudes Jesus mentions peacemakers saying they will be known as sons and daughters of God. It is good to notice that Jesus speaks of peacemakers rather than peacekeepers. At the heart of Jesus' message was non violence. He reached out to the rejected, he healed the sick, he forgave sinners and assured them that it is always possible to begin again. And the religious and political authorities couldn't cope and they tried to silence him by putting him to death. But as we know his death was not the end, but in some ways the beginning, heaven and earth being joined in an utterly unique way.

Not much has changed in our world and the need for peacemakers has never been greater, men and women who have that gentle but strong inner spirit that radiates mercy and a hunger for what is right. People who are not afraid to oppose oppressive regimes, to speak out against injustice, to expose violence and corruption, to work for a fairer distribution of the world's resources, even when this leads to personal suffering and even death. People like Mahatma Ghandi, Rosa Parkes, Martin Luther King, Oscar Romero, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa and many more.

When a teacher asked the class what you needed to be to be a saint, one person shouted out, 'you need to be dead'. The truth is there are so many saints living among us, 'impossible to count...from every nation, race, tribe and language' as our first reading put it. On this feast of All Saints we are encouraged by such a great number, living and dead, canonised and not, who have lived the beatitudes, and we are challenged to do the same. The invitation is to pray the beatitudes today, this week, and see which one(s) speak(s) to our hearts in a way that will encourage us to put it/them into practice.

## The Solemnity of All Saints

Celebrant:

With so many witnesses in a great cloud on every side of us we pray to Christ for he is the author of our faith and will bring it to fulfilment.

Reader:

Father, you chose the apostles to be the foundation of your Church – keep us faithful to all that you left in their care.

Lord hear us

Your martyrs testified to you, even to the shedding of their blood – make all Christians faithful witnesses to your word.

Lord hear us

Lord, be with those who consecrated their lives to you in virginity – may their hope and generosity be a sign to the world of the glorious life they await at the end of time. Lord hear us

In the saints you reveal your presence and your care – as we venerate them, may we be drawn closer to you.

Lord hear us

We pray for John Mitchell whose anniversary occurs today – that he and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord hear us

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord hear us

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Almighty, ever-living God, we are celebrating with joy the triumph of your grace in all the saints. With so vast a multitude praying for us may we receive from you the fullness of mercy we have desired. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen