Matthew 5:1-12
When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."
Our Scripture Reflection

Today in the Church we celebrate the feast of All Saints. During this feast we commemorate the men and women who throughout history lived their faith in Jesus at an heroic level. How were they able to do so? They lived the Beatitudes that we have for our Gospel text today. And how does one live such seemingly difficult statements which go against popular thinking?

First, we must recall God’s words to Isaiah in 55:8-9: “My ways are not your ways; My thoughts are not your thoughts, says the Lord.” We must take on a God-like mindset.

Second, the first Beatitude serves as the “gateway” for living all the others: “Blessed are the poor in spirit”. Who are these “poor in spirit”? They are people who have experienced the depths of reality, the people who have hit the rock bottom of life; the devastated, those who had their hearts crushed, those who have lost all or have come close to it; those who have been dragged through fire and who have endured indescribable suffering, those who have been betrayed; they are those who have looked squarely in the face of death, and those who have lost it all, or so it may have seemed; in short, those who have been humbled. When one has been to the bottom of life and forced to learn what really and truly matters, then one comes to know that all of us, no matter how rich, how powerful, how beautiful or brilliant, are dependent on God. Then one learns to surrender completely to Him and Him alone. It is then that one can live meekly, purely and peacefully. The saints learned, contrary to the self-esteemmed thinking of our day, that in the whole scheme of things, we are nothing and God is Everything!

Food for your Journey

When Mother Teresa first began her work among the dying on the streets of Calcutta, India, she was obstructed at every turn by government officials and orthodox Hindus, who were suspicious of her motives and used their authority to harass her and to frustrate her efforts. She and her fellow sisters were insulted and threatened with physical violence. One day a shower of stones and bricks rained down on the women as they tried to bring the dying to their humble shelter. Eventually Mother Teresa dropped to her knees before the mob. ‘Kill me!’ she cried in Bengali, her arms outstretched in a gesture of crucifixion, ‘And I’ll be in heaven all the sooner.’ The rabble withdrew but soon the harassment increased with even more irrational acts of violence and louder demands were made of officials to expel the foreign nun in her white sari, wearing a cross around the neck.

"One morning, Mother Teresa noticed a gathering of people outside the nearby Kali Temple, one of the holy places for Hindus in Calcutta. As she drew closer, she saw a man stretched out on the street with turned-up eyes and a face drained of blood. A triple braid denoted that he was of the Brahmin caste, not of the temple priests. No one dared to touch him, for people recognized he was dying from cholera.

"Mother Teresa went to him, bent down, took the body of the Brahmin priest in her arms and carried him to her shelter. Day and night she nursed him, and eventually he recovered. Over and over again he would say to the people, ‘For 30 years I have worshipped a Kali of stone. But I have met in this gentle woman a real Kali, a Kali of flesh and blood.’ Never again were stones thrown at Mother Teresa and the other sisters.”

--Donald J. Shelby,
"Weakness and Power,”

22 December 1991, Santa Monica, California.
A Prayer from the Heart

Dear God, Please strip me of all that is fake, phony and untrue. May I learn that all I have to be in this life is the person You created me to be. With the help of Your Grace, may I give You glory through my words and deeds. Amen