Readings and Reflections for the Week

SUNDAY 1 November - ALL SAINTS
Reading 1, Revelation 7:2-4,9-14, Psalm 23(24)
Reading 2, 1 John 3:1-3, Gospel, Matthew 5:1-12a
How happy are the poor in spirit

Monday 2 November – ALL SOULS
Reading 1, Isaiah 25:6-9, Psalm 26(27)
Reading 2. Romans 5:5-11,
Gospel, Matthew 11:25-30
You have hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to little children

Tuesday 3 November – Feria
Reading 1, Philippians 2:5-11
Psalm 21(22), Gospel, Luke 14:15-24
'Not one of those who were invited shall have a taste of my banquet'

Wednesday 4 November – St Charles Borromeo
Reading 1, Philippians 2:12-18
Psalm26(27), Gospel, Luke 14:25-33
Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple

Thursday 5 November – Feria
Reading 1, Philippians 3:3-8
Psalm 104(104), Gospel, Luke 15:1-10
There will be rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner

Friday 6 November – Feria
Reading 1, Philippians 3:17-41
Psalm 121(122), Gospel, Luke 16:1-8
The master praised the dishonest servant

Saturday 7 November – Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Reading 1, Philippians 4:10-19
Psalm 111(112), Gospel, Luke 16:9-15
Use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends

SUNDAY 8 November - 32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Reading 1, Wisdom 6:12-16, Psalm 62(63)
Reading 2, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Gospel, Matthew25:1-13
The wise and foolish virgins

United with Churches together in St Albans we pray for all members of Forest Town Church.

SAINT OF THE WEEK St Charles Borromeo
Charles was born in Arona in 1538, at the age of 12 he was given the title of "commendatory" of a nearby Benedictine Abbey. The honorific title came with a notable income which Charles donated to the care of the poor. Charles studied canon and civil law in Pavia, and in 1559, at the age of 21, became a doctor of both laws. Several years later, his older brother died and many people urged him to leave ecclesiastical life to take up his position as head of the family. Charles, however, decided to continue along the path to priesthood and was ordained in 1563. Shortly afterwards, he was consecrated Bishop, and was able to participate in the final stages of the Council of Trent, becoming one of the principal promoters of the Catholic Reform (known as the "Counter-Reformation"). Later, he collaborated on the production of the Catechism of the Council of Trent. The Council compelled Bishops to reside in their dioceses, so Charles took possession of the Archdiocese of Milan in 1565, when he was only 27. He made 3 separate pastoral visitations of the whole Archdiocese and organised the territory into ecclesiastical circumscriptions. He founded seminaries for the formation of priests; built churches, schools, colleges, and hospitals; instituted the Congregation of Oblates, composed of secular priests; and donated his own family's wealth to the poor. Charles was also dedicated to a profound reformation of the Church's interior life: he was not afraid to defend the Church against the encroachments of the powerful; and was brave enough to renew ecclesial structures, correcting abuses wherever he found them. He encouraged priests, deacons, and religious to believe in the strength of prayer and penance, transforming their life into a true path of sanctity. His pastoral ministry, stimulated by his love of Christ, nonetheless met with hostility. One group, the so-called "Humiliati" organised an attempt on his life. While praying in his chapel, Charles was shot at, however, the bullet failed to penetrate his vestments and miraculously his life was saved so Charles was able to continue his mission, In the 1570s, Milan was struck by a plague causing disease and famine. During the plague years of 1576 and 1577, Charles closed churches constructing outdoor altars in their places, visited and comforted the sick and dying, and fed the poor. His heroic response was so great that this period became known as "the plague of St Charles. In 1578, Charles decided to make a pilgrimage to Chambery in France to give thanks in the chapel of the Holy Shroud for the liberation of Milan from the plague. Hearing of this, the Duke of Savoy, whose family owned the Shroud, brought the burial cloth of Christ to Turin where it has remained ever since. St Charles made the pilgrimage to Turin on foot, praying and fasting over the course of 4 days. However, after many years of hard work, Charles' health began to fail; and in

November 1584, he died aged 46. Charles was beatified in 1602 by Pope Clement VIII, and 8 years later was canonized by Pope Paul V. Since then, his relics have been venerated in the crypt of the Cathedral of Milan. St Charles Borromeo, a devoted reformer and patron of catechists, seminarians, and those with stomach ailments, is remembered for his deep commitment to the Church and the spiritual well-being of others. Many seek his intercession to grow in virtue, serve others with love, and strengthen their devotion to God
Prayer: *St Charles Borromeo, guide us in faith, inspire holiness and intercede for our needs.*

REFLECTIONS

Reading 1, Revelation 7:2-4,9-14

The Book of Revelation, from which this reading is taken, was written during the first persecutions of Christians. It is built on the promise that, after persecution, those who are faithful to God and to Christ will be delivered and gathered into the peace of God's presence. At the time of writing, the persecuting force from which the persecuted were to be delivered was the might of the Roman Empire, with its immorality, its materialism, its consumerism, and above all its demand that all its subjects should worship the Emperor as Lord. For Christians at that time, the late first century, the great test was whether they would accept the standards of the Empire or remain faithful to the demanding standards of Christianity. The same decision stands before Christians in today's world. Who is my Lord? Is it Christ or the standards for which the Emperor stood: carelessness about sexual morality, materialism, consumerism, putting myself first in everything without regard for the cost to others? Do I connive at and approve standards of behaviour which are built on a morality far from that of Christ? More pressingly, do I accept those standards for myself?

How far have the standards of Caesar made inroads into Christianity and into my own life

Reading 2, 1 John 3:1-3

The second reading also contains hints of an opposition from a godless world, but concentrates much more on the union of God's children to God himself. We are already God's children, because we have been adopted in Christ and can cry 'Abba, Father!' What are the implications of this adoption to sonship? Sometimes a son is almost absurdly like his father in looks, gestures, mannerisms and ways of approaching any task. For ourselves we cannot yet fully know what this likeness to the Father will consist of, but we are promised that in the fullness of revelation we will be assimilated to God. Not only must we be close to our Father in prayer, but we must also show the qualities of God in our actions: God's generosity, his forgiveness, his openness. Part of this must be that we will find that God has developed in us all the qualities we most love and admire in others; we will be sons assimilated to their father. It will be a place of universal joy and appreciation, as all is suffused with the generosity and love of the Father. 'We shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is', and this means that the vision of God will be so overwhelming that we cannot but become like him.

What are some ways that you have experienced God's love in your life? How will you respond and best witness to Christ in our 'secular society'?

Gospel, Matthew 5:1-12a

These eight blessings stand at the head of the Sermon on the Mount, pointing out eight ways in which we can welcome God into our lives. They are ways of living out God's blessing, possible only if the hand of God is upon us. That is why the first and the last beatitudes knit them all together with 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven'. Jesus came to proclaim the kingship of his Father, and these are ways of living that kingship. For each of the beatitudes, do you know someone in the parish or elsewhere in your life who exemplifies that particular attitude? Or is there a saint whom you consider typifies each of these beatitudes for you? What is your own favourite beatitude? Jesus illustrates the beatitudes in various incidents in the gospels: he enters Jerusalem on a donkey as the gentle king; he shows love in his welcome to sinners; he brings peace to those tortured by disease or contempt; he manifests purity of heart in his single minded pre-occupation with his Father's will; finally, he accepts persecution for what he knew to be right. All Christians may suddenly find themselves face to face with similar shattering challenges.

Which of these 'beatitudes' do you most lack? Which would you most like to acquire?

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