



**THE
COMMUNION
OF SAINTS**
(MATTHEW 5:1-12)

Stained glass window in Cologne Cathedral depicting the four evangelists: St Matthew, St Mark, St Luke and St John

The background to Matthew's version of the Good News is the most explicitly Jewish of the four Gospel narratives.

When he presents Jesus going up the mountain (rather than the "hill"), he is showing Jesus in the same light as Moses at Sinai, where Moses received the Law, the Torah, from God. Jesus sits down, this being the posture of a teacher addressing students or disciples. He does not give a new law so much as new teaching (which is the root meaning of Torah). The long sermon begins with a list of attitudes or dispositions which his disciples should adopt: the Eight Beatitudes are thus the equivalent of the Ten Commandments; they are positive in tone, in contrast with most of the Mosaic instructions which begin, "You shall not..." The one set of teaching is not proposed in opposition to the other; rather, for Matthew, Jesus' doctrine represents the true inner core of the Torah of Sinai. If people are properly disposed, there is no need for law: for example, if a person is a peacemaker, the commandment against killing is not necessary.

The timing of the promised reward for living out the Beatitudes is interesting: it will come at the end of time, in the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is mentioned at the beginning and the end of this section, and the Beatitudes in between refer to the final judgement, when the kingdom will be finally established in its perfect form. ■

REFLECT

As we celebrate the feast of All Saints, we remember all those people, some of whom we have known, members of our families, friends and fellow parishioners who have gone before us and who tried their best to live up to the standards Jesus proposed for his disciples. They are part of the "great cloud of witnesses on every side of us", those anonymous saints who are now with God in glory, as well as those who have been officially recognised by the Church.

Each time we recite the Apostles' Creed, we say "I believe in... the communion of saints". By that we mean that we are somehow united in some way with those who have gone before us. As it

says in the first Preface of the Mass for the Dead, "for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended". Just as Jesus was transformed through his death and resurrection, so we believe that all those who die and rise with him sacramentally in baptism share in his risen life, both now and in eternity. The Beatitudes may seem like impossible ideals, but all that the Lord expects of us is that we do our best to live up to them and to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in our efforts. That is why the Eucharist is so important: receiving Holy Communion is not a reward for being a good Christian, but a powerful aid to becoming one. In that, we have the witness of those anonymous saints whom we commemorate today. ■

SAY

Thank you, Lord, for all the saints I have known in my life.

DO

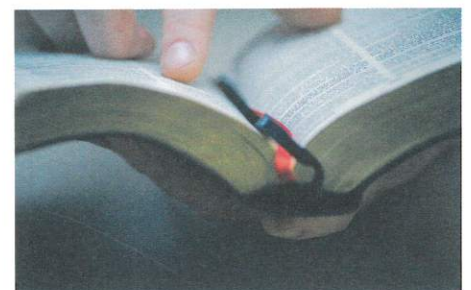
Recite quietly the Apostles' Creed: think about the various phrases, especially "I believe in... the communion of saints".

LEARN

Matthew is depicting Jesus as the new Moses: Moses represents the Law given on Sinai.

The Hebrew word translated often as "Law" is *Torah*: its meaning is broader than legal rules and basically means "teaching" or "instruction".

The collection of the first five books of the Bible – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy – is known as *Torah*.



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Let us all rejoice in the Lord,
as we celebrate the feast day in honour of all
the Saints,
at whose festival the Angels rejoice
and praise the Son of God.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
by whose gift we venerate in one celebration
the merits of all the Saints,
bestow on us, we pray,
through the prayers of so many intercessors,
an abundance of the reconciliation with you
for which we earnestly long.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING *Apocalypse 7:2-4, 9-14*

A reading from the book of the Apocalypse.
I, John, saw another angel rising where the
sun rises, carrying the seal of the living God;
he called in a powerful voice to the four
angels whose duty was to devastate land and
sea, "Wait before you do any damage on land
or at sea or to the trees, until we have put the
seal on the foreheads of the servants of our
God." Then I heard how many were sealed:
a hundred and forty-four thousand, out of all
the tribes of Israel.

After that I saw a huge number, impossible
to count, of people from every nation, race,
tribe and language; they were standing in
front of the throne and in front of the Lamb,
dressed in white robes and holding palms in
their hands. They shouted aloud, "Victory to
our God, who sits on the throne, and to the
Lamb!" And all the angels who were standing
in a circle round the throne, surrounding
the elders and the four animals, prostrated
themselves before the throne, and touched
the ground with their foreheads, worshipping
God with these words, "Amen. Praise and
glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and
honour and power and strength to our God
for ever and ever. Amen."

One of the elders then spoke, and asked
me, "Do you know who these people are,

dressed in white robes, and where they have
come from?" I answered him, "You can tell
me, my lord." Then he said, "These are the
people who have been through the great
persecution, and they have washed their
robes white again in the blood of the Lamb."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 23

Response:

Such are the men who seek your face,
O Lord.

1. The Lord's is the earth and its fullness,
the world and all its peoples.
It is he who set it on the seas;
on the waters he made it firm. (R.)
2. Who shall climb the mountain of the
Lord?
Who shall stand in his holy place?
The man with clean hands and pure heart,
who desires not worthless things. (R.)
3. He shall receive blessings from the Lord
and reward from the God who saves him.
Such are the men who seek him,
seek the face of the God of Jacob. (R.)

SECOND READING

1 John 3:1-3

A reading from the first letter of St John.
Think of the love that the Father has lavished
on us,
by letting us be called God's children;
and that is what we are.
Because the world refused to acknowledge
him,
therefore it does not acknowledge us.
My dear people, we are already the children
of God
but what we are to be in the future has not
yet been revealed;
all we know is, that when it is revealed
we shall be like him
because we shall see him as he really is.
Surely everyone who entertains this hope
must purify himself, must try to be as pure
as Christ.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Come to me, all you who labour and are
overburdened,
and I will give you rest, says the Lord.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:1-12

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill.
There he sat down and was joined by his
disciples. Then he began to speak. This is
what he taught them:

"How happy are the poor in spirit;
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Happy the gentle:
they shall have the earth for their heritage.
Happy those who mourn:
they shall be comforted.
Happy those who hunger and thirst for what
is right:
they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful:
they shall have mercy shown them.
Happy the pure in heart:
they shall see God.
Happy the peacemakers:
they shall be called sons of God.
Happy those who are persecuted in the
cause of right:
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Happy are you when people abuse you
and persecute you and speak all kinds of
calumny against you on my account. Rejoice
and be glad, for your reward will be great in
heaven."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May these offerings we bring in honour of all
the Saints
be pleasing to you, O Lord,
and grant that, just as we believe the Saints
to be already assured of immortality,
so we may experience their concern for our
salvation.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall
see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the
sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we adore you, O God, who alone are holy
and wonderful in all your Saints,
we implore your grace,
so that, coming to perfect holiness in the
fullness of your love,
we may pass from this pilgrim table
to the banquet of our heavenly homeland.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

