November 1: All Saints (Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12a)

**A COMMUNION OF SAINTS**

**All Saints**

 All the readings of the Solemnity of All Saints focus on our status as "children of God", called into loving and eternal relationship with God and with all those who belong to God.

 Responsorial Psalm 24 invites us all to sing, "Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face." Together, we express our longing to be face to face with God as we strive to live Jesus' lifestyle and values. The Gospel reading from Matthew specifies those values in terms of the Beatitudes. We are to live with total reliance on God, no matter what life may bring.

 Jesus invites all his followers to embrace values and lifestyles that are essential to making the reign of God real and practical in our everyday lives. The Beatitudes counter the typical manner of thinking that we often appropriate from our culture and surroundings. Such countercultural statements seem so unrealistic and foreign to us that we often wonder whether Jesus knew what he was talking about.

 Yet, these are the very values that are essential for all who claim to be the Lord's disciples.

 The first reading from the Book of Revelation envisions the joy and ultimate victory of those who have lived with fidelity and trust in God as described in the Beatitudes. They are the victorious ones, dressed in white robes and carrying palm branches, clear signs of triumph in their struggle against forces alien to God. Faithful to the values of the Beatitudes, they lived in constant hope and trust in God that allowed them to handle the challenges and struggles that are part of everyday existence.

 The readings help us to realize the significance of the feast of All Saints and of the whole month of November, which is dedicated to the memory of all the faithful departed.

**All Souls**

 November 2, the feast of All Souls, dovetails with the Solemnity of All Saints. We commemorate all the faithful departed, those who have died with hope and trust in a loving God. The saints, our models of Christian living, are one with God in heaven, which is sharing in the life of the Blessed Trinity. They have fought the good fight as faithful children of God.

 We look to them for strength and guidance as we continue our struggles in life until we are united with them once more. All the faithful departed are with our God, who calls us to greater growth, intimacy, and development, even beyond death.

 These November readings and feasts vividly remind us of the rich reality known as the Communion of Saints. This belief stresses the affirmation that the Church is always one in Christ. Death does not sever any of the bonds that unite us in Christ.

 That is why it is a fitting practice to pray for the dead and to ask them to pray for us. Because of our strong bond in faith, we believe that those who have died continue to be connected with us, as concerned about us as we are about them.

 This leads us in faith to believe that they, too, can intercede with God for us as we intercede for them. Saints do not answer prayers. Only God does. But just as we ask one another for prayers in our struggle to be faithful to God's values in this life, so too we continue that bond and concern for each other even beyond death.

 Those who have died are not separated from us although they are no longer physically present. They are still with us, and we are still connected with them. These celebrations provide time and space, both religiously and socially, to connect with those who have died, to show care and concern for them and to ask them to pray for us.

 This month is an opportune time to reflect on our relationships with those who have gone before us "marked with the sign of faith." As children of God, both here on earth and beyond this life, we are challenged to live in constant fidelity to God's values and in constant trust that our loving God journeys with us, now and always.