

Feast of All Saints

On February 12, 2005, on a dirt road at the Boa Esperanca settlement in a rural area in Para, Brazil, two hired gunmen fired six shots and killed Sister Dorothy Stang, a Sister of Notre Dame. She was murdered because she had put into place programmes that created self-sufficient communities of people committed to their own independence as well as to the sustenance of the rain forest.

As the gunmen approached Sister Dorothy, she took her Bible from her bag and began to read the Beatitudes:

Happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.
Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage.
Happy are those who hunger and thirst for justice...



Sr Dorothy's legacy lives on in the people of Brazil.
To them, she is known as the Martyr of the Amazon.

The Beatitudes form our Gospel reading today. In some translations, the word "Happy" is used, whilst in others it is the word "Blessed". I think that a good phrase is "Grace filled".

*"Grace filled are those who mourn: they shall be comforted.
Grace filled are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.
Grace filled are the pure in heart: they shall see God.
Grace filled are the peacemakers: they shall be called children of God.
Grace filled are those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

The feast of All Saints which we celebrate today is an opportunity for us to reflect on all those who have gone before us, grace filled and marked with the sign of faith.

Some of these people have been acknowledged publically by the Church as Saints such as



St Josephine Bakhita



St John Henry Newman



St Oscar Romero

Others, like



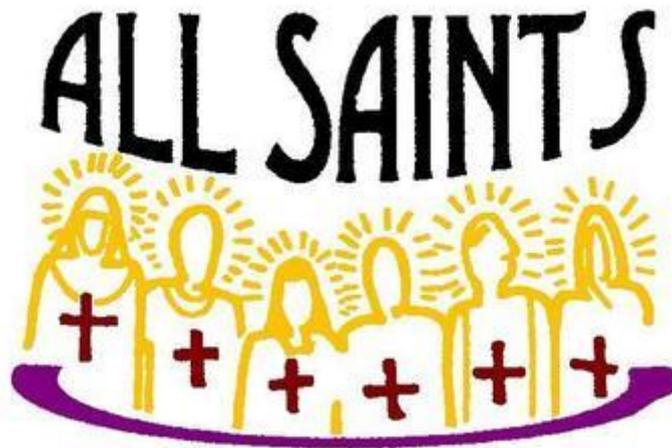
Catherine McAuley
Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy who
began the community of the Sisters in Bermondsey



Mary Potter who was baptised in the
Most Holy Trinity, Dockhead and was the
Foundress of the Little Company of Mary

have yet to be named by the Church as saints, but to all who know the work they inspired they are truly Grace filled people whose lives proclaimed the Gospel message of the Beatitudes.

The vast majority of saints, however, will never be known by most of us. We may know them as mum, dad, daughter, son, brother, sister, cousin, grandparent, friend. We may read their names on the scrolls of remembrance in the parish every November. They may never be officially recognised as saints, but we know that they are Grace filled people whose lives were lived in love and in the spirit of the Beatitudes. They become our saints – people that we have known and loved to whom we can turn when we need support and encouragement.



The first reading today, gives us the image of:

“A huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language standing before the throne of God.”



Let us rejoice with all the saints –
Those recognised by the Church as Saints
Those whose lives proclaimed the Gospel
message of the Beatitudes
Those we have known and loved who were
Grace filled.