

**Reflection on the Gospel- Feast of All Saints Year B
(Matthew 5:1-12)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

This year's celebration of All Saints Day comes just one week after the Synod on the Family closes in Rome. We await the outcome of the Synod, recognising that there may not emerge the clarity of direction we have come to expect from Synods of Bishops. Pope Francis speaks of a synod as an experience of "journeying together, laity, pastors and the Bishop of Rome." While he recognises that this may be "an easy concept to put into words", it is "not so easy to put into practice." He reminds us that "a synodal Church is a Church of listening...in which everyone has something to learn: the faithful, the College of Bishops, [and the] Bishop of Rome; each listening to the others; and all listening to the Holy Spirit". Readiness to listen demands humility and today's gospel reading begins with blessings on the humble ("the poor in spirit" and "the meek"). We can thank Pope Francis for calling our Church leaders to a greater humility as they struggle to listen to the Spirit of God at work in family life.

We have become so familiar with the beatitudes that there is a danger of our failing to attend to the extraordinary present and future reversal that they offer to those who suffer injustice at the hands of the not-so-humble. It seems a good time for us to listen anew to these words. God's favour rests on the humble, on the gentle, on those who grieve for the pain of the world, on serious justice seekers, on the mercy-filled, on the pure in heart, on peacemakers, and on those who suffer in the cause of right. We find here a description of so many of the faith-filled families who grace our assemblies with their presence and even of those who find themselves alienated from the institutional Church.

The repetition of "blessed are" echoes Israel's sacred songs and prophecies. God's favour or blessing comes in diverse forms: the *basileia* or empire of the heavens; comfort in the face of grief; the earth for a heritage (a problematic concept); the experience of "being mercied"; face to face encounter with God; a great reward "in heaven". ["Heaven" was a way of talking about God or God's empire of justice and compassion in contrast with the heartless empire of Rome and its modern equivalents].

Maybe the greatest blessing of this feast is on those who mourn the plight of our planet, the uneven access to Earth's precious resources and the resort to arms in the face of conflict. The families at the heart of our Church might hope to be blessed in ways that set them free to transform both our Church and our planetary home.