

“Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect”

Mt 5:48

Today’s feast of All Saints reminds us that the one great purpose of our holy religion is to provide us with the means of sanctification and salvation. Our coming to church, our prayers, our fasts and abstinences, our penances, our rosaries and devotions, and our hymns, all have no other function than to help us grow in holiness and work towards attaining to heaven to join all the angels and saints with our Blessed Mother and her Divine Son for all eternity.

What does it mean to be sanctified, to be holy? It means growing in conformity to Our Lord Jesus Christ, and becoming more like to Him. It means, as it says at the end of the Sermon of the Mount, becoming perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Mt 5:48).

Most of us probably think that we are not perfect, and most of us probably think that we are not likely to reach perfection in this life. (That, after all, is why we have the safety net of Purgatory.) But that must never deter us from striving towards perfection. If we stop working at the sanctification of our souls, we will not stand still. Rather, we shall start to go backwards, and slowly move *away* from Christ.

The Beatitudes which we have heard proclaimed in today’s Gospel passage, along with the Ten Commandments, give us the recipe – or, if you like, the road map – for perfection.

To become poor in spirit instead of continually hankering after the goods and recognition of this world; to become meek instead of angry every time something doesn’t go our way; to mourn at the sorrows of this world instead of rejoicing in this world’s distorted ideologies; to long (and work) for justice by giving to God and others what is their due instead of taking all things to ourselves in acts of self-centredness and selfishness; to be merciful towards the vulnerable in our society instead of ignoring them or trampling on them; to seek after purity instead of becoming more and more lascivious and self-indulgent; to make peace instead of

being argumentative and confrontational; and to suffer with equanimity and forbearance the ridicule of this world's hostility to Christ. These are the virtues in our modern world after which we should all strive.

Do not be duped into accepting the politician's rhetoric about fairness and tolerance. These, whether or not they are British values, are not in themselves Christian virtues. Strive after what Christ teaches, not after what public figures declaim. Strive to become more like to Christ, not your favourite TikTok celebrity or YouTube influencer.

If you want to become a saint, read the lives and writings of the saints. They are the ones who have succeeded in what matters most. They are the ones who have a proven track record of what growing in holiness is all about. They are the ones who have put the teachings of Christ into practice, and have now joined Him in the kingdom of the Blessed in heaven.

'You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts shall not rest until they rest in Thee' (St Augustine, *Confessions*.)