



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

***November 1, 2011, All Saints' Day***  
***Barbara Lundblad***

RCL: Revelation 7:9-17; Psalm 34:1-10, 22; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12

LM: Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14; Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12a

On this day our minds are filled with memories of loved ones who have died, not only in the year past but long ago. We close our eyes and see them still, and try to remember the sound of their voices. We wait for their names to be read aloud in worship, feeling the weight of loved ones' names in a particular way. When the passage from Matthew's Gospel is read aloud, one blessing seems to stand out among the rest: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (v. 4). On this day the church sanctuary is filled with a great cloud of witnesses. "How many were in church today?" someone might ask you later. "Thousands!" you could reply, and you'd be right no matter how many the ushers counted.

The communion of saints gathers up the living and the dead in one eternal, sacred tapestry. This communion also extends into the future in the visions of Revelation: "After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white" (v. 9). In these words we glimpse another dimension of the communion of saints. This communion transcends not only time but also space, taking us beyond our neighborhoods and national boundaries. Those gathered in the sanctuary are part of a global communion of saints too large to fit inside one church, people of every race and tongue and nation.

How can we hear today's readings with this global communion of saints in view alongside the blessed saints who live close within our memories? It isn't easy, for our emotions well up, and it's hard to hear anything other than the names we remember. The Gospel reading from Matthew can also be a problem, for the Beatitudes are so familiar that it's hard to hear them anew. Some have pointed out the differences between Matthew's blessings and those found in Luke, insisting that Luke is much more earthy. Where Matthew says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Luke says, "Blessed are you who are poor." Luke says, "Blessed are you who are hungry now," while Matthew says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." Does this mean that Matthew's Jesus is more "spiritual," not concerned about people who are actually poor and hungry? Some people make that assumption, turning the Beatitudes into lovely verses for needlepoint pillows, stripped of any connection to the earthly realities of poverty and hunger.

It is righteousness that stands at the center of Matthew's Beatitudes, named both in the middle (v. 6) and near the end (v 10). What does it mean to hunger and thirst after righteousness? What does it mean to be persecuted for righteousness' sake? This word righteousness is very important for Matthew, and he doesn't leave us guessing what righteousness looks like. Righteousness looks like Joseph taking Mary for his wife-even though he had every reason to abandon her quietly (Matt 1:18-25). Righteousness looks like forgiveness



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

rather than revenge, loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you (Matt 5:38-48)-even though the written law called for “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Righteousness looks like food shared with hungry people, a cup of water for the thirsty one, and clothing for those who are naked-even though it isn’t obvious that the person in need is Jesus (Matt 25:31-46). Righteousness, often described as a passive gift, is very active in Matthew’s Gospel. People do righteousness. They care for one another as family, forgive rather than avenge enemies, and make sure hungry people are fed.

We dare not confine the Beatitudes to a pillow covering or a bookmark. Jesus calls us to radical righteousness that connects us to the global communion of saints. In the prayers today we not only name the names of loved ones who have died but lift up the names, known and unknown, of men, women, and children who are hungry. It would be fitting on this All Saints’ Day to bring not only our prayers but an offering of letters to government leaders, letters advocating justice for those who are in need. Even as we remember those closest to us who have died, we also remember Jesus’ words to the righteous before the throne of glory: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matt 25:40).

### ***Children’s Time***

***Written by Larry Hollar***

Find one of those expanding geometric balls (available at science museums or perhaps in some child’s playroom). Close the ball up as small as it will go. Ask: “Who’s part of God’s family?” Children may name themselves, their parents, or people sitting in the pews. “What about people who are sick today?” Hopefully, children will say, “Oh, they’re part of the church too.” Expand the ball a bit larger. “What about people who have died?” Children might name a grandparent or someone close to them. Keep expanding the ball with each question. “What about people in other parts of the world (you might ask them to name countries they know), are they part of God’s family?” Open the ball all the way. If you have a ball that’s large enough, children can reach their hands inside and hold hands with someone “across the globe.” With hands joined, pray for people around the world, especially for those in need. You might also give each child a postcard, pre-addressed to a senator or representative: “Please help hungry people in \_\_\_\_\_ . Vote for (name a specific bill supported by Bread for the World).”

### ***Musical Suggestions***

***Prepared by Larry Hollar***

All Who Hunger-FWS 2126

Blest Are They-GC 659

In Unity We Lift Our Song-FWS 2221

Reflection from Hunger for the Word, Year A

© 2005 by the order of Saint Benedict, Inc.

Published by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota.

Reprinted with permission.