

Solemnity of All Saints: Nov. 1, 2014

By: Sr. Kathy Green, RSM

Matthew 5:1-12

“The Beatitudes”

After Christmas and Easter, the holy day that carries the most spiritual and personal significance for me is the Feast of All Saints. I find it personally enriching and challenging to think about the lives of the spiritual giants of our Church – Catherine of Sienna, Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola, Elizabeth Ann Seton, and so many other women and men canonized in our Catholic tradition. There are others who haven’t made the “official” listing of saints, but who have, nonetheless, lived saintly lives – Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero, Mother Theresa and Nelson Mandela. These men and women lived incredible lives of faith and their courageous witness to the Gospel has and continues to impact my life and the lives of countless others.

On this special feast day, my attention also turns toward the “saints among us” – those individuals whose kindness, selflessness and generosity make the people and world around them better. In all likelihood, they will never be canonized ... or featured on the local news, yet, they make a profoundly-compassionate difference in the lives of those they serve. Who among us in this healing ministry has not been touched by examples like these:

A dying patient is able to witness her son’s wedding, because a caring nurse makes arrangements with the chaplain and dietary department to provide a ceremony and celebration in the patient’s room.

A caregiver is keeping vigil at the bedside, holding the hand of a homeless, dying man. Her shift ended hours ago, but she refuses to let her patient pass from this world to the next alone.

An outreach worker mobilizes resources from different groups and agencies to help a former client pay rent and utilities and purchase food for his family. A change in employment and a serious health issue have left the man without the resources to secure the necessities of life for himself and his loved ones.

A CFO, who despite budgetary constraints, insists that maintaining behavioral health services in the system is a response to the needs of the communities the

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organization serves and thereby extends the healing ministry to one of the most under-served populations in the country.

I am confident that these saintly acts are repeated over and over again in our hospitals, long-term care facilities, clinics, physician offices and any number of other places throughout the Catholic healing ministry. When we are privileged to witness them, they serve as reminders of Jesus' call to us all.

On this holy day, the Church invites us to reflect on our lives and ministry in light of the Beatitudes, often referred to as a blueprint for living a Christian life. In this era of Pope Francis and his clearly articulated vision for our Church, the Beatitude that calls for special attention is: "*Blest are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs.*" In his recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis writes: "*The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven, and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.*" How clear the Pope's call and admonition that all our facilities be places of mercy, as well as places of healing.

The nurse that arranged the wedding, the caregiver who held the hand of the dying homeless man, and the outreach worker who secured resources for a former client in need let their schedules and plans fall by the wayside in order to respond to need...in order to be mercy for another. These compassionate souls certainly wouldn't consider themselves to be saints, but they did saintly deeds. Their example, as well as the example of the "officially canonized" saints of our Church and the many unofficial saintly individuals who have made invaluable contributions to the human family, remind us that we are all called to live, as best we can, the Beatitudes Jesus proclaimed in his Sermon on the Mount.

On this holy day let us commit ourselves to the healing ministry of Jesus, to be a sign and source of mercy in our world.