

**Lesson Plans That Work**  
**Year A – All Saints’ Day**  
**Gospel Lesson for Younger Children**

**Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12**

**Background:** This section of Matthew, known as the Beatitudes, is a type of inaugural address for Jesus. These words are not a wish, or a dream, but a statement of what the Kingdom of Heaven is, and of how we should begin to treat one another now. The Beatitudes in Matthew are statements that tell us about the Kingdom of God that is coming and the Kingdom of God here on earth. In pronouncing these, Jesus is once again turning the norm on its head, and reminding us that the Kingdom of God is different. These declarations orient life toward the other, toward equality, toward discipleship and toward love. Those, who follow Jesus, are to be different.

So why do we read these on All Saints’ Day? The nature of the Kingdom of Heaven is that it is already-and-not-yet. They state the character of God and ask if this is the character of God, should it not also be the character of the people of God? The saints are people who understood this and lived into this character in a variety of ways. The saints give us an understanding of what it looks like to have God in our midst, and to live a life with the Beatitudes as a part of our being.

**Theme: Blessed Saints**

NOTE: Since today’s lesson is about Saints, you may want to read over some of the more popular and important saints for your parish. Is your parish named after a saint? Make sure to have the back story on that saint. There are small bios of each saint below to help you with this, but there is lots of information on saints that can be found on the internet as well as in books. Your parish priest may have a dictionary of saints if you do not have one in the classroom.

**Supplies needed:**

Option 1: *Saints’ Shields*

Copies of the shield templates, and art supplies for decorations.

Option 2: *I Sing a Song of the Saints of God*

Copies of Hymn 293, possibly costumes if you are going to act out the hymn, copies of the shield and art supplies if you are going to create Saints’ Shields of those in the song.

**Beginning:** Welcome the children into the room, and have them sit, in your gathering area. Ask them whom they look up to in their lives. Who do they know that does a good job living how Jesus taught us? Which saints do they know?

**Opening Prayer:** *There are two prayers below from which to choose. The first is a simplified version of the Collect of the Day. The second is the Collect as it appears on page 245 of the Book of Common Prayer.*

Almighty God, you have brought us together in relationship with all who follow you: Help us to follow you the way the saints did so we can know your love and feel deep joy as they did. Amen.

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God in glory everlasting. Amen

### **The Story: Matthew 5:1-12**

In the Bible, we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us. They eat and sleep, and go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories, we learn that God's plan is for each of us too.

Read Matthew 5:1-12

### **Reflection Questions:**

- I wonder what Jesus meant by all of these statements.
- I wonder what the people Jesus was talking to thought of these statements.
- I wonder what these statements might say to us.

### **Introduction:**

All Saints' Day is a day to talk about saints we know because they are saints in the church, and saints who are in our own faith community. Today is a day to celebrate all those who have shown us the way of faith, the way of Christ, and the way toward God.

Ask the children questions like:

- Who are saints that you know?
- Who are the saints in your faith community?
- Who are the saints in your family?
- What makes someone a saint?

### **Creating Saints' Shields**

Invite the children to make saints' shield of a saint that they know, a saint in their family or a saints' shield for themselves. Saints' Shields are usually simple with one or two things on them. "A Small Sampling of Saints" is included in the Downloads for this lesson and here you will find some examples of shields. You can show them these pictures, and help them discover how they would like to make their shield. There are also three different shield outlines that may be useful.

### **I Sing a Song of the Saints of God**

Using Hymn 293, you will introduce the children to the six saints in the hymn and to the saints around them, including themselves. If you do not have a recording of the hymn, search on the internet or on Youtube.com. I would suggest having an accompaniment for the children to sing to, and possibly a version with words so they can hear it as well.

There is a book “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” by Lesbia Scott and Judith Gwyn that illustrates this hymn.

Begin by singing the hymn with the children, then ask them if they know which saints the song talks about. Then tell them the brief story of each of the saints mentioned in the song. Once they know more about the saints in the song, invite them to act out the parts as you sing it through, making someone a doctor, someone a queen, etc. As an alternative, have them choose one of the saints from the song, and create a Saints’ Shield using the templates below.

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### **About the Saints in the Hymn**

#### **Doctor = Luke**

Luke, who was the writer of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, is the first saint mentioned in the hymn. He was born in the Greek city of Antioch in Ancient Syria in the first century. Not only was he a writer and one of the four evangelists who tells us of Christ’s life, but it is also said that he was an artist (mostly painting icons) and doctor. He was a follower of Paul and involved in spreading the word of God.

Luke is usually symbolized by a winged ox, which is a symbol of sacrifice, service and strength.

#### **Queen = Margaret of Scotland**

Margaret of Scotland was born in Hungary and moved to Britain as a young girl. She married King Malcolm III of Scotland and they had eight children. She is known for being a good mother who raised her family in the faith, who influenced the people of Scotland and helped the poor as much as she could.

#### **Shepherdess on the Green = Joan of Arc**

Joan of Arc was born a peasant and was a shepherdess at an early age. When she was 12 or 13, she had a vision telling her to go help recover her homeland. She felt that she was being called to act more courageously than any other in France. In 1429, when she was 17, she rode into battle and helped with many victories. She was captured by the enemies a year later, tried for heresy (which was later nullified) and put to death. She became a saint in 1920 for her courage and faithfulness to God.

#### **Soldier = Martin of Tours**

Martin of Tours was born in Hungary. His father was serving as a senior officer in the Roman Army. Against the wishes of his family, he went to a local Christian church at the age of 10 and became a catechumen or someone who wishes to be baptized. Because Martin was a son of a high ranking officer, he had to enter the army at the age of 15. When Martin was serving in Amiens, France, as they entered the city, he saw a beggar at the city gates. Martin cut his military cloak in half and gave it to the beggar who was shivering from the cold. He did this because he saw Christ in the beggar, and knew he had to help him. When he was 18, Martin finally got baptized and two years later, he left the military stating, “I am a soldier of Christ and I cannot fight.” He was jailed for being

a coward and deserting the army, but was later released. He became a priest, and in 371 he was made Bishop of Tours. He devoted his life to spreading the word of God, founding monasteries, and being a faithful servant.

**Priest = John Donne**

John Donne was a poet, lawyer, and priest born in London in 1573. He was known for his skilled and beautiful writing. In 1615, with the persistent prodding of King James I, he became an Anglican priest and was made dean of the Cathedral in London. He was known throughout the region for his fine preaching, and for speaking about God with great skill. He died in 1631.

**Slain by a Fierce Wild Beast = Ignatius of Antioch**

Ignatius of Antioch lived and wrote during the second half of the First Century. He was the third Bishop of Antioch, and a follower of John. During his service to the church, he wrote many letters that let us know about his ministry, and eventually his death. He was taken by Roman soldiers who condemned him to death because he was a Christian. During his imprisonment, he wrote letters to his followers. Upon reaching Rome, he was sentenced to die after being thrown into a pit with wild lions.

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**Getting Closure:** Invite the children to clean up their space and gather together. Invite them to share what they created.

**Closing Prayer:** Gracious God, we thank you for our time together today. Thank you for all we have learned from the saints past and present. Help us to remember that we are part of the communion of saints and are to help bring the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Amen.

**Matthew 5:1-12**

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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