### LSW

children

And one more thing: many Protestant claim that we pray to dead people, meaning that we pray to saints. You should also take the opportunity to explain that we do not pray to saints. We address our prayers to them because we believe they are closer to God than we are, just like we ask our friends and the priest to pray for us. Saints take our prayers to God. We can of course and do address our prayers directly to God but as members of a praying community called the Church, any harm in asking others to pray for us?

Also, these saints are not ‘dead people’. They are alive, in heaven. In fact, if anything, they are more alive than we are being so close to God, and recognised by God that they have done so many good things on earth.

Year B

#### Solemnity of All Saints

**Images**

Saints

**Points to note**

Today is the day the Church has reserved for those lives have been exemplary but for whom no day has been set aside in the calendar for their commemoration. While tomorrow, we commemorate our family members, friends and people in our community who have departed from us. Discussions today will focus on what saints are and why we pray to them. If you have the time, you may wish to discuss why we pray for the faithful departed.

**Liturgy**

## Acclamation before the Gospel

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened,

And I will give you rest, says the Lord.

Alleluia!

Gospel

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Matthew

(Mt 5: 1-12)

Seeing he crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

“How happy are the poor in spirit;

theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy the gentle;

they shall have the earth for their heritage.

Happy those who mourn;

they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right;

they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful;

they shall have mercy shown them.

Happy the pure in heart;

they shall see God.

Happy the peace makers;

they shall be called sons of God.

Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right;

theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of nasty things against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”

This is the Word of the Lord

**Dialogue**

How many saints do you know? *There are over 2000 canonised saints in the Catholic Church. There are, for instance, over 60 Saints Johns. Get the children to name as many as they can.*

Do you know how somebody can become a saint? *After a very good person dies, sometimes people pray at their graves. I remember in St Francis Xavier Jesuit church in Dublin (in a way very much our mother church as that is where our Irish Jesuits came from) there is a grave of a priest who is not canonised but people pray at his grave. That is the first step to being a saint. He must have been a very holy man who have touched many people in his life and gained the respect of many.*

*A group of other people may then present a case to the Vatican to support canonisation of the candidate. They gather stories of the good deeds that the candidate had done in life. If the cardinals in the Vatican agree, they may approve the candidate to be a Blessed. A Blessed means that the Church agrees that we can address our petitions to them. This process is known as beatification.*

*On further investigations, the candidate can be made a Saint in the process known as canonisation. Usually, beatification require one certified miracle arising from invoking the candidate in prayers while canonisation require two. A saint may (i) be recognised in the register of Saints; (ii) be included in the public prayers of the Church; (iii) have churches named after them; (iv) have masses publicly offered to them; (v) have a feastday; (vi) be painted with a halo; and (vii) have his relics publicly recognised. (Canon Law)*

Can you tell me what is the first thing that the priest does when he reaches the altar? *No, he does not bow to us. He is kissing the altar. Not actually the altar, more what we call an altar-stone. If you life up the altar cloth, you will find a square hole in the wooden table, in which is a slab of marble, the altar-stone. The altar-stone has five crosses cut into it, to represent the five wounds of Jesus. It contains the relic of a saint, which could be a piece of bone, or a hair or something connected to the saint. You see, the early Christians celebrated masses in catacombs, which are basically cellars used as cemeteries. They, naturally, prefer to celebrate mass near to bodies of martyrs or those they consider holy. Later, when we moved out of the catacombs, the practice was retained to celebrate mass over the altar that contained a little bit of the saint they venerated.*