

## **Donnybrook**

1 November 2021

### **Welcome**

Today is a great feast, illustrating our hope in Christ. Today we celebrate all the saints – not just the ones on the books but the unrecognised ones who led good and inspiring Christian lives – people we ourselves have known. As we celebrate all who have followed the path of discipleship, perhaps we can renew our own following of the Gospel.

### **Topic**

Our Gospel reading, very familiar, portrays for us the values of the Kingdom of God, values we are called not simply to live but even to become.

### **Steps**

Our readings are taken from the original Jerusalem Bible and there we find the word “happy”, as in “How happy are the poor in spirit.” The most recent version of the Jerusalem Bible has reverted to the traditional “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” The challenge for translators is the both meanings are in the original Greek.

Here are three modern efforts to come up with something fresh. One British writer, the Jesuit Nicholas King, came up with “congratulations to the poor in spirit” which makes me squirm a little. His compatriot, the Anglican bishop Tom Wright did much better. He rendered it thus: Blessings on the poor in spirit, which has nice energy. But the best I came across comes an American evangelical scholar called Jonathan Pennington. In his study of the Sermon on the Mount, he comes up “Flourishing are the poor in spirit.” It might not be your only version but it does capture the two senses of happy and blessed and a very attractive energy. Who would not like to flourish?

Then we would read, flourishing are the poor in spirit, flourishing are the gentle, flourishing are the mourners and so on. This is now the world tells us to flourish! There is a paradox – a deeply Christian paradox from Jesus himself. Deep down, in our truest selves, we know the truth of this paradox.

### **Conclusion**

And so today, as we celebrate the saints, all of whom were happy and blessed, all of whom flourished as they followed Jesus, there is great good news for us. We too would like to flourish, to be ourselves deeply and richly, before God and our neighbour. The beatitudes tell us how we are to flourish. May be so. Amen.