

## **The Quilt**

All Saints Sunday A

Matthew 5:1-12

### **Slide: Mom**

My mother Joanne is a quilter. She helps assemble and sew quilts at her church with several other dedicated quilters to create these blankets of beauty for people either at home or abroad who are in need. Every year, they pack up the quilts they have made in boxes and send them to Lutheran World Relief, where they are disbursed throughout the world.

And as a child, I can remember squares and squares of colorful, festive, and patterned material everywhere in the sewing room of the house. Sometimes it wasn't just in the sewing room. It spilled over into other areas, too, depending upon how many projects she had going at any one time. Today, she does not have as much in her sewing room as she is more limited with her hands due to arthritis, but she still quilts every week.

My mother also collected sheets for the backs of these quilts; she would wait for sales before buying the batting for them and would spend countless hours cutting up squares to make just the right pattern come alive. Because of her arthritis, she does not tie the quilts anymore, but she still goes to the church to help quilt and can iron, or cut, or assemble those beautiful blankets of love.

My Mother's quilting is evangelism. Her quilts promote the Good News. She believes in Christ, who rose from the dead, who appeared to those women that Easter day saying, go and tell my brothers. And, this belief was her purpose in sewing these quilts. She sews the Gospel of Jesus Christ stitch by stitch, and she didn't need to do it with words in a pulpit or by evangelizing to strangers on the street. She does it with quilts...she spreads God's word like a seed, square by square, blanket by blanket, tie by tie, and stitch by stitch. She sews the Gospel.

My mother, like all the saints before her, thank God, still a living saint at 95. I'm thankful I will see her at the end of November because she

and I both know; the way of all life is eventually the end of it. Life does not go on forever as it is here. Therefore, I lift her up today on this All-Saints Sunday because she is one of the ones who taught me the faith.

### **Slide: Quilters**

You may know that St. John's also has a dedicated, faithful group of quilters. This quilt here is one that was made by them. Every other Wednesday, these friends of Jesus come to quilt, to create similar blankets for others who need them. Just this week while on a walk, I saw a man wearing a quilt just like as if it was a coat, hugging it around him, keeping the chill out. Somewhere along the way, he received this tapestry of kindness. So, now today, when I look at this quilt, I think of the evangelists who sewed it and all those who provide such gifts of God's love to the world.

When hearing Jesus comfort the crowds with his teaching from today's Gospel in Matthew, these phrases which we call 'beatitudes', it brought me back to this image of a quilt, how all the blessed, and all the saints in my life are a patchwork of people and experiences, of grieving and joy, of belief and doubt, of death and resurrection. A quilt is comprised of numerous squares, each one telling a story of where they have been, at least metaphorically.

And, on this day, when we remember those saints who have gone before us, and as we look to our living saints, all fifteen First Communicants today, in their excitement and their youthfulness opening their hands to receive the Blessed Sacrament, we ponder upon those now living and dead who proclaim or proclaimed the faith to and for us. Because of their faithfulness to the gift of the Good News of Jesus Christ, we can sew our own metaphorical quilt of the faithful.

Square by square, what would your quilt look like? If you were to make one comprised of all the times of your life where your faith took part, what would it be? What tapestry would be created because of those who have been in your life? Who are the blessed to be added as a square to your quilt in life? What are the major life passages, experiences that get

sewn in along the way? And how has Christ been woven throughout that tapestry of faith, because God called those faithful ones to lift up Christ to you? Today, Jesus invites fifteen young people to the table for the first time. This is by far the largest First Communion Class I have ever had. Thanks be to God for parents and guardians who keep the promises of Holy Baptism for their children. This day will be sewn into the memory of these children who are faithful and longing to experience the grace of Jesus.

As we hear in the words of Jesus today about being blessed, your “quilt” will include times of grief, times of loss, times of division and hardship. The “blessed” ones - When Jesus speaks of them, they are also wholly human. For some of you today, this year has been a tough one. And, on a day when we remember all those who have died, it is especially fitting to recognize also those Jesus says when we are blessed: when we do mourn, when we are poor in spirit, when we do hunger for righteousness, and when we are meek. This year, like all the years before, is sewn in, so to speak, to how we come here today in this place.

### **Slide: Communion Class**

So, on this All-Saints Day, let us also remember that we do not only point to our grieving and our struggle, but we also point to the promises of the Resurrection, to the touchpoints of goodness and continued journey. This quilt that is being sewn is like the tablecloth at the heavenly banquet, spread before us, a table that welcomes and has plenty of space for more. This table has a host, Jesus Christ, who invites all the faithful to it.

As we hear in Revelation chapter 7: “They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Amen.