

We are living in a predominantly secular society with a multi-faith and multi-cultural society. Nationally the church might be losing its relevance in the public space, but we do have a strong Christian cultural ethos. The church is present in every single community across the country. So, we not only have a privilege but a moral responsibility to represent our faith in the communities we serve. Having said that, the church has evolved in the last few years into a common symbolic space for the whole communities, irrespective of the fact if they have faith or none.

The church is best placed to be the voice of the collective, amplifying the diverse voices in the public square. Calling for common good, not just as a political issue but a fundamental moral requirement. The church, as a political community has the language and imagination to offer an alternative, a critique. Being politically active and standing up for social justice, speaking for the most vulnerable in our midst is essential for the church. Because by its very nature church is political, and Jesus of Nazareth stood up to a colonial power and challenged those who propped it up.

Jesus' 'beatitudes' (Mathew 5: 1-12), which will be the focus of All Saints Sunday exactly calls for such a public engagement. The Greek word *Makarios*, which Jesus used means not just blessed, but a sense of deep-down happiness that stems from an intimacy with God, not the shallow happiness marketed by the world. Jesus did not tell them 'Look after yourselves, keep out of trouble and mind your own business...Stand up only for your rights, and make trouble if you don't get them...don't worry about right and wrong...hope other people will be decent to you, regardless of how you treat them...compromise your principles to make life easy... forget about the climate crisis... On the contrary, Jesus invites his followers to be content in heart, to be humble, to think of duty and service rather than self-interest, not intent on getting the better of other people, to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Jesus encourages them to be merciful, to be pure in heart, to be the peacemakers. Pursue peace and love amidst the loud noises of hatred and fear. Fight for racial justice and equality of all people. Speak the truth to powers, when children go hungry, they find ways to feed them. Help the vulnerable in homeless shelters and feed the hungry in foodbanks.

Beatitudes are political virtues that calls into question the rightfulness of any action in the public space.

Dear friends we bring to life the body of Christ. We are called to be saints. Saints are those who turn to Christ, look towards him and grow in his likeness, and in the process be drawn towards and into the lives and well-being of their fellow women and men.

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