All Saints Day

Blessed are they who wake up this Wednesday morning, for all the political advertising will be over. I know I'm adding to the cacophony, but in Missouri one of the important items on the ballot is Amendment 3. The Catholic bishops of our State encourage those eligible to vote yes to protect life.

You've heard the Beatitudes a million times. But imagine if in the crowd hearing them for the first time, from the lips of Jesus, there were children in the womb. And imagine, if, by some grace, they were able to hear and respond. When Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," children in the womb might think, "he's speaking about me. I'm poor in every way, totally dependent on others." Jesus said, "theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." He continued, "Blessed are they who mourn." Perhaps on that day some parents heard those words, concerned about the hardships another child would place on their struggling family. Jesus said, "they will be comforted."

Children might have heard, "Blessed are the meek," and "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness," and thought, "That's me again. Who is more meek than a child? I too hunger and thirst for what is right." Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful," and parents in that group must have felt affirmed for all the mercy they offered their children. Jesus promised, "they will be shown mercy."

If children in the womb could respond upon hearing, "Blessed are the clean of heart," and "Blessed are the peacemakers," they'd surely think Jesus was talking about them, committing no sin, and bringing peace and joy to those who awaited their birth. Jesus promised, "They will see God," and "They will be called children of God."

The last of the Beatitudes touches all those who have suffered prejudice—parents who suspect they lost a job because pregnancy cut into a productive work schedule; children made to feel they're more of a bother than a blessing. Jesus promised the kingdom of heaven to all of them. "Rejoice and be glad," he said, especially "when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me."

We hear these Beatitudes every year on the Solemnity of All Saints. They remind us of the saints who fell into these categories. Some of them spread peace; others suffered martyrdom. All of them listened to the words of Jesus and let them resound in their heart.

God not only gave us the precious gift of life; he gave his own Son as one of us, to teach us how to use that gift well. Whatever age we are, whatever our stage of family life, God calls each of us to live like saints. Some people may disagree with the church's teachings. Some will taunt us because of our faith. Jesus foresaw it. He praised those who remained faithful. If others are making your life more difficult because of what you believe or how you vote, Jesus made a promise: "Your reward will be great in heaven."