

Our Vocation

Preached on All Saints' Day (Transferred)
Trinity Anglican Church, WRJ
Nov. 6, 2022
Texts: Rev.7: 2-4; 9-17 and Matt. 5: 1-12

On our observance of All Saints' Day, there are three important lessons we should consider briefly. First, that the fellowship of the saints is present and true. The saints have died, but they have not been reduced to nothingness. Rather, they are present with us. We are in true fellowship with them. As the Collect for today puts it, we have been knit together "in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord." Or, as the hymn written by Charles Wesley says:

*Let saints on earth in concert sing
With those whose work is done
For all the servants of our King
In heaven and earth are one.*

*One family we dwell in him,
One Church, above, beneath
Though now divided by the stream
The narrow stream of death (397, 1940 Hymnal)*

Though death denies our physical communion with the saints, death does not extinguish their being. On the contrary, we are joined with them in the Body of Christ. At Baptism we have been ontologically changed, so that now we are a new creation in Christ. By virtue of this fact, we are solidly linked with those who have died in Christ.

Second, this fellowship is marked by worship, for the fellowship of the saints precisely *is* worship. And this reality becomes present to us most in the Mass where we take part in the eternal worship of God in which the saints are also participating. It is here where we experience this in our space-time reality. Think about what our Preface says.

*Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising thee, and saying,
HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, Lord God of, hosts, Heaven and earth are full of thy glory: Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High. Amen.*

The saints worship with us each time we celebrate Holy Communion.

Finally, our fellowship with the Saints becomes a great encouragement and example to us because they show us our End. Again, the Collect for today asks that God:

“Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love thee.”

The witness of the saints encourages us to align our lives with theirs. This does not mean merely that we treat them as good examples from the past that we occasionally try to emulate. We should, rather, seek to do what they did and *are doing* right now! This means that we take on their reality of a life dedicated to the worship of God. As we saw in the passage from Revelation, our future glory, our future reality is the worship of God, standing before the throne, beholding Jesus as we join His worship of His Father.

The lives of the saints urge us to live this reality now. If we wish to prepare our lives for heaven, we must now participate in that heavenly reality. And this brings us to the Gospel message, of which the saints are great examples. Worship of God demands holiness that the saints exemplify and which God promises to assist us with. Think about some of the beatitudes that Jesus mentions. We can be holy in our mourning and in our meekness. We can be holy as we thirst for righteousness as one dying for a drink of water. We can be holy as we seek to be pure in heart as was Mary. We can be holy as we seek to be merciful, for we shall be shown mercy. We can even be holy as we are persecuted. The saints who have gone before us exemplified these godly virtues because their lives were dedicated to God’s service. We should not be ashamed of following this path, or fear that we are missing out on something. Instead, Jesus tells us to rejoice, be glad, for our reward will be great in heaven.

So if we are mourning all of the sin in our lives and in the world we should take heart. Jesus says we are blessed. If we desire righteousness with every fiber of our being, we are blessed. If we are occasionally acting with self-forgetfulness, we are on the road to true blessedness.

For our true vocation is to become saints. We often see our vocation as some calling, a job, profession, or mission in life. This isn’t wrong, only incomplete. We are made to be in the presence of God for eternity. But we must be cleansed of all that cannot be there with us. Jesus said in the reading from Matthew today that the pure in heart will see God. It is one of the simple facts of life that we see only what we are able to see; and that is true not only in the physical world, but in the spiritual as well. The continuing task of all Christians is, with God’s grace, to expose and remove all of the self-serving notions and distortions through which we see God, other people, and the world. God wants us to see things as He does, and so share His Heart. That is what a saint is: one who shares God’s Heart.

So as we celebrate All Saints Day, let us remember those who have gone before and left us their example. For we are all called to be saints. Let us remember those who have fought the battle and won the prize. May we be numbered among them.

In the Name...