

A day like All Saints doesn't need too much of a sermon,
so let me just point to a few things about our service this morning
that deserve your attention.

The first is the most obvious - the Saints.

Today we remember and give thanks for the Saints,
those men and women who each show us
some particular aspect of who Christ is.

We know some saints from scripture,
people like Mary Magdalene or Peter or Paul.

Others come from 2,000 years of church history,
people from the early centuries like Blandina, Fabian, and Agnes,
from the middle ages like Thomas Aquinas & Julian of Norwich,
and saints from more recent centuries like George Herbert,
Fanny Crosby, Harriet Beecher Stowe, the Chaplains of Dorchester,
James Weldon Johnson, Florence Nightingale, Diedrich Bonhoeffer,
and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Look around this Nave and you'll see reminders of the saints.
On the front of the lectern is that gorgeous mosaic representing
the writers of the 4 Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John.
And in these windows behind me,
the figures across the middle are saints of God from across the ages.

+++

Along with these saints of the whole Church,
the second thing I'll point to is the saints of this parish,
the saints of your lives.

These are the people we knew personally, loved deeply,
the people who died and were received into God's loving arms.

You'll find a few of their names scattered around the Church,
but a lot of them in what I think of as the heart of this campus,
the Chapel Garden.

We scatter their ashes in the garden
and we place their sacred names on the walls around it.
Names like Tisdale, Trotter, and Tervelt.

Today we're praying for our local saints in what we call our necrology,
the listing of our loved ones we remember before God.
Still others might be prayed for silently this morning
when you light a candle after you receive communion.

+ + +

The last thing I'll point to is baptism.

At both services today we're renewing our baptismal covenant
and at 10:30 we're baptizing 4 little children:
twin brothers Liam & Declan,
and 2 precious girls Matilda and Hannah.

Today they become full members of the Body of Christ.
Today our saints become their saints.
And there's not any reason, no, not the least,
why one day they won't become saints, too.

+ + +

Now let me try and connect those 3 parts of our service:

the Saints of the Church Catholic, the Saints in your own lives,
and the importance of Baptism.

Put another way, I'm trying to connect 4 little babies
with people who died before they were even born,
and with even more people who died before any of us were ever born.

The connection, of course, is Jesus.

The crucified and risen Christ connects those children
to the rest of us here today,
connects them to your loved ones,
and connects us all to those prophets, apostles, martyrs,
teachers, musicians, and servants who lived long ago
and in distant lands.

We are connected to one another
through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We are connected through Jesus' baptism and through our baptisms.

+ + +

Rowan Williams says the crucial point is this:

normally, death severs relationships. Death isolates.

But Jesus' death does the opposite.

By passing through death and into resurrection life

Jesus restores to the world the means whereby every human being
may find grace and hope and identity.¹

And by raising Jesus from the grave, God says, "This is what I do....

What I do in Jesus I do now and always."²

And because of what God does for Jesus,

you and I can say, "I live because of Jesus. I live in Jesus.

I am now part of the Body of Christ and the person I am
cannot be understood apart from Jesus.³

+ + +

See, today is not about those 4 beautiful little children,

just like it isn't about you, or our beloved local saints, our spouses and
parents and friends.

Today isn't even about the historic saints of the Church.

Today is about all of us, because really, today is about Jesus,

that one whom Ephesians says gave himself up for us all,
a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.

"The Lord is glorious in his saints / come, let us adore him!"

Amen.

¹ Rowan Williams, Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel, page 53-54

² Williams, p. 55

³ *ibid*