

Sunday Sermon November 2, 2025

I love All Saints Day which we are celebrating this first weekend of November.

I love singing “For All the Saints who from their labors rest.” “O blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine.”

Remembering the saints who have come before us now shining in the glory of the face of God.

We also get to sing that charming little song “I sing a song of the saints of God” it says: “One was a soldier, and one was a priest (that’s good), and one was slain by a fierce wild beast” – yikes! – “and there’s not any reason, no, not the least, why I shouldn’t be one too.” Remembering that we are called to be saints too.

We profess our belief in the communion of saints, that great cloud of witnesses, every time we say the creed. “We believe in the communion of saints...” Followers of Jesus going all the way back to the first disciples like Peter and James, Martha and Mary. People who lived out their faith, people who lived the Way of Love, who often paid a price, sometimes the ultimate price, for standing with Jesus against the ways of the world.

In the early church it was martyrs who given the honor of “saint.” As time went along, popes, bishops, priests and missionaries were added. More recently, the list has been expanded to include artists, poets, mystics, composers, environmentalists, teachers, physicians, conservationists, civil rights leaders and prophetic witnesses.

This expansion helps us to remember that all of us, in whatever vocation we choose, can live that out in a way that serves God and our neighbors and builds God kingdom in our time and place. Making the corner of the world that we inhabit more just, merciful, compassionate, and loving. All of us are called to be saints.

Former Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold, in the foreword of the book *Holy Women, Holy Men: Celebrating the Saints* speaks to this well when he writes:

“(This book) seeks to expand the worshipping community’s awareness of the communion of saints, and to give increased expression to the many and diverse ways in which Christ, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, has been present in the lives of women and men across the ages, just as Christ continues to be present in our own day.

Faced with circumstances most often very different from our own, these courageous souls bore witness in Christ’s death-defying love, in service, in holiness of life, and in challenge to existing practices and perspectives in both the church and society.

The men and women commemorated in the Calendar are not simply examples of faithfulness to inspire us: they are active in their love and prayer. They are companions in the Spirit able to support and encourage us as we seek to be faithful in our own day.”

In one of the prayers in our Prayerbook that we use when we celebrate a saints feast day, we pray in thanksgiving “for the wonderful grace and virtue declared in all the saints, who have been the chosen vessels of your grace, and the lights of the world in their generations.” Chosen vessels of God’s grace... Lights of the world in their generations...

That’s our call... By virtue of our baptism, which we share with all the saints who have gone before us, we are to “proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.” We are to “seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourself.” We are to “strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.”

Living out our baptismal covenant has been the call for followers of Jesus all the way to the first followers down through the generations. The call is to put flesh on God’s love, in all we say and do, to help God’s love grow and to make it known to everyone we meet.

Chosen vessels of God’s grace... Lights of the world in our generation... We stand in a long line of faithful witnesses to the power of God’s love who inspire us to live out our faith here and now.

We must not just place the saints on pedestals, like statues, frozen in time, thinking we could never be as faithful and “holy” as they were, but rather we can appreciate them as followers of Jesus who, in some way, embodied the challenges of faith in their time and place and in do so, opened a path for us to follow.

Once I was leading a service in a church that had large, beautiful stained-glass windows down both sides of the nave. There was a saint in each of the windows.

That Sunday morning as I looked out on the people gathered, the sun shone through those windows and cast their colors on the people. I saw them bathed in beautiful blues and reds and golds, and it occurred to me that that’s what the saints can do – color our lives with the light of Christ.

Rather than simply looking at the saints, admiring them, thinking we could never be as “holy” as they were, we are called to see through them, to see the world and the people in it through the light of God’s grace, mercy, justice and love that shined so brightly in them.

In our Gospel passage today, Jesus’ beatitudes, a large crowd has gathered to listen to his teachings on that mountain. Jesus turns the world upside down by blessing the poor, the mourning, the ones who struggle for righteousness and who work for peace.

All sorts and conditions of humanity hear that they are saints of a different kingdom, that they are holy, blessed, set apart by God and set apart for God. Illuminated by the light of Christ’s love.

As we gather this evening/day to celebrate the saints of old and the ones we have known, let us remember the words of the song: It says: “the world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus’ will. And I mean to be one too.” Amen