

All the Saints

Readings:

Isaiah 25:1-9

Psalm 119: 1-8 VU 838

Mark 12:28-38

John 11:32-44

The story of Lazarus is a call story like no other. Lazarus' story is the story of our faith the story of a faith that conquers death. It's a story of restoration, new life, healing, and forgiveness, it is the story of walking with God in life and death and life beyond death.¹ Lazarus' story is our story, for we who are called to love God with all our being have symbolically died to the old life. Our baptism has signified that 'worldly' death as we have answered the call of Jesus to a life of new beginnings in constant journeying with the "holy presence."

But death without new life is the enemy. That is why our faith is based on a profound moment when God conquered death. Death makes us face brokenness, despair, division and lack of control. Our mortality challenges our purpose, our value, at times our faith and our very being. Even in the best circumstances, even when we are prepared death jolts the majority of us. Even according to the scriptures, and according to our Gospel story death is the enemy. It causes us to question the purpose of life.

Most of us understand the moment when Mary and Martha question their Jesus. Why did he not come and save Lazarus before he died? Why would he allow them such pain? Why didn't he care? And because they did not know the depth of his love for them; and because his care was misunderstood, Jesus wept with them in their grief. And we are reminded God is with us on the journey no matter how dark it seems. And we are reminded that it is we who doubt God and Jesus; it is not God who stops caring. And faith calls us to trust that God will wipe away those tears and bring us rest and peace. Faith calls us out of the dark places to new life. Jesus says "come out" of the places where we have died in peace and trust. Jesus is calling us towards the freedom that loving our God and neighbour with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength will bring. This is the nourishment faith will offer us as we journey with one another in life and death.

It is through the saints in our lives that we come to know the nourishment of our faith. It is through people who have walked through the stench-y times and places in our world and offered new life and opportunity. It is the people who have walked alongside and shown us the heart of God.

¹ Miller, Mark. Blogging towards Sunday "The Ultimate Call Story" Nov. 1 09

I believe on this day we are called to offer our thanks to the saints without halos as much as those with. On this day we remember family members, mentors, and friends who were gifts of God to us when they journeyed with us. On this day I invite us to give thanks to those who still journey with us, those who show us love and compassion, those who challenge us to live more and better lives. Saints are not people who are perfect they are people who have lived out the yeast for us – who were at one time or another have offered holy nourishment.

And on this day we also give thanks for the saints of our generations – people like Martin Luther King Jr., who gave powerful public witness in working for justice for all people; for those who, like Mother Teresa, were living examples of caring for the least of these. We give thanks those who have touched our world like St. Francis, who taught us about caring for the whole creation; and Gandhi who longed for us to live in simple peace and truth.

Saint-making isn't our doing it is God's accomplishments through us. But saints aren't perfect. It was Martin Luther who pointed out we are simultaneously saints and sinners. "So the saints of God that we remember and give thanks for today include also the family member who always manages to rub us the wrong way, the high-maintenance friend who often seems to need more than we can give. It includes the people—ourselves also—who sometimes find it difficult to believe than God can possibly love those whose lifestyle or belief system differs from our own. It means that when we find out years after their death that some of those we've placed on high pedestals—such as Mother Teresa—have clay feet, it doesn't make them seem less saintly but only more human.

All of us less-than-perfect people, living and dead, are part of the communion of saints. In our imperfections we give witness to the lavish love of God, who receives us by grace and knits us all together in one... body of Christ."²

For all the saints we give you thanks O God. Amen.

² Kersten, Phyllis Blogging toward Sunday: Saints with and without halos. All Saints Day