

## All Saints' Day 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020

### Call to worship (Psalm 34)

O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.  
I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.  
Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed.

### Hymn 743 – [Come, let us join our cheerful songs with angels round the throne](#)

**Prayers:** Since we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses,  
let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely,  
looking to Jesus in penitence and faith. (*Hebrews 12.1*)

Lord, you are gracious and compassionate:

**Lord, have mercy.**

You are loving to all and your mercy is over all your creation:

**Christ, have mercy.**

Your faithful servants bless your name and speak of the glory of your kingdom:

**Lord, have mercy.**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,  
have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from all our sins,  
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

God of holiness, your glory is proclaimed in every age: as we rejoice in the faith of your saints, inspire us to follow their example with boldness and joy;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

**Readings:** [Revelation 7: 9-17](#) & [Matthew 5:1-12](#)

**Thoughts:** The congregation at All Saints Church was searching for a new Priest and they described themselves as 'the saints' that is: 'demanding, intelligent, eccentric, crazy, sad, muddled, confused and, sometimes, part of the holy people of God, but never boring.' Today is All Saints' Day, so the obvious questions to ask are 'who is a saint' and 'what are saints like?'

### **What is a Saint?**

A saint is **an ordinary person** made holy by God. The New Testament is clear that all believers are saints (Eph 4:12). We are God's holy people, not because of what we have done but because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. We are holy because we put ourselves into God's hands asking God to bless us and build us up into a community of Saints. We can get the wrong view of sainthood because of the way a few special people have been singled out in the past and revered as saints. But even then they were often pretty ordinary people. Take St Jude for example. There is only one verse in the Bible that mentions Jude: *John 14: 22 Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "Lord, how can it be that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?"* St Jude is now known as the saint of lost causes and hopeless cases! We are all saints then if we are happy to be on God's team – and happy to let God's Holy Spirit work in us.

## But what are saints like?

### Saints are people with a vision of heaven, longing for heaven on earth.

When we see Jesus, we see God's love and we see a vision of heaven. We can no-longer be sitting-saints or silent-saints but active saints, ready to work to bring heaven to earth. As Saints we are ready to fulfil God's promises, and live into the holiness promised at our baptism and received at Holy Communion.

#### a) Vision Of Heaven – in Revelation 7

- Includes everyone, everyone worshipping God, one Lord
- All clothed in the robes of Christ: holiness and goodness
- Protected from hunger, thirst and climate extremes
- Guided by Christ – to life-giving water
- Comforted: God wipes away tears of sadness and grief and pain...

This is a vision not just for life after death, but for God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven, and life in all its fulness before death.

#### b) Vision Of Saints – in Matthew 5:3-10

The characteristics of saints who seek heaven below – and above are:

- They know their need of God
- They are grieved by the pain we cause each other and all creation
- Humble enough to know they don't know what to do
- They seek God's will – and desire it with all their heart
- Merciful and patient with others as God has been patient with them
- Their heart is single-minded – purely drawn towards God
- They work for shalom – holy peace and reconciliation
- They are not stopped by resistance from the world, because they have a vision of heaven

**Saints that have inspired me include: Ignatius of Loyola** - a wealthy soldier and knight in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, with dreams of chivalry, he became a humble lover of Jesus whose only desire was to bring greater glory to God. He wanted everyone to know Jesus better and created a sort of training manual for strengthening the life of prayer. He stayed humble because he was ruthless in recognising his own sin, but he also stayed joyful, because he was constantly amazed at God's gracious forgiveness. **Oscar Romero (El Salvador 20<sup>th</sup>C)** He mourned those killed or 'disappeared' by the right-wing government, he didn't stay silent and he was shot and killed between the pulpit and the altar, moving from sermon to celebration of Mass. He was persecuted for speaking up for the poor. **Phil C (21stC)** Phil is a saint who is still alive and living in the Isle of Man. He is inspiring because he lives a simple life, makes his house a home for the homeless and regularly challenges the Isle of Man government over facilitating tax avoidance for the super-rich.

There are, of course, women saints and Yorkshire saints too like **Hilda, Abbess of Whitby**. Bede describes Hilda as a woman of great energy, who was a skilled administrator and teacher. She gained such a reputation for wisdom that kings and princes sought her advice but she also had a concern for ordinary folk such as the herder, Cædmon, whom she encouraged as a poet.

### Now it is time for us to remember and thank God for the saints in our lives.

We say in the creeds that we 'believe in the communion of Saints'. It is good to allow special thoughts and memories of loved ones to surface and be relived and cherished. There is a relationship with the past saints which affects our present in a good and healthy way. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. It is good to recall their goodness, their influence, their love and their friendship. As Fred Buechner puts it: 'When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means you can bring me to mind, even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that if we meet again, you will recognise me.'

*Spend a quiet moment remembering those whom you love but see no-longer. Thank God for those who have loved you, inspired you, and given you a vision of what heaven might be like.*

**Give rest, O Christ, to your servants with the saints: where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting.** Hear us, O merciful Father, as we remember in love those whom we have placed in your hands. Enfold them in the arms of your mercy, in the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and in the glorious company of the saints in light. **Amen.**

## Hymn 745 – [For all the saints who from their labours rest](#)

### Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray to the Lord, who has conquered death.

Jesus, bread from heaven, you satisfy the hungry with good things: grant us a share with all the faithful departed in the banquet of your kingdom.

**Hear us, risen Lord, our resurrection and our life.**

Jesus, the light of the world, you gave the man born blind the gift of sight: open the eye of faith and bring us from darkness to your eternal light.

**Hear us, risen Lord, our resurrection and our life.**

Jesus, Son of the living God, you summoned your friend Lazarus from death to life: raise us at the last to full and eternal life with you.

**Hear us, risen Lord, our resurrection and our life.**

Jesus, crucified Saviour, in your dying you entrusted each to the other, Mary your mother with John your beloved disciple: sustain and comfort all who mourn.

**Hear us, risen Lord, our resurrection and our life.**

Jesus, our way and truth and life, you drew your disciple Thomas from doubt to faith: reveal the resurrection faith to the doubting and the lost.

**Hear us, risen Lord, our resurrection and our life.**

May God in his infinite love and mercy bring the whole Church, living and departed in the Lord Jesus, to a joyful resurrection and the fulfilment of his eternal kingdom. **Amen.**

### The Lord's Prayer

## Hymn 526 – [Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy](#)

### Blessing:

May God give us his comfort and his peace,  
his light and his joy, in this world and the next;  
and the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
rest and abide with us now, and for ever more. **Amen.**