



All Saints Celebration (C)
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
November 3, 2019
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector

†May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

How are you today, holy people of God? Feel called to holiness?

On at least one level, today's celebration of All Saints is a call to holiness. As disciples of Jesus, we are first and foremost called to be like him, and we believe that Jesus was a holy man.

What does it mean to strive to be holy in life? What does it mean to be 'humble before God' and allow the Spirit of God to be active and alive in our hearts?

What does it mean that the Spirit of God calls us to shine forth the light within us for all to see and experience? Ever thought about your 'true calling in life' and what that might mean to you as a follower of Jesus in today's world?

In an article I recently read entitled, "Does your soul need therapy", the writer said, "We're living in a time of shattered illusions and soul-crushing truths. Divided politics reigns. Economic crisis looms. #MeToo landed like a Mayweather upper cut. Because we're all fairly sure that the answer to our anxiety does not lie in more money... or more muscles; we're looking somewhere else: within ourselves." The writer goes on to quote Joseph Campbell who said, "We must let go of the life we had planned so as to accept the one that is waiting for us." (Sean Hotchkiss, "Does your soul need therapy". *Men's Health*, July/August 2019, p. 78.)

As disciples of Jesus, the life waiting for us is not outside us but deep within us. It is already a part of who we are as children of God. The call to holiness is deep within us. It is a kind of primordial call to embrace who God created us to be.

Perhaps, a challenge is to set aside those things which enable us to be people who we might not recognize and assess just how we got there. Sometimes, we need to make changes in life. We recognize that we need to "let go of the life we had planned so as to accept the one that is waiting for us" and allow the light deep within us to lead and guide us.

The holy women and men the Church sets before us were not perfect people. They struggled with some of the same challenges with which we struggle. However, they were people for whom the Beatitudes of today's Gospel from Luke were a guiding force in life.

In the Episcopal Church's calendar of holy men and women, we can see folks like Absalom Jones, Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. and others. Apart from traditionally accepted saints, they are examples of people who strove to live lives of justice, mercy and love. They worked hard to embrace Gospel values to which we are called as disciples of Jesus. Those Gospel values are all over the Beatitudes in today's Gospel.

Jesus called his disciples and calls us to be a blessed life through which we can be life-giving forces for others. Sometimes, we get that right. Sometimes, as is *my* experience these days, we miss the mark. As people of faith, those times challenge us to listen more intently to the voice of God and allow God to speak through the noise of life.

The blessed's in today's Gospel are followed by the woes which Jesus sets out. Luke's Beatitudes have a different twist than those found in Gospel of Matthew. Here, Jesus tells us how to become the beloved of God through a conscious effort to respond to the call to be holy.

Throughout the Holy Scriptures, women and men are called to holiness, to be more like God, to be people who mirror God's love in life. One could go down the list from Abraham and Sarah, to Moses, to Elijah, to Daniel, to Mary the Mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, to Paul and the list goes on. The Judeo-Christian Tradition is about responding to the call to holiness.

St. Mark's twenty-two youth and adults who were prepared to be confirmed, received or reaffirm faith at the Diocesan Convention yesterday are examples of individuals who to strive to embrace God's call to be holy. Today, we celebrate all the women and men who respond to the call to be holy in life.

In a few minutes, we will life up the names of loved and friends, especially those who have gone before us over the past year. They are part of the 'Communion of Saints', those who have gone before us, those around us and those who will come after us.

To be holy does not mean to be perfect. No one is perfect. We are called to live in humility before God, respect each person and do our best to love as we are loved by God. We are called to the 'Way of Love', the way which Jesus exemplified and teaches us through the Scriptures and the Church. We are called to do the best we can to be people who strive to live into the 'Way of love' to which Jesus calls us.

Think about the Breakfast Café Teams who volunteer to serve those in need in our Parish House, or the volunteers at our SPA Days or those at Heartside, Degage, Safe Haven, Mel Trotter and Dwelling Place. Think about those parishioners who take Holy Communion to the sick and those not able to be with us: Ordinary people doing extraordinary things as God's hands and heart.

So on this day we celebrate as All Saints' Day, what do we need to do to better strive for holiness in life? What do we need to do to love as Jesus loved and loves us? What do we need to embrace Jesus and to let love reign in our hearts?

I believe we are here because we strive to be all God calls us to be as God's creation. We have said "yes" to be here today and to be united with Jesus and with one another for which we can be grateful.

Our Stewardship Season of "Shining Our Light" could be subtitled, 'Shining Our Gratitude.'" We are grateful for many gifts given to us as individuals as a community of faith at St. Mark's.

We are grateful for the holy women and men whose lives mirrored or whose lives mirror the life of Jesus. We are grateful for the grace given to us to respond to God's call to be all we can be as followers of Jesus. Amen.