

October 30, 2022

All Saints

Meditation: Saints we have known.

Tomorrow is All Hallows Eve, which makes Tuesday All Hallows Day or All Saints Day. It all started back on May 13 of the year 609 when Pope Boniface dedicated the Pantheon, a former Roman Temple, as a church in honour of the Virgin Mary and all martyrs.

Fast forward a few years to the papacy of Gregory III in the years between 731 and 741. Pope Gregory III dedicated a chapel in St. Peter's Basilica in honour of all saints on November 1. That fixed the date of November 1 as a day to honour all saints of the church. The evening before All Saints Day became a holy, or hallowed, eve.

I know. Language. Hallow means to make holy, and holy means dedicated or consecrated to God, or sacred, in short.

The date, November 1, was no accident. Pope Gregory III was attempting to displace the Celtic celebration, in what is now the UK, of Samhain. Samhain was New Year's Eve for the Celts. It was the night that the temporal and spiritual worlds were at their closest, and spirits could cross from one to the other. In order to frighten off any evil spirits that crossed from spiritual to temporal, bonfires were lit and ugly faces were carved in turnips. In order to help the spirits of the recently deceased to cross from the temporal to the spiritual, sweets were shared and consumed. But I digress.

What I really wanted to talk about is sacraments. In our book study this week we talked about the Bible as sacrament. I know. Language. Borg says, "A sacrament is a finite, physical, visible mediator of the sacred, a means whereby the sacred becomes present to us." (The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith. HarperSanFrancisco, 2003. Pg. 57)

When I read that passage this week it was as though I was reading it again for the first time. With All Saints Day coming up, I immediately seized on the idea that people could be sacraments, and that the people who make the sacred present to us are saints.

Saints are the people who reveal to us God's love in their lives. The apostle Paul says we are all called to be saints, but that sounds like a mighty high and daunting calling to me. I mean, I don't know about you, but I have my moments when I *might* make the sacred present to someone else, but that is certainly not always, and realistically probably not even frequently the case. Maybe it might be more accurate to say that *when* people make the sacred present, that is when they, when we *are* saints.

We are not saints because we always live Godly lives.

We live Godly lives because we are saints.

We are not saints because we always do good things.

We do good things because we are saints.

What makes us saints is not the lives we live or the things we do, but the saving love and grace of God. We are holy because we are created by God, filled with God's spirit.

When we got to the last part of today's scripture lesson, "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you," it's there that we hear something of God's values, we hear some of what is sacred to God. It is the people who reveal to us what is sacred to God that we call saints, and it is those people who were saints in this community that we turn to now.

Dolores Johnson

Dolores worked hard, and Dolores played hard. She enjoyed bingo and the Blue Jays, euchre and her flower beds, her Royal Doulton figurines and her collector spoons, but the things that were most important to Dolores were

her family and her faith. It was her dedication and loyalty, her faithfulness to God and to her church family that spoke the loudest about what mattered most. Her faithfulness to God and to her church family speaks of God's faithfulness to us. Her faithfulness to God spoke of an understanding of the love that God held, holds for her, and for each of us.

Ron Dickie

Ron worked hard most of his life, starting in childhood, including 47 years for Dowler-Karn. Ron loved to get away from work to go hunting and fishing, camping and trapping. I think it's because when Ron was out in God's creation that he felt close to God. I also believe that Ron felt close to God in the presence of children, or perhaps it was in Ron's presence that children felt close to God, or both. Ron loved to play games with kids, and to sit with them when they were eating ice cream. Would Ron cheat at the games or steal a spoonful of their ice cream? Of course he would, yet that was an endearing trait, one in which the children felt secure and loved, because he was with them and sharing life with them. Secure and loved, I think, is something that God wishes for all of us to feel, loved by God and secure in that love, because God is always with us, sharing life with us.

Harvey Patterson

Like Ron, Harv loved to be in nature, and I suspect it was for the same reason, because he felt close to God there. Unlike Ron, Harv wasn't one for hunting, fishing or trapping. Harv's passion was birdwatching. When he wasn't watching birds, Harv was involved with minor hockey and with umpiring baseball. But it was his work at CIBC that makes me think that Harv was a saint. He was the manager of the branch in Port Stanley, and in that role he worked hard with customers to help them through difficult times and to help them to succeed in life. I think God is there to help us through the difficult times that are inevitable in life, and that God wants us to succeed in life, to discover abundant life.

Marlene Smith

Speaking of abundant life, it is in the tenth chapter of John's gospel that Jesus says that he came that we may have life in abundance. In other words, that we may know joy. I believe that joy is another of the things that God values, another thing that is sacred to God, and joy was the gift that was always on offer from Marlene. She brought joy into the lives of countless others through her music, through her laughter, and through her hats. Marlene was a door to the sacred because it was through Marlene that we experienced the joy for which God created us.

Marleen Parish

Marleen was one of the first people that I met here. We sat together eating beef on a bun at a cruise night in the summer of 2017. It took no time at all to learn that she had worked at the psychiatric hospital, where my father also worked for a couple of years. More recently I became aware of just how hospitable Marleen was. She was always inviting people into her home for a meal. Hospitality is one of those sacred things that God values. God prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies, and then invites us, our family and friends, and even those enemies to the table.

Marleen was also deeply interested in history. It wasn't history for the sake of history though. It was about who was related to whom and how. For Marleen it was the relationship that mattered. Our God is a relational God. I think that is why we are here in the first place. As trinity, God is in relationship internally, but I think God wanted to be in relationship with something outside of the trinity, and so, creation, and creatures to be in relationship with.

As we leave this place today, and in the weeks to come, remember, that in our own time, and in our own way, each and every one of us mediates the love and grace of God to someone, each and every one of us is a saint.