

Sunday November 2, 2025
All Saints Sunday

Sermon: “Saints all around us.”

If I asked if anyone knew what the triduum was, could anyone tell me? (Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday). Did you know there is another triduum, and it has nothing to do with Easter? Together All Hallows Eve, All Hallows Day, and All Soul’s Day constitute what is known as Allhallowtide.

Friday was All Hallows Eve, which made yesterday All Hallows Day (a.k.a. All Saints Day), and today is All Soul’s 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.

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

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, because pumpkins were unknown in the UK. In order to help the spirits of the recently deceased to cross from the temporal to the spiritual, sweets were shared and consumed. Does any of that sound remotely familiar? Anyway, I digress.

The interpretation of Daniel’s dream speaks of four great beasts: “As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth.” Scholars believe that the book of the prophet Daniel was written shortly before the rise of the empire

of Alexander the Great and that the four beasts or four kings was a reference to Alexander's successors: Ptolemy 1 Soter – who established the Ptolemaic Kingdom in Egypt, which ruled up until the death of Cleopatra; Seleucus 1 Nicator – who established the Seleucid Empire that stretched from Syria to parts of India; Lysimachus – who ruled Thrace and parts of Asia Minor (Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey); and Cassander – who ruled Macedon (Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia, and Kosovo). Another of Alexander's generals, Antigonus who sought to take the entire empire of Alexander was defeated by a coalition formed by Ptolemy and Seleucus. Other scholars believe that Daniel is referring to the Herodian dynasty formed by Herod the Great (who ruled when Jesus was born) and his sons: Herod Archelaus – who ruled Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, briefly, until Rome deposed him and installed Pontius Pilate as governor; Herod Antipas – who ruled Galilee and Perea (this is the Herod Jesus refers to during his ministry); and Phillip – who ruled Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanaea, and Paneas. Whether it was the successors of Alexander the Great or the Herodian Dynasty or some more modern variation doesn't really matter for the sake of our discussion today.

What does matter is the next part of the interpretation: "But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever—forever and ever." The Holy ones, the sacred ones of the Most High – these are the ones we call saints. So what exactly is a saint?

Saints are the people who reveal to us God's love in and through their lives. When people make the sacred present, that is when they are saints, and, according to the apostle Paul, we are all called to be saints. We are holy because we are created by God, filled with God's spirit, and when we let the spirit of God shine through our lives, like the coloured light that shines through the stained glass windows of this church, then we are saints. 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.

Gordon Francis Lewis, October 22, 2024

Gord was an historian, a keeper of stories. As a keeper of stories he was always ready to listen to people's stories, and he had plenty of opportunities to do that while serving the community in his role as a Lion, or while cooking corn at the seniors center, or at Wednesday coffee time, or at Holy Diner, or any other time and place he could find to listen. And Gord didn't just listen, but he was interested and he cared. Talking to Gord was like talking to God, who is interested and cares about even the smallest of details in the stories of our lives.

Shirley Elizabeth Day, November 27, 2024

Shirley was a worker. She sewed clothing for her daughters, her husband, and sometimes for herself. She knit socks and sweaters. She grew strawberries, many of which were converted into strawberry jam. And Shirley made many relationships with young people through 4-H and at the school she worked at for 30 years. Shirley was created in God's image – God's image as a creator – the creator of clothing and food and relationships that were the hallmarks of her life.

William George Latham, November 29, 2024

Bill spent his career as a much beloved teacher, but Bill was also a lifelong student. He read a wide variety of topics from politics to farming. Bill loved jazz. Jazz can have many moods, but the thing about jazz is that it is often unpredictable, just like God. We think we know what God will do, or what we want God to do, and God does something unpredictable. Bill travelled far and wide, but his favourite place was at the cottage with family. Family was the most important thing in Bill's life, just as family is the most important thing to God – the family of creation.

Mary Lee Patience, March 11, 2025

This is where I need some help from you. Not only did I not know Mary Lee well, but neither was I able to attend the open house, held in her honour, to hear the stories of her life. I know only what was written in her obituary. (If nobody offers anything: I would like to think that Mary Lee made the love of God known through her artwork, and her work with Boy Scouts)

John Gibb Muir, March 13, 2025

Outside of work John had many interests – home improvements, gardening, cars, especially his MG, and model trains to name a few. Like God, John had a vision of a better world and to that end John gave of himself to make his community and this world a better place. John was involved as a soccer coach and as president of the skating club. John volunteered as a driver, and I suspect confidant, with the CNIB, VON, and Cancer Society. If you were to ask one of the many young people he coached, or one of the many people he drove, I'm sure that they would tell you that their lives had been enriched by John – their world was better because of John's efforts.

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.

At this time, I would invite the families of those we have remembered here today to come forward and select a bulb to be planted in memory of their loved one..... I would invite anyone else who has experienced a loss and would like a bulb to plant to come forward now.