

Sermon for November 1st
2nd Reading - 1 John 3:103
“We are God’s children”

Today we commemorate All Saints day. Today is a joyous celebration in the Church. It is the day we remember and we name those who have died over the past year. Those who have died in our community: Alex, Joyce, Stephen. We name those family or friends who have died, Kari, Nan, Randy, Brenda, Daniel, Mr. Ramdour. We name those who have died due to violence, war, natural disasters, accidents and this year we remember and name those who have died due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

This year our commemoration of All Saints is tinged with many losses. This year we mark the loss of many freedoms we took for granted: worshipping in person, singing, sharing the peace, standing close to other people, going to galleries, museums, concerts, movies, restaurants, parties, weddings, funerals, Easter, Thanksgiving and the list goes on.

This year it may be difficult to remember that we are all God’s children. That is why today’s reading from 1 John is so comforting. 1 John was written anonymously in the late 1st century or early 2nd and probably in Ephesus. It was not a letter - it was an essay that calls the community to mutual love.

All Saints Day is also about consolation and encouragement.

1 John and All Saints Day ask us to remember that it is in our Christian community that we find consolation and strength. We are not carrying our burdens alone.

We are God's children. Called to live loving one another. It may be much easier to "love" a stranger than someone we know well and do not like very much!

Today we remember and name those close to us who have died. Today we also remember those we cannot name - names not written in our hearts and minds. But children of God - every one of them.

For all the Saints we give thanks.

It is important to honour those who have died. But the living have other responsibilities as well. The living must champion the causes that will impact those who will live after us.

As children of God - as beloved children of God we are called to try to live as Jesus did. And that means making our world a better place. It means an end to the destruction of our natural world, an end to violence and hate and racism. It means an end to poverty and hunger and the lack of clean water or lack of education or lack of health care. It means narrowing the gap between those that have and those that have not.

This is how we honour the dead. This is how we honour the Saints.

You are a beloved child of God and the kingdom is yours.

As children of God we are required to examine ourselves and our intentions so that we can become the best creation of God.

The love of God is creative love. Love is the word of God that created the world and this creative love has the power to renew us and give us strength.

We need our family of faith in times of adversity and sorrow and loss as much as we need our family of faith in times of happiness and joy.

We cannot live this life alone. We cannot live in these times alone. We need one another. We need the other children of God. We need the Saints - those that have gone before us - our mentors - our loved ones. The ones that encouraged us, taught us and showed us what faith is, what love of God and neighbour is and what the scriptures say.

We are blessed by those who taught us. We gain strength because of the faith of our mentors.

Our loved ones have died - but they are still speaking to us. They speak through love and compassion and instruction and correction. Through laughter and tears, sacrifice and dedication and honesty and humility and most of all their faith.

They are still speaking to us.

What voices are you hearing today as we commemorate All Saints day - when we name those who have died?

What favourite expressions are you hearing? What laughter?

One of the most difficult parts of loss and grief is that we lose the ability to “hear” the voices of our loved ones. We can look at photos - we may hear recordings of a voice - but we lose the ability to hear the voices in our minds and our hearts. The tone of voice, the sounds - the words remain for awhile but then vanish too soon. And we find ourselves wishing desperately to hear a loved ones voice again even one more time - just enough to hold onto.

When we lose the voices of our loved ones we find that we need the other Saints as well. The ones with us here and now. For we cannot do this alone. We need each other - perhaps this year more than other years.

All Saints is a joyous celebration of the Church.

Joy is an often forgotten spiritual practice and perhaps this is the practice we need the most this year. We have relied on prayer, on the reading of scripture, service to one another, living a moral life - these are all vital.

But this year - as we move toward the end of the Church year - may our spiritual practice be joy.

In 2020 - finding joy, expressing joy sharing joy may be the most difficult spiritual practice and the most vital.

May we find joy in small things, in larger things, in laughter, in conversation, in our membership in God's family - in our relationships, in our friendships. May we find joy at Advent - joy we can share with others.

AMEN