

All Saints Day – 2008, Year A

Rev. Jennifer Adams, November 2, 2008

There's a lot going on at Grace today, so before we go any further I want to take this moment, which has nicely been set aside for such reflection and name for you all that's happening. It's a beautiful day, really, one where we get a glimpse of the breadth of what it means to be church.

First it's All Saints' Sunday, that wonderful day in the Episcopal Church when we remember and celebrate the lives of those amazing people who did incredibly holy things in the world. People like Francis and Clare and Peter and Paul. Lucy, Hildegard, Thomas and Constance and her companions. Absalom Jones, Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero, Matthew, Mary and Joseph. Gregory of Nyssa, Monica, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Irenaeus, Catherine of Siena and Cuthbert. Justin, James, John the Baptist, Jonathan Daniels and Enmegahbowh. Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King Jr., Luke and Macrina. The Litany of saints is long list of people who come from every possible status, class, ethnicity and from every corner of the world. They were martyrs or prophets or teachers or preachers or theologians or musicians or parents or authors or bishops or kids. Community builders, reformers, mystics, revolutionaries, healers and desert monks. They were poor or peacemakers. They were merciful or meek. Some hungered for righteousness, many were persecuted for righteousness sake, and all of them were blessed as they brought the light of God to a place or a time or a church that needed their particular spark of holiness. Today we remember the Saints and we celebrate their special place in the life of our church.

But we also remember that while these people did incredibly holy things, they were also very real people. They were saints and sinners, faithful and in need of forgiveness. The saints were holy people yet also very human people too. Stories tell us that some of them were actually cranky. Some were a little full of themselves. Probably a very high percentage of the saints were stubborn (or they never would have accomplished what they accomplished) and most of them would never have guessed that they'd end up being celebrated as a Saint. Nor from what I've read about some of these people would many of their family members have placed such bets. One of the temptations of the day is to let All Saints become more like a fairy tale with lots of fantastic sort of characters, rather than allowing it to be an opportunity to see God's redeeming work in the world and to be embraced by God's redeeming work in the world. So don't fall into that trap - let the Saints

be holy, but let them be real too, reminders of the fact that God uses very real people to do truly blessed things in the church and in the world.

Because that's what else is going on here at Grace today – we celebrate that very real people have done or are doing truly blessed things here. This morning and every morning and actually every time we gather we continue the story that the saints told with their lives. While we celebrate All Saints Day we also welcome Kevin into the household of God through baptism and this afternoon we'll remember Betty Test as we give thanks for what is now her eternal life with God. Over brunch we'll welcome all of you who have begun worshipping with us here at Grace this year and during the offertory we'll give thanks for the gifts that come through the ingathering of our pledges. So while we celebrate the Saints, the truly beautiful thing about this day is that we also carry on their work through our lives and our life together as community of faith. We baptize into the life and death and resurrection of Christ. We let a risen one go into the forever household of God. We welcome new yet already known faces into this amazing place we call Grace Church and we give and gather many of the gifts that support the work that is being done here.

And like with the Saints, this is holy and this is real. And those two things come together because of God. And that's the greatest miracle and gift of all - this is redemption at work right here all around us. Redemption - the process that invites us, all of us as our whole selves – saints and sinners that we are – invites us to be the light of God in this particular time and place. Invites us to be the light of God in this particular time and place. So, this isn't just about the biggies of our tradition. This is about you and me too.

Faithful and ever in need of forgiveness, human and holy, occasionally cranky, appropriately stubborn and over and over again blessed. -- We come as prophets, musicians, preachers, community builders, revolutionaries, healers and peacemakers. Kevin is a chef. Betty was a photographer. Our newcomers are college students, nurses, therapists, stay-at-home parents, professors, teachers, seekers, retired people, ordained ministers, teenagers and kids. Together with them we pray that with God's help and we trust that with God's help we too can embrace the fullness of life, the wholeness and holiness of life that God has set before us being human and holy light in this world and beyond.