

Sermon for All Around the Altar Service – Sunday 1st November 2020

- The Example of Saints

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Intro

In your mind or those who you are gathering with, think for a moment how many Saints you can name. When doing this myself I could think of around 25 but there were very few that I actually knew why they had become or been made Saints or what they were the patron Saint of. The word Saint means to “set apart” or “make holy” so why had these people been recognised for being set apart or holy?

So I set 3 families a challenge a couple of weeks ago to find out about 3 Saints and we will hear from them a little bit later and what they found out about 3 particular Saints.

A little quiz to begin with....

Try to match the Saint and the example/gift they are known for:

Was St Paul known for being a martyr, a brilliant scholar or an evangelist?

Was St Stephen known for being a martyr, a brilliant scholar or an evangelist?

Was St Thomas known for being a martyr, a brilliant scholar or an evangelist?

THE ANSWERS

St Paul - known as St. Paul the Evangelist - he was a Christian missionary and is the patron of evangelists and missionaries

St Stephen - he was one of the first deacons of the Christian church and was the first Christian martyr, he was stoned to death for his believe in Jesus Christ.

St Thomas Aquinas - he was a brilliant scholar and was aid to be able to bring the word of God alive into peoples lives and known for his prayers he wrote for students

Many things we can already begin to see and learn from some of our Saints, Paul being a missionary, Stephen a faith that cost him his life and Thomas who brought the God’s teaching alive for people to understand. (More a little later.)

Main Talk

So why do we celebrate All Saints day on November 1st? - in the Christian church it is a day commemorating and remembering all the saints of the church both known and unknown. This holy day has appeared on the English calendar since 837. It is a day to pause and reflect on all those holy men and women who have come before us and lived amongst us. It is a day when we come together to recognise that we are all people of God, praying for one another, learning from the example and wisdom of those who have gone before us and who have lived out the gospel. It is a Christian celebration in honour of all the Saints from Christian history.

In our bible reading today we are told the story of a rich young man who disappointed Jesus because he cared for his money and wealth more than he cared about living a holy life and following Jesus. He asked Jesus "What deed must I do to have eternal life?" At this point Jesus saw the young man's need for a better understanding and listed the commandments but still there was a lack of understanding because it wasn't about the good deeds, Jesus was trying to teach the young man eternal life isn't just about good deeds and having money or possessions it's about God's grace. Many rich people that lived at the same time as Jesus believed that their riches proved they were under God's blessing, that they were living a life that God wanted for them. Eternal life is God's life in us so that we can have a life with him that never ends.

As I said earlier, I asked 3 families to find out about 3 certain saints - those saints were St Luke, St Teresa of Calcutta and St Francis. I asked them to find out:

what these saints were the patron saint of
to find their favourite quote from that person
what could we learn from their example and put into practice in our own lives?

Firstly St Luke (Janita's video)

What a wonderful testimony from Janita, planning for the future, of being ready and being a companion for their learners. St Luke the evangelist, he was a companion of Paul - Paul referred to him as a co worker and he was instrumental in the development of Christianity. The patron of artists, doctors and surgeons - Luke lived a life reaching out and helping out to anyone in need. As Janita has shared, many of Luke's stories show and display loving the poor. He saw hope in God's mercy and shared that with the people he met.

Next St Francis (Elizabeth's video)

Lovely to hear from Elizabeth the quote "Start by doing what is necessary, then do what is possible and suddenly you are doing the impossible" I'm sure we all, like Elizabeth, have felt challenged at starting something albeit necessary, particularly at this current time and we see how things do become possible with God as our companion and through God's love, grace and help we can do what we first thought impossible.

The patron saint of animals and the environment, St Francis devotion to God was expressed through his love of all God's creation."

And finally St Teresa of Calcutta (Helen, Phil & family video)

Wasn't that wonderful to hear from the Jordan family that their favourite quote from St Teresa is to "spread love everywhere you go, let no one ever leave you without leaving happier". What an example for us to take on board and try to follow. We know that Mother Teresa as she was more commonly known devoted her life to caring for the vulnerable, sick and poor. She was a noble prize winner for her humanitarian work and saw herself as God's hands and his voice here on earth for people. Her life was devoted to loving others because God loved her and she certainly spread that love.

The bible doesn't tell us to pray to the Saints or through the Saints but to think of our connectivity to past saints, to find inspiration in their lives and stories, the example of their unfailing trust and love in God. It was their love and belief in God that caused them to help people, to love people and devote themselves to caring for others. It was their Faith and belief in Jesus Christ that led to the way they lived their life, they weren't trying to earn eternal life like the young man in our reading, they believed and had faith that they already had eternal life; and that led them to live

lives that put other people first, devoting their lives to reaching out, loving people, looking after God's creation and sharing with people that with God nothing is impossible. At this time celebrating All Saints may we look to the example of the saints we've heard about today, about how they lived their lives because of their faith in Jesus and their faith in eternal life. Look for opportunities in our lives when we can put these examples into practice, look for ways in which we can be his voice, his hands, to be caring for his created world and the people living in it - Our lives lived for Jesus.

A prayer for All saints Day

Dear God, praise you for giving us the glorious example of the Saints. We aspire to meet their company, praising you forever in Heaven. Please help us to follow in their footsteps, and yours, Jesus Christ. Please help us to submit ourselves to Your call, seeking Your order in all things, just as the Saints did. Please help us to commit ourselves to Your glory, and to the service of our neighbours.

Amen.