

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

“But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever—for ever and ever.”

“In him you also... were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.”

Today is All Saints Sunday,

the day when we remember those who have gone before us

down the road of Christian Life;

who have preceded us along the Way.

And on this day it is important for us to remember

not only our favorite Saints,

or the popular Saints,

but All the Saints.

It is a time for us to remember what a Saint really is.

I say really because there are a lot of Saints in the world that get missed every day.

Missed even by the church.

So what is a Saint?

Webster’s dictionary describes a saint as

“a holy person,

a person who is exceptionally patient, charitable, etc.;

in certain churches,

a person officially recognized as having attained heaven

after an exceptionally holy life and duly venerated.”

I don’t like that definition.

I don’t like it because it seems too bureaucratic for me.

It also seems to me that one would have to be dead before they could be a saint,

and I don’t think that’s really fair.

Everyone talks about your good qualities and ignores your faults after you’re dead.

It's easy to be a dead Saint.

But what about living Saints;

the ones not yet resting from their labors.

What does it take to be a living Saint?

That must be tough.

Or to put it a different way,

How are we to live like Saints?

I found a wonderful definition of a Saint,

from an Archbishop of the Swedish Lutheran Church

by the name of Nathan Söderblom.

“A saint is one who makes it easier for others to believe in God.”

It is a simple definition, but I liked it right away.

It spoke to me.

“One who makes it easier for others to believe in God.”

I like it because it has nothing to do with yourself

and everything to do with relating to others.

And you can be a saint no matter what you do for a living.

You can be a housewife saint,

a lawyer saint,

an engineer saint,

even a homeless saint.

And that means that saints can be anywhere,

as indeed they are.

I know they are because they have visited me in some of the strangest places

and at some of the strangest hours.

Some of them donate money,

and some of them beg for money.

You never know with a saint.

But you know one when you meet them.

You know them because the result of your encounter with them
is a strengthening of your belief in God.

My favorite song about the saints

is the very first one that I learned about saints when I was a boy.

“I Sing a Song of the Saints of God”

I liked it then,

and still like it now

because it makes the possibility of sainthood

very real to common people like you and me

without diminishing the great Saints of the past.

It helps us to see the importance of the little things.

When Jesus starts his public ministry in the Gospel of Luke

he starts at the bottom and turns the world upside down --

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.

You know

all those people that are beneath you,

not worthy of your notice, let alone your respect.

The poor.

We like to think that they all live in boxes or tents under the bridge,

or in Third World countries,

but the truth is they also live in Jeff City, and Holt’s Summit,

and even Fulton and Columbia.

And some even come to Grace.

It is vitally important that we remember that,

because it is those poor that guard the gates to the kingdom of heaven.

It is they who hold our immortal salvation in their hands,

just as we hold their mortal salvation in ours.

And you thought it was going to be tough to get around St. Peter!

That is the point Luke is trying to make when he says

“...woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.”

The poor may not have much,

but what they do have is a gift to us beyond price.

Their gift to us is to remind us of all that we do have.

And to remind us that God is the giver of all.

They are, or can be if we let them, Saints to us.

And when we respond as we should, we become saints to them.

There is, you see, an economy of sainthood.

And into this economy the church works to make saints.

Well, not make Saints exactly.

More like grow them.

It is God that makes Saints, the church only nurtures them.

Last May

we put a little water on one of Gods little saint seedlings,

Kelisha Rachel John.

You may wonder why I am calling this little girl a saint,

when she is barely even an official Christian.

Well, you can take it from me,

I know that children welcomed into a family

do more to make it easier for their parents to believe in God

than just about anything else that could happen to them.

That's why I know that children are saints;

and in the Episcopal Church some of our best evangelists too.

It is amazing how many people some children bring with them to church.

So,

if we all start out as saints,

where are all the Saints now?

We're still here... we just don't know it.

As we so often do, we have forgotten.

The opening words from the sermon on the mount that we heard today
are a reminder that the little people,
the poor,
the hungry,
and those who weep,
are not little before God.

And it is we who are filled and who laugh,
we who leap for joy;
it is we who will bring in the kingdom of God.

Or not.

Right now we are all that God has.
And if we don't do it, it won't get done.
It's not a big job.

But it is a whole lot of little ones.

The life of a saint is made manifest in a lifetime of small kindnesses.

Many years ago at the church up in St. Charles,

I had the honor to work with and form an amazing group of women
as they planted the St. Catherine of Siena Chapter
of the Order of the Daughters of the King.®

Their motto speaks cogently, I think, to the issue at hand.

It goes like this.

I am but one, but I am one.

I cannot do everything, but I can do something.

What I can do, I ought to do.

What I ought to do, by the grace of God I will do.

Lord, what would you have me do?

Today is a special day set aside to remember all the great saints,
but it is also a day to remember that we too are Saints.

And to ask ourselves if that is how we have been behaving.

Are we living like Saints?

What have we been doing in *our* lives

to make it easier for others to believe in God?

Don't ask me.

Ask the people you work with and play with.

And even more importantly, ask the poor,

and those who are hungry,

and those who weep.

And get ready for their answer.

It may demand a response.

I am but one, but I am one.

I cannot do everything, but I can do something.

What I can do, I ought to do.

What I ought to do, by the grace of God I will do.

Lord, what would you have me do?

Amen.