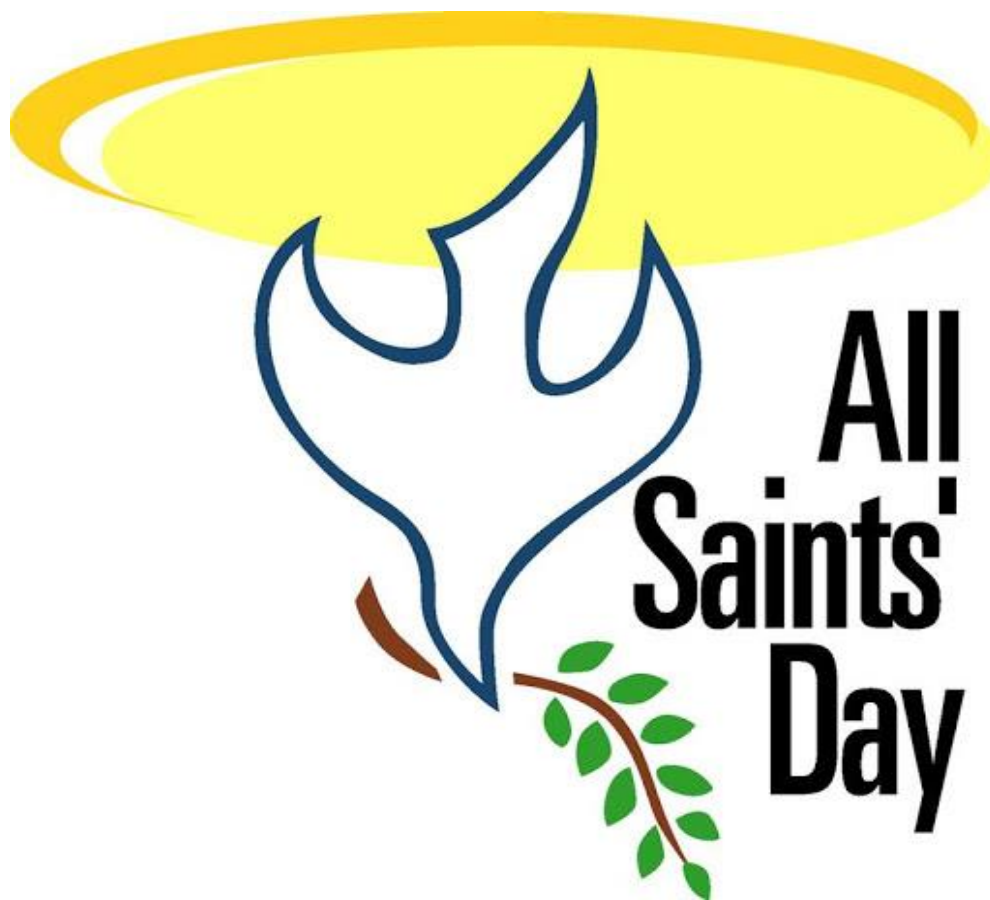




Reflections & Prayers for All Saints' Day

1 November 2020



Introduction

In his letter to the Colossians, our reading for today chapter 1:1-12, Paul writes in verses 11 and 12: “May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.” Today Lauryn is reflecting on this passage, “the communion of saints”, their example and encouraging us to pray.

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Readings for this Sunday

These are the readings for this Sunday which you may like to look up in your bibles at home and read.

Revelation 7:9-end

1 John 3:1-3

Matthew 5:1-12

And the reading on which Lauryn's reflection is based: **Colossians 1:1-12**

Colossians 1: 1-12

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

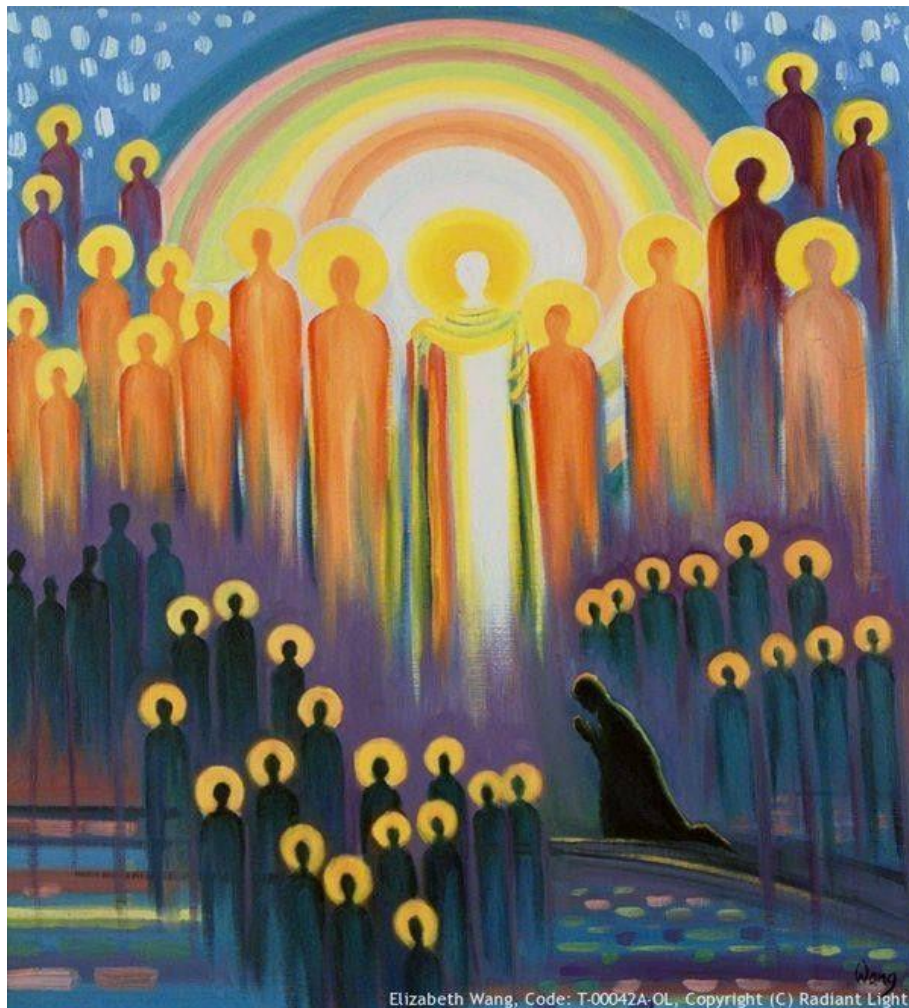
To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Reflection from Lauryn Awbrey



Text: Colossians 1: 1-12

To all the saints in Harpenden, greetings! To the saints who live further afield, welcome! Today is All Saints Day, a day for remembering and rejoicing. On this day the church remembers that we are surrounded by “so great a cloud of witnesses”, as St Paul puts it, surrounded by all the company of heaven, by angels and archangels, martyrs and saints, and those whom we love but no longer see. We are in communion with the saints – that is, we are in community with them – all of us together in the Body of Christ.

This is a glorious thought, and a comforting thought, and also a challenging thought.

On All Saints we are asked to remember those named and known saints – like St John, or St Alban, or St Theresa – saints with a capital S, who shine in glory, who have given their all to God or to the Church in witness to their faith. Extraordinary women and men of faith.

And we are asked to remember those whom we knew and loved – and still love, but no longer see because we are separated by death. We name them, silently or out loud, we name them in our prayers – all those whom we hold in our hearts. These unseen loved ones may be extraordinary too, if not to the whole world, then to us.

And *also* on this day, we can name ourselves. You and me... we are all saints. That’s what the New Testament calls us; that’s what St Paul named us. In the Bible, St Paul used the word Saints to refer to all believers, all who follow Jesus. He talked about the saints in Corinth, the Saints in Ephesus ... and in this morning’s reading, he writes to the Saints in Colossae, greeting them in the name of God.

I don’t know about you, but I don’t often feel very saintly. Okay, well, sometimes, I have a feeling that everything is going well, and I have done something nice, and I get a lovely little warm glow... I hope you have that feeling sometimes. But even then I don’t exactly feel saintly, and certainly not extraordinary. Although the scriptures tell me that I am a saint and a child of God, I just as often feel that I should have done more/done better/done something else.

We often sing the hymn “For all the saints” on this day, in church. One of the great lines is this: “O blest communion, o fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine.” We feebly struggle... to do the best we can, some days just to put one foot in front of the other. We feebly struggle... to, as St Paul says, lead lives worthy of the Lord, to bear fruit in every good, to grow in knowledge of God.

The good news is that we don’t struggle alone. That cloud of witnesses? They are surrounding us with love and with prayer – like a great heavenly stadium, cheering us on. Those saints who died in faith? Their example pulls us forward, reminding us that we aren’t the first to face challenges. Those heavenly saints robed in white, praising God? They remind us that we too are to, one day, stand in the throne room with **all** the saints who have gone before us. I find this both glorious and comforting.

And challenging. St Symeon (known as “the New Theologian” (949-1022) writes:

"The saints in each generation, joined to those who have gone before, and filled like them with light, become a golden chain, in which each saint is a separate link, united to the next by faith, works, and love. So in the One God they form a single chain which cannot quickly be broken."

What a vision! A golden chain... and we are to be the next links in the chain. United by faith, works, and love, we join with all the saints in heaven and on earth. We are a part of the blessed company of all faithful people, ordinary saints and extraordinary saints. We are all bound together, those of who are here now and those who have gone before us and those who are yet to come.

I think that part of what makes a saint special is that they practiced praying. A lot. They made time, set aside the time, created the space, and prayed. They talked to God. What the saints did a lot of is PRAY. Paul greets the saints in Colossae and then he prays for them. “We have not ceased praying for you,” he writes. He prays for the community to know God’s will, to lead lives worthy of Christ, to be made strong, to be prepared to endure hard times.

So here are two suggestions to help us along in our prayer lives. You could light a candle. In a safe place. Maybe on the kitchen windowsill. Maybe

just a little tea light. I don't know about you, but I have lots of candles. For some reason I save them for special occasions – I don't know why. But I could, and you could, light a candle As you light the candle, offer a prayer... of thanksgiving, or on behalf of someone who needs it. And you might just keep the candle lit for a little while if you are at home ... And when you glance at the candle, remember to pray. Oh! That candle is still lit – Lord, help me to be a light to the world.

Oh – is that candle still lit? (which is okay, because remember, it is in a very safe place). Lord, please be with my friend who is healing from an operation.

OR maybe you are worried about lit candles. In which case, here is another option.

Remembering that image that St Symeon gave us, of a golden chain, golden links of faith and love and works, make your own prayer chain. (do and show) You might start, for instance, with a prayer of thanksgiving for someone you love, who was a teacher of faith for you. So I would thank God for my mother, Kathleen. You could have several links like that. I would certainly pray for my new baby granddaughter. Your prayers might roam far and wide... prayers for others, for the world ... and for yourself.

It is for all the saints that we give thanks today. I invite you to give thanks, too, for the saints whose sacrifice formed our church, for the saints whose example encourages us to be links in the chain... and give thanks, too, for the saint who may be found no further away than your mirror.

Amen.

The Collect for the week

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: grant us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that we may come to those inexpressible joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord.

Prayers

Heavenly Father, thank you for all the saints who have gone before, for their example and their prayers which have reverberated round your Kingdom through the centuries. We give special thanks for those who have encouraged us on our Christian journeys over the years – those who sowed the seed of faith, those who have fed and watered it since.

We pray for those struggling today – those in isolation, those fearful and anxious, not knowing what tomorrow will bring, those out of work wondering how to pay their bills, and the younger generation whose plans are suddenly no longer as certain as they'd seemed a few months ago.

We pray for your world, and repent of the ways in which we have contributed to its sad and sorry state, from litter which despoils our hedgerows to forest fires used by commercialism's greed. Help us to live more simply that others may simply live.

We pray for your Church, for Bishop Alan and Archdeacon Jane, and all who minister in our Deanery. We pray for our parish, especially Berkeley that you would bless him and restore him to full health, for James and Jane our Church Wardens and our ministry team as they search for ways to sustain the church in this place.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed by your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen

A Sonnet by Malcolm Guite (2014) based on The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)

The blessed are the ones we overlook;
The faithful servers on the coffee rota,
The ones who hold no candle, bell or book
But keep the books and tally up the quota,
The gentle souls who organize the fete,
Church sitters who give up their weekday hours,
Doorkeepers who may open heaven's gate.
God knows the depths that often go unspoken
Amongst the shy, the quiet, and the kind,
Or the slow healing of a heart long broken
Placing each flower so for a year's mind.
Invisible on earth, without a voice,
In heaven their angels glory and rejoice.

[Parish Prayers for the week ahead](#)

In the Anglican cycle of prayer:

Sunday	The Church of the Province of West Africa
Monday	Rochester England; Rochester (The Episcopal Church); Kushtia (Bangladesh)
Tuesday	Rockhampton (Australia); Delhi (North India); Kutigi (Nigeria)
Wednesday	Rokon (South Sudan); Derby (England)
Thursday	Rorya (Tanzania); Derry & Raphoe (Ireland); Dhaka (Bangladesh)

Friday	Ruaha (Tanzania); Europe (England); Europe (The Episcopal Church)
Saturday	Rumbek (South Sudan); The Bahamas and The Turks and Caicos Islands (West Indies); Kwara (Nigeria)

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Parish of Radlett (Deanery of St Albans)
Monday	Diocesan Synod
Tuesday	Retired Clergy in the Diocese
Wednesday	Parish of Shenley (Deanery of St Albans)
Thursday	St Albans Cathedral (Deanery of St Albans)
Friday	Parish of St Albans, Christ Church (Deanery of St Albans)
Saturday	Parish of St Albans, St Luke (Deanery of St Albans)

For the homes and families in:

Sunday	Acacia Walk, Aldwick Road
Monday	Alzey Gardens
Tuesday	Aran Close, Ashcroft Close
Wednesday	Barlings Road, Barnfield Road
Thursday	Barrons Row, Beech Close
Friday	Beeson End Lane, Bewdley Close
Saturday	Birch Way, Bowling Close

The Sick:

Berkeley, Emily, Amy Smart, Claire, Jo, Sue, Christine Strohm, Hermione, Karen, Sue Holt, Enid Giles, Jo Young and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

For the recently deceased:

Michael Blackmore Squires, Shambu Mitra

On their year's mind:

Brian Ledwith, Therese Sale, Gladys Owens, Winifred Gibb, David Saxby, Janet Saxby, Geoffrey Andrews, Sylvia Tweed

[A reminder... of this phone service:](#)

Daily Hope – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.