

All Saints' Day

November 1, 2009

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9

Psalm 24

Revelation 21:1-6a

John 11:32-44

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

What, or who, is a saint? We all know the names of quite a few men and women who have that official title. Some of them were Apostles, friends of Our Lord Jesus Christ, men and women who made enormous contributions to the spreading of the Gospel and the founding of what we call Church.

There are many, many more. Down through the centuries all sorts of people have come to the fore in moments of danger and stress and in moments of service, giving real, personal meaning to Christianity. We have some names but certainly not all of them. Some will never be known but never be forgotten before God. Some names come to mind immediately: names such as Francis of Assisi and Catherine, all sorts of Catherines, actually, saints of all sorts from all sorts of places.

I received a book about saints several years ago. The book listed saints to be called upon in all sorts of situations. There is a saint for juvenile delinquency, Saint Dominic Savio, a nineteenth century young man who set himself up as a good example for the rude boys of his village and, remarkably, is not a martyr. There is a saint for physically unattractive people, Saint Germain Cousin, who was

rejected even by her parents, and a saint for hangovers, Saint Bibiana; sounds like the Latin “bibulous” which means, of course, fond of strong drink. Who knew?

As I sit in my usual seat during the Eucharist, I look out over our wonderful parish and think what a joy and a privilege it is, and has been, to be here. My mind drifts back to the appearance of the church a few years ago: yellow walls, red carpet, white tile, a dark brown pulpit and rail and cylinder lights, and I think of the physical changes we have seen together. More importantly, I think of the many people who have made Christ Church what it is today, a loving parish family centered on the worship of Christ and committed to his service.

It seemed that I could see some of those parishioners who are no longer visible with us still in the places they occupied over the years. It's a curious truth that very often those places remain unfilled as though we have a sense that they are still seated there. Of course they are. Those are our communion of saints, and they are many. Looking back over the twenty years that I have known Christ Church so many names come to mind; men and women, boys and girls whose lives have profoundly influenced those around them, models of what it means to be a follower of Christ.

Should I name them? I need not, because the list is too great, and I dare say you might have names to add. It seems to me that they have taken their place in an unbroken line of servants of Christ stretching back to those few who heard His call and followed Him. They are still here, of course, some smiling upon us from their apparently empty places, rejoicing in each successive generation at prayer, and many seated today in our congregation. How blessed we are by their loving presence.

As November begins we set aside a date, All Saints' Day; in truth, every day is a day to celebrate the saints among us.

In His Holy Name.