

Saint Thomas' and St Thomas' of the Air Church  
 All Saints Day  
 November 1, 2021  
 rmcneely+

Blessed are ye  
 when men shall revile you and persecute you  
 and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely  
 for my sake.

Rejoice and be exceeding glad:  
 for great is your reward in heaven.

Fall is such a mysterious time

Filled with beauty,  
 Melancholy  
 And the macabre.

The golden afternoon light

Filtered through the blazing beauty of the changing trees  
 Bright yellows, brilliant reds and deep purples,  
 Evokes the fragility and the fleeting nature of life,  
 As Christians we look beyond to the eternal.

As Anglicans we prepare for the eternal harvest festival of God:

All Saints Day.

The Saints, those glorious characters

Often friends, or family  
 Point to God's eternity beyond time; Heaven.

We celebrate today the octave of All Saints.

The Church marks the great feasts

by observing them for 8 days; an *octave*,  
 a day of preparation we call an *eve*  
 and a Proper Preface to be chanted  
 at the Sanctus of the Mass.

All Saints Day has gone by a number of names over the centuries:  
 the Feast of All Saints  
 All Hallows Day, and  
 Allhallows  
 Hallowsmas

Hallow as in “Hallowed be thy name” is an old English word that meant: to make holy or sacred.

Yesterday we celebrated  
 All Hallows Eve, the day preceding All Hallows Day  
 But for our secular friends it was only  
 Halloween  
 Which has become the second great festival  
 For the American public.  
 In this era of conflict, cultural confusion, isolation  
 unemployment and violence  
 Americans celebrate the darkness of Halloween  
 Rather than the light of Easter.

The former Archbishop of Paris said:  
 “The West is born in Christianity,  
 The crisis of the West is that it isn’t Christian anymore.”  
 And so our culture separates All Hallows Eve from All Hallows  
 Day.

Our fallen culture prefers to focus on the dark side of man  
 Forgetting the victory of the good  
 found in the loving hearts of the saints.

Archbishop Morse wrote:  
 “The problem of freedom

is the choice between good and evil  
 And is particularly reflected in the Feast of All Saints Day.  
 When man's understanding is darkened,  
     He becomes alienated from the life of God.

Today the secular has seized upon the eve, All Hallows Eve  
     --Halloween  
     and makes it a celebration of evil and the darkness of night.  
 The church celebrates the light of day  
     and makes it a harvest of Heaven; the Saints.”

The 8 day feast of All Saints begins with a three-day observance:  
 All Hallows Eve – a time to prepare for All Hallows  
 All Saints Day – a time to commemorate all the saints  
 All Souls Day (tomorrow) a time to remember all the  
     Faithful Departed.

All Saints Day has been observed since the 4<sup>th</sup> Century.  
 When the Church recognized that  
 countless men and women  
 had been persecuted, martyred  
 literally hunted and tortured for their faith in Jesus  
 sometimes to the delight of the crowds.

Their names were not recorded in history  
 But we should remember and honor them nonetheless.  
 Recall the sacrifices of the nameless thousands.  
 This day was originally set aside to commemorate them,  
     their sacrifice and what it means in our lives.

The English word “saint” comes from the same Latin root that forms our words

sacred,  
sanctuary, and sanctify:  
*sanctus*. Which means

to set apart and devoted to the exclusive purpose of God.  
So this is the Sanctuary of the Church,  
a place we physically set apart  
from the rest of the church building  
and devoted exclusively to the worship of God.  
That’s why the altar is here,  
that’s why the credence table with the elements for  
communion are here.

That’s why we receive communion here.

Nothing happens in this space that does not involve God.

Of all the real estate in San Francisco

We have set it apart and dedicated it to God.

So, Saints are people who set their lives apart to devote themselves to the purpose of doing God’s will.

We think of Saints four ways:

1. All Saints Day and its octave, is a time to look back at the lives of Saints who have been formally canonized by the Roman Church and adopted by the Anglican Church:  
The way they lived their lives  
and for some, their martyred deaths.

In the days before Comic Books, Movies and electronic screens, the Saints were the Superheroes.

But they were not fiction

The product of paint, celluloid, pixels and imagination

They were flesh and blood  
 people whose  
 heroic actions  
 Saved us, motivated us  
 and were the examples for our lives.

Their names and lives and accomplishments were well known  
 And celebrated both by the Church  
 And Society at large.

They were lights of the world in their several generations.  
 They were the choice vessels of God's grace,  
 because they sought to do their duty  
 in that state of life unto which God had been pleased to call  
 them.

There are fascinating stories,  
 there are Kings,  
 there are paupers,  
 there are priests and soldiers.  
 some of the most unlikely people.

Too many stories to tell this morning.  
 But their lives and the ways they led them remain  
 instructive to our lives  
 and to how we might lead them.

2. Our remembrance at All Saints also includes  
 Those who were never formally sainted  
 but who devoted themselves  
 to the love of God  
 and who lived their lives  
 "following the Commandments of God and walking in His holy  
 ways"  
 as we say in the invitation to the general confession.

Nameless men and women who gave their lives  
And were martyred for their faith.

These Saints include all those untold millions  
who live eternally with our Lord.  
Some of them it has been our fortune to know  
and their lives have guided and inspired us

3. The concept of saints includes our ancestors, departed relatives  
and loved ones.

We remember them today.

will pray for their eternal peace with God

And offer thanksgiving for their

Lives, works and examples for our lives.

In times not so long ago, tomorrow would be the day each year

That we would visit their graves

Decorate them with flowers, poems, and mementos

On All Souls Day, broadly known in the Latin tradition

As Dia de los Muertos.

However, in the Anglican tradition, the concept of saints is broader  
still.

4. It includes:

people from all over the world,

the people of the here and now,

who love God and carry the way of Christian life to those who will  
succeed us.

So, you see; The Saints of God lived not only in ages past- not only in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries but also in these last days. The living:

Today,  
right now,  
right here.

So, if you are thinking that you too are a saint,  
you win the sermon prize,

The difference between us  
and the people that were formally recognized as Saints  
is only a matter of degree.

The people the Church has formally recognized as Saints  
have set apart a very large part of their lives  
to do God's will  
and we have set apart  
only a tiny part of our lives for Him.

But both set apart a portion of their lives to do God's will. And in the Anglican tradition both are saints.

### Communion of Saints

All Saints Day embraces the concept of the entire Communion of Saints,

In the Communion of Saints, the concept of time is eroded.

The past and present intersect  
and become one  
in Communion.

So in this communion of Saints, we celebrate every Holy Communion in union with all of the saints, past and present.  
People from all over time

and all over the world,  
 all the Saints, join with us,  
 the saints here at St Thomas,  
 in the organic and living body of Christ; His church;  
 in the spiritual union  
 in the love of God that takes place in Holy Communion,  
 that close union with God.

And we are changed.

We recite our belief in the Communion of Saints in the Apostles  
 creed.

But it is now,  
 in the days of All Saints  
 that we are encouraged to pause  
 and reflect upon the Communion of Saints.

Bishop Morse loved his acolytes and fondly told a story  
 About one young man who served at the altar.

Morse had just given a sermon on the Communion of Saints  
 And had emphasized that at every communion  
 We are joined by Saints from all time  
 And in all places  
 In spiritual union here at the altar  
 In a spiritual cloud of countless Saints.

There comes a time in the service when the acolyte  
 Tells the priest the number of people who shall  
 Be coming to the rail so the priest can provide sufficient  
 Body and Blood for them.

The boy approached the Bishop at the altar  
 And when asked how many people there were  
 That boy had listened to every word of the sermon.  
 And he stammered.... Millions !!.

As we contemplate All Saints Day we may even discover



the special treasure of sanctity and devotion,  
 which can flourish in any surrounding,  
 when fostered by faith  
 and the love of God.

For each feast day of the Church

There has been written what is called a Proper Preface  
 You'll find them beginning at page 77 of your BCP  
 It is said or sung at the Sanctus of the service.

The one for All Saints Day sums up the sentiment and  
 Theology of the Day:

“ Who, in the multitude of thy saints  
 hast compassed us about  
 with so great a cloud of witnesses, that we  
 rejoicing in their fellowship  
 may run with patience the race that is set before us, and  
 together with them  
 may receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

There is a song in our hymnal written by an English woman,  
 Lesbia Scott in the 1920s. It's Hymn 243.

Its composer was the wife of a British Admiral.

A man who began his career as a warrior  
 But ended it as an Anglican Priest.

The family lived in England west of London.

Lesbia established a little family tradition.

She wrote little songs for her three kids  
 about the family events.

The kids loved it and nagged her  
 to write a song for the most mundane things.

There is even one for a picnic.

This song she wrote for her children, to encourage their faith. She  
 never intended it to be published for us,

but it has become a world wide favorite  
 and has been translated into many languages.

Many of you know it well. She entitled it “Sing a Song for the Saints of God”.

It may have been written by their Mom for the Scott Children, but it has a sweet message that will do us good as well.

We live in a time that is far different from the violent Christian persecutions of the past.

Although recent attacks on Churches  
and religious statues are foreboding.

It is a time when all of us,  
“the Saints of God”,  
in the sense of the Scott family children’s song,  
are called to prayer and more.

So what will good folk do?

We are already doing it, . . . right now. We set apart a portion of our lives this morning and dedicated it to do God’s will.

We are a part of the organic body of Christ, his church by virtue of our Baptism.

We come to participate in the Communion of Saints each Sunday and through out the Church year,  
we take  
and make communion with Him  
in this service,  
this close union with God.

We can come to Bible study, or read His word and let it affect our lives.

Several of you say the daily offices, Morning Prayer  
A stalwart group meet 5 evenings and one morning  
in St Thomas' Church of the Air  
to say the Daily Office together  
All are welcome.

We say our prayers each day, at each meal, and before retiring each  
night.

And when we take stock of our lives;  
especially in these days of All Saints,  
and consider the lives of the saints,  
those who have been formally sainted  
and those who have not;  
we may hear God's will.

And may we have the courage to set apart a portion of our lives,  
and perhaps a greater part of our lives  
to do that will.

If I may borrow from the Scott Children:

“For the saints of God are folk just like you  
And there's not any reason  
No, not the least  
Why you shouldn't be one too.”  
Amen.