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NOVEMBER 2021

The Evangel

HOW CAN I BE A SAINT OF GOD?

All Saints' Day contains a richness and depth that brings it alongside the "big" feast days of Easter and Christmas in its power to connect us more deeply with the Church temporal and universal. We recognize and celebrate the saints who are among us, singing cheerful hymns that always bring out the soulful voices of our congregation. It is an opportunity to welcome new members into this fellowship of saints, as we will at 10 a.m. on **Sunday, November 7, 2021**, when we baptize the three Cavender boys! It is also a solemn occasion to thankfully remember the loved ones who have passed on into glory, reminding us that they are still very much a part of this glorious fellowship even though we do not see them.



In these concurrent celebrations, we hear explicitly – and experience implicitly – this holy fellowship of the living and the dead holding in common the person, presence, and power of Jesus Christ. As such, All Saints' Day is more than simply a remembrance or a feel-good experience. It is an invitation to draw closer to the fellowship of Christ's Body. It empowers us with the knowledge and the strength to grow into being saints of God here and now. Even though All Saints' Day is November 1, we always observe it on the Sunday following so we do not take for granted God's desire to simultaneously equip us and welcome us into this exceptional life of devotion.

This Sunday, as we sing these familiar hymns, support these amazing boys as they enter the life of the church, and call out the names of our loved ones who have died, a question will be spoken to you. *How can I be a saint of God?* The good news is that Jesus has already answered this for you. Believe in Him. Celebrate His presence among us. Strive with all your being to make His love known among all the people you meet. As we also bless the gifts and talents being offered to our parish at the conclusion of our stewardship campaign, recognize that God has already given you the tools to serve and grow into your calling as saints. Go forth and be saints of God so that future generations of the faithful at St. Stephen's may continue to joyfully sing and remember the goodness of the life that God continually provides for all who seek His love.

~ Fr. Bailey

COMPASSION CLOSET

ST. STEPHEN'S CHRISTIAN EDUCATION WILL BE COLLECTING DONATIONS FOR THE COMPASSION CLOSET THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER.

Foster care is often messy. Most often, a child's placement is last-minute and the families have little time to ensure they have the specific items these children need. The problem is made worse by the fact that children often enter the system with only the clothes they are wearing. These factors can cause the first 24-48 hours of a new placement to be far more stressful for everyone involved than they should be. This is the core reason for the Compassion Closet.

The Compassion Closet exists to show the love of Christ by providing quality clothing and tangible goods to children in foster care and the families caring for them. We also desire to serve birth families, aging-out youth, kinship placements, and domestic/international adoptive families as God allows and the needs arise.

The closet was started in 2013 in the basement of a local foster/adoptive family. Through partnerships with other like-minded volunteers, it has grown to 5 active locations at this time.

Andy and Kristy Smith became foster parents in 2010 and first made the connection with the closet by dropping off donations to the home mentioned above. Having shared the vision for a foster care resource closet in their community, knowing firsthand the needs, they soon became regular volunteers and officially opened the Oak Ridge location in 2019. Since then, they have had the joy & privilege of serving children, families and staff who are part of the foster care community in the East Region.

There are currently 8,468 children in foster care in the state of Tennessee, 567 in our immediate region that includes Anderson County. The need for support of these children and families is significant. We are sincerely grateful to have your interest in partnering with us to remind them that they are valued, cared for and not alone.

Greatest needs include underwear (all sizes toddler-teen/adult), hygiene, diapers, wipes, socks, gift cards for teen clothing/shoes, carseats & boosters and fast food gift cards for children waiting at the DCS offices for placement.

~Courtesy of Kristi Smith, Director of Compassion Closet in Oak Ridge

RESOURCES

[Compassion Closet Website](#) | [Current Wishlist](#) | [Oak Ridge Video](#)



Clothing

- Underwear
- Socks
- Pajamas

All sizes: toddler, child, teen, adult



Baby Supplies

- Diapers
- Wipes
- Car seats
- Booster seats



Toys

- Simple toys: blocks, dolls, cars
- Books



Donations

- Gift Cards for clothes (teens & adults)
- Fast Food Gift Cards

ALL HALLOWS' EVE, ALL SAINTS' DAY, AND ALL SOULS' DAY

You are probably very familiar with the evening of October 31, All Hallows' Eve, which precedes the church's celebrations of All Saints' Day on November 1, and All Souls' Day on November 2nd. But did you know that The Book of Occasional Services provides a form for a service on All Hallows' Eve? This service begins with the Prayer for Light, and it includes two or more readings from scripture. The options for the readings include:

- the Witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:3-25),
- the Vision of Eliphaz the Temanite (Job 4:12-21),
- the Valley of Dry Bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14), and
- the War in Heaven (Revelation 12:1-12).

The readings are followed by a psalm, canticle, or hymn, and a prayer. The The Book of Occasional Services notes that "suitable festivities and entertainments" may precede or follow the service, and there may be a visit to a cemetery or burial place.

The popular name for this festival is Halloween. It was the eve of *Samhain*, a pagan Celtic celebration of the beginning of winter and the first day of the new year. This time of the ingathering of the harvest and the approach of winter apparently provided a reminder of human mortality. It was a time when the souls of the dead were said to return to their homes. Bonfires were set on hilltops to frighten away evil spirits. Samhain was a popular festival at the time when the British Isles were converted to Christianity. The church "adopted" this time of celebration for Christian use by observing All Saints' Day on November 1st, and All Hallows' Eve on the evening of October 31st.



ALL SAINTS' DAY

All Saints' Day is one of the seven principal feasts of the church year, and one of the four days recommended for the administration of baptism. If it doesn't fall on a Sunday, All Saints' Day may also be celebrated on the Sunday following November 1st, as we are doing this year.

ALL SOULS' DAY

This optional observance is an extension of All Saints' Day. While All Saints' is to remember all the saints, popular piety felt the need to distinguish between outstanding saints and those who are unknown in the wider fellowship of the church, especially family members and friends. Commemoration of All Faithful Departed did not appear in an American Prayer Book until 1979, and it is celebrated on November 2nd. It is also known as All Souls' Day. Many churches now commemorate all the faithful departed in the context of the All Saints' Day celebration.



CURATE'S CORNER - ALL SAINT'S EDITION

Greetings, St. Stephen's and welcome to this inaugural edition of the Curate's Corner! When I first presented this idea to Fr. Bailey, I had imagined that this column would be a place where I could nerd out about particular theological topics. Trust me, I will! However, I am approaching it with a more open mind, and we will see where the Spirit leads us over time. However, since November 1st is All Saints' Day, it seemed most fitting that for this month's offering we could explore the communion of saints.

The communion of saints, or *communio sanctorum*, in the way that we commonly understand it has always existed throughout the Christian world, in both the East and West, and, in its earliest iteration, began as the veneration of the earliest martyrs of the Church. However, as the understanding of martyrdom was expanded to include those who had taken monastic vows, termed white martyrdom, so too the understanding of sainthood was expanded. Over the proceeding centuries we have developed a complex calendar of seemingly countless forbearers in the faith who we celebrate due to their witness to the gospel.

However, it was not until at least the 5th century that the Western Church received a formal expression of this long-held connection between the Christians living in the world, and those who are enjoying the more immediate presence of Christ. That formulation of course being the Apostle's Creed, a creed that was designated originally for baptism, which is not recognized in the Eastern Church. Up until that point belief the communion of saints was expressed more devotionally in the practice of venerating relics, or in the many prayers for the dead that have been found etched in the walls of early Christian catacombs. It was a simple belief that those who had gone before were alive in the Lord, that they had received a share in the resurrected life of Jesus, and thus were a part of the "great cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1).



Our own catechism in the Book of Common Prayer states that the communion of saints "is the whole family of God, the living and the dead, those whom we love and those whom we hurt, bound together in Christ by sacrament, prayer, and praise" (BCP 862). While there are many more expansive treatments of the *communio sanctorum*, especially in the medieval scholastics, I believe that this definition strikes at the heart of the nature of the Church in its fullness as the Body of Christ. It is the relationship, animated by the power of the Holy Spirit, between those of us here in the world with those who have gone before. However, it is even more than that. The communion of saints, of which we are all a part, is a participation in, and a reflection of, God's trinitarian nature. God's very nature is relationship, albeit perfect relationship. After all, we are a human family, and as such there are those times in which we will hurt one another, as the catechism soberly states. We are all saints, but we know that even the most holy of saints are still sinners in need of God's grace.

So, the communion of saints is not just an abstract concept, but rather an integral dynamic and lens through which we can understand our life together in the Church. We are reminded of the reality of our own interconnectedness, because in Christ there is no separation, for we are all members of his one body. As Nicetas of Remesiana, a bishop of the early church, said in the 5th century:

What is the Church but the congregation of all saints? From the beginning of the world patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, and all other righteous men who have lived or are now alive, or shall live in time to come, comprise the Church, since they have been sanctified by one faith and manner of life, and sealed by one Spirit and so made one body, of which Christ is declared to be head, as the Scripture says. Moreover, the angels, and the heavenly virtues and powers too, are banded together in this Church.

We can glean a couple of things from this quote from J.N.D. Kelly's Early Christian Creeds. The first is that we do not have to be especially holy to be counted among the saints, thanks be to God, for we are included in the assembly of the righteous by virtue of our baptism. Of course, that does not mean that we should not strive to live holy lives, nor does it take away from the witness of those saints with a capital 'S', but it does witness to our inherent dignity by virtue of our adoption by God. The second is that the Church is comprised of all people at all times past, present, and even future. In addition, Nicetas expands the Church beyond its human dimension and includes the angelic ministers of God. "In him all things hold together," as Paul writes (Col. 1:17). Therefore, any separation between us is that of our own making; and I would like to suggest that there is no place where our connection with the saints is as transparent as in our celebration of Holy Eucharist.

In one of our recent classes on our book study of Life in Christ by Julia Gatta, we discussed how every celebration of the Eucharist, in a certain sense, is transhistorical. It is at the altar when the past, present, and future become presence, and we are gathered into the eternal Now of God. Whenever we celebrate the Eucharist, we "[join] our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven" who forever sing their hymn of praise to God, that company of heaven being, you guessed it, the communion of saints (BCP 362). Every Sunday, whether we realize it or not, our church is suffused with a great cloud of witnesses from every generation. They are made present to us in the Spirit, praying with us and for us, and our connection to them and to the Lord is a foretaste of that heavenly banquet where we will feast forever.



As many of you have come to know one of my favorite theologians is St. Thomas Aquinas. He says something interesting in his treatment of the three theological virtues in connection with Heaven, or as he terms it, the beatific vision. Faith, he says, will pass away for we will perceive God in his essence. Hope, too, will pass away for what Christ has promised to us will be received. Love, however, will not pass away. On the contrary love, or charity, "has no limit to its increase, since it is a participation in the infinite charity which is the Holy Spirit" (II-II,24,7). While this may seem abstract, I believe it is directly connected to our understanding of the communion of saints. In a way, this life of ours is a training ground for the life of the age to come, and the love of neighbor receives an additional dimension. We all have an opportunity, as members of "the whole family of God," to grow in love, not only for the benefit of ourselves and our neighbors in this life, but as a preparation our and their eternal blessedness. Thanks be to God that we have been given so many examples to follow in the saints who have gone on before.

I leave you with the words traditionally ascribed to St. Paul:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin that clings to us so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:1-2).

~ Fr. Ashton

November Celebrations



BIRTHDAYS

11/1 Elijah Mauk-Olson
11/2 Alexis Aaron
11/3 Walt Gardner
Michael Trank
11/4 Mary Ellen Klots
Allan Reiss
11/7 Beth Reed
11/8 Samantha Berven
Anna Davis
Margaret Terrell
11/10 Liz Baker
11/11 Deb Johnson
Ruth Prince
11/12 Deborah Clary
Mary Morris
11/14 Victoria Medaglia

11/15 Don Madgett
11/16 Mila Giuliano
11/17 Carol Gardner
Andie Lenhard
11/18 Derek Baker
11/19 Simon Ballintoy
Ray Evans, Jr.
11/23 Cleon Hartman
11/24 Jim Hilton
11/26 Charmaine Hensley
11/27 Mary Cooper
11/28 Scott Aaron
Thomas Cox

ANNIVERSARIES

11/17 Carol & Adolf King
11/26 Jo Kelley & Drew Shane
11/27 Margaret & Bill Baldauf
Judith & Wes Delaney



WHERE GOD IS SEEN, LOVE IS FELT, LIVES ARE CHANGED!

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