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Holy Faith, Santa Fe
2 November 2025

All Saints' Sunday
Ecclesiasticus 44.1-10, 13-14
Psalm 149
Revelation 7.2-4, 9-17
Matthew 5.1-12

In the name of the one, true, and living God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

We are celebrating the Sunday after All Saints' Day today. We hear about saints in our hymns, in our readings, in our prayers, but what is a saint? In the New Testament, the word "saint" is used to describe any member of the Christian community. Many of St. Paul's letters are addressed to the "saints" in the particular city to whom he was writing. From very early times, however, the word "saint" came to be applied primarily to persons who had done something heroic for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We honor them in the church kalendar on or near the day they died in the faith for the example they set before us.

We are surrounded by these saints. We join our voices with the saints and angels every time we say/sing in the Eucharist "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory." In the preface to the Eucharist for All Saints, we hear that in the multitude of the saints God has "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." When we think of saints, we may not think of a cloud of witnesses, singing with and rejoicing in their fellowship, running a race, receiving a crown of glory, but the saints are all around us, nevertheless.

The saints are all around us here at Holy Faith, depicted in the stained glass. In the church, we see St. Cecelia, St. Hilda of Whitby, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Mary,

the Mother of Our Lord, all featured in the stained glass windows. In the chapel we have St. Julian of Norwich, St. Mary the Virgin, and St. Hugh of Lincoln in stained glass. And in Conkey House we have the emblems of the twelve apostles.

I've heard it said that it's proper to feature likenesses of the saints in stained glass because, just as in their own day, the light of Christ still shines through them, radiates the love of Christ for all to see, and gives glory to our Father in heaven. A stained glass window viewed in the dark doesn't reveal anything, and isn't much to look at. But with God's created light streaming through, the vividness of the colors and the impassioned expressions of the glass faces radiate the love of Christ, give glory to our Father in heaven, and reflect a decision and determination to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior.

And you know what? Not all of the saints of Holy Faith are depicted in stained glass! We are surrounded by a great cloud of these witnesses – not just all the saints in stained glass and on the church kalendar – but those who came before us in this parish church, whose treasure built this place, whose traditions informed the way we worship, whose faith was passed on to us so that we might have a living faith, and whose prayers over the generations are still palpable in these pews, within these walls, and at this altar today. We get glimpses of these benefactors as names on plaques and etched in the stained glass windows, on doors and walls. We stand in line with these our ancestors who were the light of Christ in their generations and with those who will follow us in the next generation.

And so it is appropriate on this Sunday after All Saints' Day that we begin our annual pledge drive as part of our stewardship campaign, when we ask all parishioners

to make a pledge of their time, talent, and treasure to further the mission and ministry of Holy Faith in the year to come. The theme of Holy Faith's stewardship campaign this year is "You are the light of the world." You are invited to pray, participate, and pledge so that your light may shine before others, and they may see your good works and give glory to our Father in heaven. The pledge cards that are available today can be returned in three weeks on November 23, the Feast of Christ the King, and will be blessed at God's altar here as an acknowledgment that all things come from God, and from all that God gives us we give back to God. We own nothing, but we look after it in the time God gives us. Through our stewardship, we are called to pass on Holy Faith's vibrant mission and ministry, this beautiful building, a solid foundation to the next generation.

And you know what's more? Not all of Holy Faith's saints have gone before us. There are those in our midst now who let the light of Christ shine through them, radiate the love of Christ, give glory to our Father in heaven, and reflect a decision and determination to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior in an ever-deepening relationship with him. We have to say farewell to one of those saints as we wish Godspeed to Holy Faith's Associate Rector, Mtr. Lynn Finnegan, as she moves to Colorado to be closer to her daughters and grandchildren. Mtr. Lynn has been an exemplary priest and we will miss her powerful preaching, compassionate heart, and pastoral presence. Mtr. Lynn, you go with our lasting love, and deep gratitude for your ministry among us.

But there are those who continue here at Holy Faith who let the light of Christ shine through them, radiate the love of Christ, give glory to our Father in heaven, and reflect a decision and determination to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior in an ever-

deepening relationship with him. For, you see, our readings this morning provide other clues about who's a saint. In our reading from the Revelation to St. John the Divine, we hear of an angel having the seal of the living God who marked the saints of God with a seal on their foreheads. We experience a similar thing here at Holy Faith every time we have a baptism [like today when we baptize Demian] [like today when we baptize Jazrene, Jeremiah, and Eileen]. We trace the sign of Christ's cross with holy oil on the forehead of the baptismal candidate and say, "You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism, and marked as Christ's own forever." In the sacrament of baptism, the light of Christ shines through them, they radiate the love of Christ, they give glory to their Father in heaven, and they make a decision and determination to follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

This decision and determination doesn't come lightly. All of us who are baptized, either on our own or by our parents and godparents, have vowed to turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as our Savior, to put our whole trust in his grace and love, and to promise to follow and obey him as our Lord. And we who witness any new baptism pledge to renew our own Baptismal Covenant. We know we can't do this alone. We need God's help. To continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers, we need God's help. To persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord, we need God's help. To proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ, we need God's help. To seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves, we need God's help. To strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being, we need God's help.

But if we do these things, with God's help, we will be called blessed. We often speak of Blessed Francis of Assisi, our patron, Blessed Peter or Blessed Paul, Blessed Mary Magdalene or the Ever-Blessed Virgin Mary. "Blessed" is another term to describe the saints. But while we rejoice in the fellowship of the great cloud of witnesses with which God has surrounded us, we know that we must still run with endurance the race that is set before us. We know that it won't always be easy, but Jesus in today's Gospel says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

It is my hope and prayer that we can be this kind of saint – like the saints in stained glass, may we too let the light of Christ shine through us, radiate the love of Christ, give glory to our Father in heaven, reflect our decision and determination to follow Jesus as our Lord and Savior in an ever-deepening relationship with him, and so together with the saints, we may receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away. Amen.