

I love All Saints Day because it reminds me of the many, many saints who have surrounded me throughout my life. I remember St. Theresa, because I was a child at St. Theresa's Church in Summit, NJ, where I learned to love the mystery of God. I remember St. Paul, the first theologian of the Christian faith, because it was at St. Paul's Church in Bound Brook, NJ that I presented myself for ordination 22 years ago to a Rector named Ron Parker.

I love All Saints Sunday because I was once Rector of All Saints parish in Lakewood, New Jersey, where we celebrated this day with great festivity because it was our patronal feast day, and I always remember them on this day. And in the window over the altar of that church, in print so small that you had to stand near the altar to see it, was a quote from the Apostle's Creed which reads: "I believe in the Communion of Saints." And that is why we celebrate this day, not just because the Saints were the great hero's of our faith, but because they still are. When we pray the Eucharist, and you hear the phrase, "with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven," that is a reference to all those who have gone before us. The gift of eternal life means that the only thing which separates us from those who have gone before are the limits of our five senses. We no longer see them, but they are alive and well in the nearer presence of God.

The difficulty in telling about the Saints is that they are remembered so much for the great things they did that we forget they were also real people with real problems just like you and me. For example, we know that St. Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland, but did we know that at the age of 16 he was abducted by Pirates from his father's farm in Wales and held as a slave for six years. And if you read the lives of the Saints you'll see that they had tempers and complicated relationships and all the trials that befall human beings. So if they're just like us what makes them so special?

Well, you and I will talk about wanting to live our dreams, and many of them are fine dreams. But the saints are those who dared to dream dreams for God and pray for the Grace to live those dreams. This is what St. Augustine meant when he described the need to "get our loves in order." God first, other people second, ourselves third.

That is how Jesus summarized the entire faith: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself." When you think of how someone like Desmond Tutu dreamed a dream for God regarding racial harmony in South Africa or how Mother Teresa dreamed a dream for God regarding the care of the poorest of the poor in Calcutta, we begin not only to see what makes them unique, but we begin to see the importance of all God's children dreaming dreams for God.

And that, ironically, is exactly where I see us here at Christ Church. We are at the beginning of a new pastoral relationship; we are in the middle of a parish conversation about our future. This is a time to get in touch with the saint within. This is a time for us to dream dreams for God here at Christ Church and pray for the Grace to make those dreams come true. This is a time to get our loves in order and ask what it means to be a saint right here, right now.

Of course, most of us would quickly say, "I'm not a Saint," with me at the front of that line, but let me give you a little exercise to work on this week as we remember all the Saints. Consider the word "Christian." We think of it as a noun: I'm a Christian, you're a Christian, and then we look bad and feel bad when we don't live up to the expectations placed upon being "a Christian." So the little exercise is to stop thinking of "Christian" as a noun, and begin thinking of it more as an adjective.

Don't think of yourself as being "a Christian," think of yourself as "being Christian." We know that those of us here at Christ Church are a gathering of Christians. But to dream dreams for God, we need to ask; how can we be more Christian? What would it look like? What changes would have to be made? What risks would have to be taken? And then pray for the Grace to live the dreams.

Being a Christian means we belong to a group, and there's certainly value in that. But Being Christian means we belong to Christ and all the values He embodies, and that may be of more help in dreaming dreams for God.

So let us "be Christian," dreaming dreams for God and praying for the Grace that those dreams will come true. Amen.