

<b>Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 2020</b> <b>Cathedral, Grahamstown</b> <b>7.30 &amp; 9.30 a.m.</b> <b>Live-streamed, 9.30 a.m.</b>		<b>ALL SAINTS DAY</b>
Rev 7:9-17	Ps 34:1-10, 22	1 John 3:1-3
		Matthew 5:1-12
<b>CALLED TO BE SAINTS</b>		

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:3).

Today is the Great Festival of All Saints – All Saints Day – when we remember with love and appreciation all the saints, the holy ones, the abangcwele. It is a time when we look back over the history and witness of the church, with thanksgiving. It is a time when we look around and catch a glimpse of the light of Christ shining through one another.

Most of us probably think of saints as the ancient and holy figures portrayed in stained glass windows. The history of the church is full of people whose lives have pointed others to God, transformed societies, been courageous witnesses in the face of persecution and suffering.

**OUR SCRIPTURES**

The early church in particular remembered as saints those who had died for the faith, the martyrs who had offered their lives for the gospel.

**Revelation 7:9-14** – is a picture of where we shall one day be. It is a word of courage. The vision is of the great multitude that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, language, people, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands, and songs of worship and adoration on their lips. Who are these? “These are they who have come out of the great ordeal... They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Courage.

The book of Revelation emerged during a time of great suffering on the part of the church. This vision of heavenly worship, this vision of the saints in heaven, encourages us to keep strong; this vision points us to the world to come; it assures us that the suffering and heartache of this world is not the whole story: that the time and the day will come when all God’s children will be gathered together in worship and joy beyond the grave.

You may be despairing. You may be facing deep darkness. You may be experiencing persecution and opposition for the sake of the Gospel or for Gospel values. Let us take courage. Let us look to the Lamb who was slain for us. He who is our shepherd will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

**1 John 3:1-3** reminds us who we are. It is a word of intimacy. “See what love the Father has given us, that we

shall be called children of God; and that is what we are...” Elsewhere in the New Testament, the early Christians are called “saints” – holy ones, those set apart for God. They did not always behave like saints – there were times when their behaviour was anything but saint-like – but their primary identity was, and ours is as saints, holy ones, children of God, sons and daughters of the living God – and taking from the image in our reading from the book of Revelation, whatever our tribe or nation or race or language. This is who we are in Christ. Intimacy.

**Matthew 5:1-12** – is a word of holiness. It gives us a glimpse of the life of the blessed ones. It is not an easy life of comfort or luxury; there is turmoil and anguish and grief and sorrow, there is struggle and hardship. But for the sake of the kingdom of God, the saints walk this painful road, and find to their astonishment that they are blessed. This is the path that you and I are called to walk. Holiness.

## **CALLED TO BE SAINTS**

You and I are called to be saints: holy, set apart by God for God’s purposes; we are called to be signs of Christ and instruments of God’s love; we are called to walk the narrow kingdom road; we are called to navigate the stormy seas of race and gender and rage and anger and prejudice with our eyes and hope fixed on Jesus Christ; we are called to witness to love and compassion in our relationships with those who are different from us; we are called to show respect and care for the vulnerable; we are called to stand

against gender based violence; we are called to protect our environment.

Today's saints are those who feed the hungry, care for the downtrodden, witness to justice, protect the environment, reach out across barriers of hatred and suspicion, are full of the love of God. Saints are those who build communities of hope; saints are those who hunger and thirst for what is right.

Some of you may have seen the Grocotts article of this past Friday, regarding a charge of rape being laid by an Anglican priest against a colleague. The alleged rape took place here in Grahamstown, some 18 years ago. But both parties are from another diocese. I am following the case and the Grocotts article is fair. The ACSA Safe Church Commission is dealing with the matter. There will be a tribunal in that diocese. Due process is being followed. But it is very painful seeing the name of our church in the newspapers in this regard.

Last week saw the murder of an environmental anti-mining activist, Fikile Ntshangase, in her home in KZN. There is strong suspicion that her murder was due to her opposition to mining being planned for the area in which she was living. On Monday this past week, six year old Inathi Mhlahlo was raped and murdered in her home community near East London. Our hearts break. For me, the hardest is to keep faith in the face of such appalling events. Saints are called to keep faith, to go against the grain; saints dare to

be different; saints build peace; saints are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for what is right.

I want to end with the three words from our readings:

The first is courage

The second word is holiness

The third word is intimacy.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the psalm: “The angel of the Lord encamps round those who fear him: and delivers them in their need. O taste and see that the Lord is good: happy the one who hides in him!” (34:7-8).

Let us not lose heart.

The Collect for All Saints

Gracious Lord

You have bound your saints together

in the fellowship of your Church

and have prepared for them joys beyond our understanding:

help us to follow them in our daily lives

and bring us with them to everlasting glory;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Dean of Grahamstown  
All Saints Day, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020