

The Reverend Shelley Ryan  
St. Luke's Episcopal Church ~ Anchorage, Kentucky  
All Saint's Day ~ Year C October 29 & 30, 2016  
Ephesians 1:11-23. Luke 6:20-31

“The Spirit is the place of Saints and the saints are the place of the Spirit.” This quote from St. Basil the Great, a 4<sup>th</sup> century Greek Bishop in Cappadocia, conveys that no one becomes a saint without the power of the Holy Spirit working in their lives, and similarly, when we observe the lives of the saints, we witness the Holy Spirit working in the world around us.

As we observe ‘All Saints Day’ today, we lovingly honor the saints of the Church. Many of us are familiar with some of the saints of the past, such as St. Luke, but there are many saints, both past and present, which may only be known to God. You see, all Christians ‘the Body of Christ’ are considered saints. Christians are saints by virtue of their personal connection with Christ Jesus, and we are reminded of this in this morning’s collect, as we prayed reads “God has knit together the elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of Christ our Lord, and we ask for his grace that we may follow the blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living....”

Theologian and ethicist Stanley Hauerwas contends that “*Christians cannot try to become saints, nor are saint’s heroes and heroines of faith. Instead they are simply people like us who have been made more than we are by being engrafted into God’s kingdom that is ruled by forgiveness and love.*” (R.E Dunham, *Feasting on the Word*).

Sometimes it seems almost counter- cultural to live a life of redemption, love, and forgiveness when we live in a world that is sometimes incompatible to this way of living. Yet, as followers of Christ, and as we are reminded of in today’s Gospel reading – Jesus calls us to “love our enemies.” This is quite a mandate. Yet, when we - like the saints that go before us – keep our

focus upon the kingdom of God, love and forgiveness become more deeply imbedded in our hearts, which in turn gives us the peace that we can only find in Christ .

The Apostle Paul makes Jesus' message of love and forgiveness further evident in his letter to the people of Ephesus, as he entreats them to be kind to one another, to keep Christ's Body 'the Church' pure and holy, and to live a holy, pure, and Christ-inspired lifestyle. Paul wrote the letter while he was in prison in Rome, and yet in spite of his imprisonment he wrote valiantly to offer hope and encouragement and the bustling and diverse metropolis.

Paul prayed "May God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know Him, so that with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints." (v.17-18).

The 'eyes of our hearts are open' when we receive the two great sacraments - Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist. Upon receiving these sacraments we receive the Holy Spirit, which serves as our guide throughout our lives. As we receive the sacrament of Holy Baptism we are sealed with the Holy Spirit as God adopts us as His children and makes us members of Christ's body 'The Church' and inheritors of the kingdom of God. (Catechism). Each time we partake in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist we receive forgiveness of our sins, a strengthening of our union with Christ and one another, and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, which is our nourishment for life. (Catechism).

As we live in Christ we live in communion with the whole family of God – the communion of saints – the living and the dead, those whom we love and those whom we hurt. We are bonded together in Christ through Sacrament, prayer, and praise, and in everlasting life

we mean a new existence, in which we are united with all the people of God in the joy of fully knowing and loving God and one another in the communion of Saints. (Catechism).

Thanks be to God. *Amen.*