THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



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SAINTS

living life like it matters

by Drew Downs

The Episcopal Church has a generous sense of sainthood. We might say that it is less about miracles and adoration and more like collecting the lives who have the most Christlike impact on the lives around them. Which sometimes includes people we know personally, offering a life that any of us might hope to live up to; as a parent, friend, coach, teacher, or even public speaker, poet, artist, or naturalist. Someone whose love and skill makes real waves in the world.

One of the things about the saints we meet in the real world is that they never see themselves that way. And, to be honest, their inspiring of our own behavior may not bear a terribly striking resemblance, either. We sometimes seem to treat real people doing generous things as if they are perfect and we aren't up to the task. But let's not sell so short ourselves and neighbors. Sainthood has nothing to do with perfection and everything to do with living like goodness matters.

ORDINARY TIME

2026

WHAT'S GOING ON

"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today". -Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Halloween is Christian

An evening most associated with spooks and candy, with dressing up and scaring each other, Halloween is also treated by some parts of the church as outside the tradition and evil. Which is why you might be surprised to learn that it comes from inside the tradition and is anything but evil.

Halloween, or Hallowe'en, is a shortening of All Hallows' Eve: the evening before the day we used to call All Hallows' Day and now call All Saints' Day. That is the day we honor all of the saints who have come before us. The tradition, then, of beginning the celebration the night before (like Christmas Eve), of preparing ourselves for remembering and honoring the dead goes back centuries.

Even the delight, the fun of dressing up in spooky costumes, of haunting, of bringing a bit of holy fear for the fun of it is *traditional*. We do this because our tradition encourages us to lose our fear of death. We are called, instead, to see death as a turning point more than an end. That we might proceed from life to death and then into new life.

Our traditions are full of this same imagery, most notably baptism, which uses that same linguistic turn of phrase. We name the ending of one life and the beginning of a new one.

We might see Halloween, then, as a bit of mockery of the macabre and delight in the taboo so that we might better know what it is to live a life of grace and appreiate the love of those who came before us.

With love,
Drew+

ORDINARY TIME

2026

FOR SUNDAY

All Saints

November 1, 2026

Collect

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting.
Amen.

Reading *Matthew 5:1-12*

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

"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."

Reflection

The Beatitudes are a collection of several famously difficult blessings. Being blessed in poor spirit, mourning, and meekness? Yes, he said that right. And people of faith have struggled with this reality for centuries.

This collection of odd blessings is also the opening to a three chapter sermon full of difficult teachings which include turning the other cheek and giving in secret. I often tell people that if you don't find this hard to reckon with, keep reading. You just haven't gotten to the part that offends your modern sensibilities yet. I'm being glib, for sure. But let us not mistakes how much Jesus wants us to push past some of the cultural associations we have. And he starts with blessing.

Much of the way people talk about blessing today is to say "I'm blessed with good health," for example; the implication is Godly favor that shows up in our having something someone else does not. This means, essentially, that we think we are blessed for some reason in ways that other people just aren't. Which sounds less like favortism than it does incredible inconsistency.

True blessing comes later, perhaps. But inviting us to see our sadness here as blessing because it means we are more connected with God is a dramatic course-correction. One that Jesus seems intent on pointing us all toward. To divorce our present wealth from God's grace, public evaluation, and contending that we are even worthy of anything but the basic respect of our humanity. That blessing isn't earned, achieved, or reserved for people of means. It is, by contrast, for the people who have little or those who make peace in a world of violent oppression.

The momentum of the Beatitudes helps us see the movement in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, from sorrow to action to sacrifice. Because the question was never about whether any of us *is* good. It's about the good we do for one another without concern for the grade on our report card.