

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



November 6, 2022

## HALLOW

*consecrating the normal*

by Drew Downs

Hallow isn't a word we ever really use. We encounter it *sometimes* in church and that's about it.

To hallow is to regard something as holy. So notice that we "hallow" God's name in the Lord's Prayer, and on October 31, we remember All Hallow's Eve, or Hallowe'en.

How little we regard the profundity of the act; to *choose* to regard something or some-

one as holy, divine, or otherwise even "touched by God."

It is an incredible gift to consecrate! To name the gifts of bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ. To declare that humans who come before us to be washed of sin are blessed by God. And likewise, to name any human ever to be so remarkable that they may be called saint. Such a remarkable gift given to such a seemingly normal existence.

# ORDINARY TIME

*Autumn 2022*

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## 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!

### Sainthood

When our bishop comes to visit, she is fond of calling out to the congregation, "Good Morning, Saints!" From her mouth, it is a term of endearment and inspiration. As if to say we do not need to be elected after death to sainthood, for we already embody a saintliness now.

As people of faith, this aspiration, to *be saintly*, is certainly motivating for many of us. And granting us all that universal designation of "saint" helps us genuinely embody a familiarity with goodness we might otherwise say is "for other people."

Most of us, however, are prone to label as saint someone far more extraordinary. Someone whose work is remarkable and impact on the lives of others, significant. Favorite teachers, doctors, or social workers are frequently the saints who change our lives for the better.

We are also drawn to elevating loved ones who came before to sainthood. Mothers and Fathers, grandparents, siblings. Treating them like saints in death gives us a chance to hope they are honored by God.

These, of course, are all recent phenomena. The tradition is far more restricted. All Saints' Day is for those designated as saints. All Souls' Day is for everyone else. To be honest, I really don't mind that distinction. Because I don't need the most saintly person I've ever known, my Grandma, Joyce Faustman, to be numbered among the saints. For she was, after all a most remarkable disciple and apostle of Jesus. And the kind of person I aspire to be. And that, for me, is enough.

With love,  
Drew

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## FOR SUNDAY

*All Saints + All Souls Observed*

November 6, 2022

### **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**

From Luke 6:20-31

"Do to others as you would have them do to you."

### **Reflection**

This week we are celebrating the Feast of All the Saints. While the church's normal pattern is to celebrate saints individually throughout the year, we mark November 1st as the day we celebrate them all together. It's like this one day we're honoring the whole team, not just each player.

And what makes a saint has been defined and redefined frequently throughout history. All of the official apostles are saints. Many martyrs have been made saints. Similarly major figures in history and remarkable people of the recent past have been included.

Ultimately, how one becomes a saint is dependent on the living. We don't get to call ourselves saints. But others get to determine the circumstances for whether people regard us as such.

# ORDINARY TIME

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Our church is named St. Stephen's because someone over 180 years ago, decided that a saint named Stephen would be our patron. And so we, as a congregation, look to that particular saint for inspiration.

We also tend to look at the people around us for inspiration. We observe their behavior, their words, and particularly their devotion, caring, hope, and commitment. The people who inspire us to be better people, we often regard as reflecting a kind of personal sainthood.

The gospel for this feast day invites us into a fascinating challenge. It starts out with a deeply troubling style: "Blessed are you who are poor," which is hard to imagine that Jesus is really serious about that.

And yet, by the time he's done, summarizing with the teaching we know as the Golden Rule, we find the main idea intuitive and obvious.

It is almost like we think the secret to being a good person is complicated or hard. Like there's a grand mystery we need to unlock. Or it takes a radical transformation of our personal character to embody it. When Jesus really is saying "just do good."

The reality that the sainthood Jesus seems to be about is so *accessible* and not even in the least bit *special* is probably the biggest misconception of faith. Gurus on mountaintops aren't more special than the volunteers at the soup kitchen.

What **does** separate the saintly in their saintliness from you and I in our normal lives? It tends to be how willing they are to spend their time blessing other people. And how eager we are to be blessed in the here and now.

So a life of faith isn't that complicated. It isn't about playing for keeps. But instead, playing for the love of the game.

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