

All Saints Day

All Saints Day is a major feast day of the church and it is about you and me! Those who belong to Christ by their baptism, by rebirth through the power of the Spirit celebrate the heritage of “all saints.” Today, we remember those who lived the Christian life, past, present and future. We recall that Jesus Christ is our foundation, the cornerstone of our faith, and upon Him the apostles, martyrs, prophets and saints built a living church where you and I live out the same faith.

All Saints Day is one of seven principal or major feast days and is the only one permitted to be honored on the following Sunday. It is one of four days recommended for administration of Holy Baptism.

All Saints Day is the centerpiece of an Autumn trinity of days. These three days begin with the first day called All Hallows Eve, a Celtic holiday using the power of humor and ridicule to confront death. With All Saints Day we commemorate the victory of God's goodness overcoming darkness and evil embodied in the heroes of faith. This Hall of Fame has room for our names as well.

And on All Souls Day, now called The Faithful Departed, we honor all of us who strive to complete our journey in faith and transformation into Christ's likeness. This is why each year we remember those members who have died in Trinity church.

Death stares at us constantly and it is good for us to stare back at death and say, “O death, where is your sting! Where is your victory?” As Christians redeemed by Christ's death, we stare at death and laugh at death's door and ourselves for taking it too seriously. After all, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! And he raises us up with him!

Our scripture lessons this morning exclaim the celebration of all saints in their faith journey. This journey begins with baptism. Our candidate for baptism, Trista Clatone, begins this walk with God today. Baptism is that sign of her new birth, the sign of her adoption into a new family, and a life long journey called faith.

At baptism we are called children of God. And as children in faith we grow into the person of Jesus Christ -- a lifelong journey. As parents are bigger than their children, so the baptized become a part of something greater and bigger than they are. Because children are dependent on parents and their new spiritual family (you and I) we invite them to rejoice and bless God at all times. The psalmist writes, “Proclaim with me the greatness of the Lord; let us exalt His name forever” (Psalm 34:3).

Children depend on their parents and their church to teach them God's ways. The Bible stories of faith that are taught to them, and the understanding of what goes on in worship, are some of the ways we say to those beginning their faith journey, “Taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are they who trust in him!” (Psalm 34:8).

The fifth chapter of Matthew's gospel also known as “*Be-attitudes*” tells us about Christian character. Each “beatitude” is a stepping stone of faith. Each *attitude*, beginning with being “poor in spirit” and ending with rejoicing “when persecuted,” is a path that Jesus provides for the baptized to walk in. When we walk the way of these stepping stones, we are “blessed”, a word that means “happy.”

My Dad taught me that the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, which includes the “Be-attitudes,” contain everything we need as Christians to live by. As life gets more complex, this truth makes more sense to me. The two combine the best understanding of what it means to love God and love our neighbor.

In a few minutes, we will renew our vows to God when we recite the covenant of baptism found in this service. We are making these vows as a solemn promise just as we would make before a judge in civil court, or before the altar when a person makes vows of marriage. We are making marriage vows to God if you will. And we commit ourselves as the baptized to keep growing in the faith and to consider the sacrament of confirmation to help us mature as Christians.

We do that by actively participating in the apostles’ teachings, fellowship and the breaking of bread (a phrase for Holy Communion). We do that by resisting evil and repent when we fall into sin. We do that when we proclaim Jesus Christ. We do that when we serve Christ in all persons, and we commit ourselves when we work for justice and peace upholding the dignity of every race, ethnicity, and creed of every human being.

We can only be successful if we seek God’s help. And we live out our baptism only when we are together, of one mind, helping one another and being accountable to one another. That is what it means to be the family of God. Into this family we baptize Trista Lynn Clatone. Amen.