

On this All Saints Day I would like us to dedicate the Service to one of St. Andrew's particular saints, our loved fellow member Rowan Ebbels. Rowan passed away on Friday 30th October 2020 in the Freemasons Hospital. We hold him and his family in our prayers today.



Reflection for All Saints Day

1 November 2020

Psalm 34:22

**The Lord redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.**

On this All Saints Day I find myself looking back over the privileged years of ministry that have been my lot in life. There is a nice symmetry about my experiences. My first ministry was as assistant to the Reverend L. Farquhar Gunn where my role was to work with the youth. The church in question was St. Andrew's Gardiner. My retirement parish was another St. Andrew's, Box Hill. And now I find myself again filling a role of ministry preparing weekly services on-line for St. Andrew's Box hill. A swan song, surely!

Looking back I remember a ministry at St. Cuthbert's Lorne and how that was special because my family spent very happy summers there as teenagers and still see St Cuthbert's and Lorne as a special place for them, the more so now as the ashes of June's parents -their grandparents- and Coral, June's sister- their aunt- are in the Memorial Garden there. It is a sacred place that they visit quite often in their adult lives.

In the years that I was privileged to engage in study at Oxford the high point was actually living in St. Cross College as a Visiting Fellow, during Michaelmas Term, a time of very special memories for myself and for June as it enabled her to engage in wonderful music experiences with access to various chapels in Oxford and their pipe organs.

And now life has taken an unexpected turn towards saintly experience! The saints of old were wont to withdraw into isolation to focus their faith practice and commitment without distractions from the everyday world. I now find myself reflecting in isolation on the meaning and practice of faith and ministry in Covid isolation. And the insights and perspectives of faith continue to draw me on into the world of the sacred and remind me that the rampant secularism of modernity has been shaken to its very core as the previously

unshaken confidence in materialism and science to offer all the answers to life's meaning and purpose have lost their hold. The spirituality of the saints of old has reclaimed its place in the quest for ultimate meaning and purpose.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. 1 John 3:1-3

The birth of Jesus and the Sacrament of Communion - which we would today be celebrating together if circumstances were different- still has the power to draw us into Christ's life and the ultimate realisation of faith as the call of humankind into life in all its fulness.

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!

Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him! Psalm 34:8

We, the faithful people of God, are the saints of God. As Jesus affirmed to those who gathered to hear him on that Galilean hillside long ago

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

**"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.**

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

**"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** Matthew 5:3-10

Yes. This is the word for us, too, today's saints.

Affirmation and Assurance

Eternal God, one generation has praised your being to another, praising your works and involvement in our human history through the ages.

We have heard what our forebears have declared and so we would worship you now in our time and place for we are your faithful people and we praise your name.

Your compassion does not fail; but we acknowledge that we do not merit our worldly prosperity, nor your mercy and we confess our debts to society and to you. We have not been faithful to Jesus and those who strove to follow him before us. We have been unfaithful to the trust and calling committed to us by them, the saints of old. Forgive us, O God; make us worthier of the apostles, their followers in every age and the inheritance we have received from them to be the saints of our time and place. Grant that the good we have seen and felt in them may inspire and guide us. And with all these witnesses around us like a cloud, let us throw off every encumbrance, every sin to which we cling and run with resolution the race for which we are entered, our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish. O God, you have bound us all into one fellowship in Jesus the Christ among us; give us the grace to follow the faithful of all ages in a life of virtue and saintliness, that we may come at last to the unknown joys which you have prepared for those who love you.

Amen

Hymn 470

*Rejoice in God's saints, today and all days:
a world without saints forgets how to praise.
Their faith in acquiring the habit of prayer,
their depth of adoring, Lord, help us to share.*

*Some march with events to turn them God's way;
some need to withdraw the better to pray;
some carry the gospel through fire and through flood:
our world is their parish; their purpose is God.*

*Rejoice in those saints, unpraised and unknown,
who bear someone's cross, or shoulder their own;
they shame our complaining, our comforts, our cares:
what patience in caring, what courage, is theirs!*

*Rejoice in God's saints, today and all days:
a world without saints forgets how to praise.
In loving, in living, they prove it is true:
their way of self-giving, Lord, leads us to you.*

The First Saint



We give you thanks, O God for cutting through our self-deceptions and delusions.

We thank you that you connect with our reality and all reality in ways which constantly bring us into authentic living.

Jesus, the Christ , has walked our way and known our life.

We thank you for helping us to live creatively with one another in faith. In Christ's name. **Amen**

Hymn 468

*We are your people;
Spirit of grace,
you dare to make us
to all our neighbours,
Christ's living voice,
hands and face.*

*Joined in community,
treasured and fed,
may we discover
gifts in each other,
willing to lead and be led.*

*Rich in diversity,
help us to live
closer than neighbours,
open to strangers,
able to clash and forgive.*

*Glad of tradition,
help us to see
in all life's changing,
where you are leading,
where our best efforts should be.*

*Give, as we venture
justice and care
(peaceful, resisting,
waiting or risking)
wisdom to know
when and where.*

*Christ as we serve you
in different ways,
may all we're doing
show that you're living,
meeting your love
with our praise.*

Gospel Matthew 23:1-12

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so practice and observe whatever they tell you— but not what they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up

heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honour at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Reflection

Sainthood and piety, a dangerous mix indeed as the gospel reading reminds us. And this is especially the case when they are carefully manufactured for all to see. For saintliness is the gift of God to the faithful, not the right of those who see themselves as such and demand to be seen as such.

In my school chaplaincy days I was expected to project a different image than that of other members of staff. The most flattering moments came when others saw past the prescribed image and responded to me as a real person

I well remember how a former student rang me one day to ask me to conduct his marriage ceremony. It was a surprise because I had often had run-ins with him at school and so felt less than enthusiastic at the request even to the point that I actually felt duty bound to be up front and indicate my reservation. "I always thought you hated my guts, Jim", I said. Unfazed, he responded "You are right there", he said, "but I always felt that you were fair dinkum and someone I would trust if I really needed you. I am not much of a believer but I want my marriage to be real and you will make that so". Later he was to ring me to ask me to baptise his son and I said that this could only happen if he were attending a church and that church's minister agreed. The outcome was that the minister welcomed me to do the baptism and Jim went on to join that congregation and become one of its leaders. A humbling experience for me indeed, but also a reminder of the danger of misjudging people when, if we are truly to be faithful, then we must leave any judging of others to God.

Prayers for Ourselves and Others and Lord's Prayer

O God, our God, narrow the distance between who we are and who we hope to be. Enlarge our life so that it is earthed in authenticity and coloured bright with realism.

Give us faithfulness which stays the course without expecting any reward.

Give us humble hope when all around seems daunting or confusing. We pray especially for those who challenge us because they see things differently.

We ask that we may be inspired to give such as these more than that which they ask of us.

Walk with us, O Christ. Make us as loving as you are and never leave us alone, Holy Spirit. This we pray in faith and humility as we share in the prayer which Jesus himself taught us

***Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.***

Give us today our daily bread.

***Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.***

***Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.***

***For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever.***

Amen

Hymn 87

*You are before me, Lord, you are behind,
and over me you have spread out your hand;
such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too high to grasp, too great to understand.*

*Then where, Lord from your presence shall I go,
and from your Spirit where, Lord, shall I fly?
If I ascend to heaven you are there,
and still are with me if in hell I lie;*

*And if I take my flight into the dawn,
or if I dwell on ocean's farthest shore,
your mighty hand will rest upon me still,
and your right hand will guard me evermore.*

*Search me, O God search me and know my ways;
try me, O God, my mind and spirit try;
keep me from any path that gives you pain
and lead me in the everlasting way.*

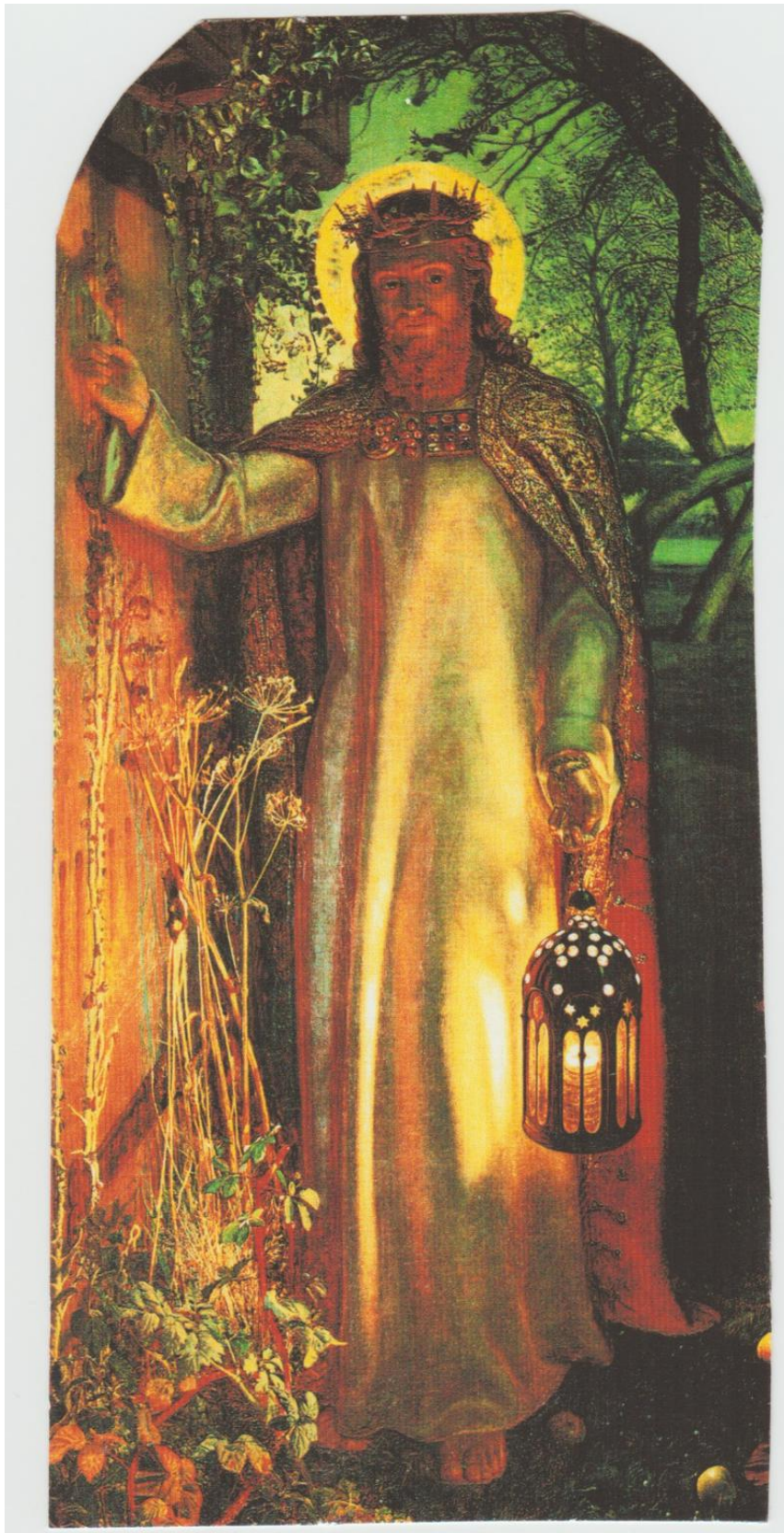
Benediction

May the whole creation ring with truth as it witnesses before its God
may we always know that the Christ is there with us
and may the Spirit guard us and guide us forever.

Amen

Reverend Graeme Kerr

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.*



CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD