

## All Saints Day 2021

Revelation 7.2-4, 9-14, 1 John 3.1-3, Matthew 5.1-12

It isn't in vogue so much these days to learn things off by heart but some still do and it can be most useful. I have of course been away and some key people in the life of this Parish and its history have died, some in more tragic, shocking or sudden circumstances than others and we will specifically pray for them on Tuesday at our All Souls Day mass. But All Saints Day comes first and to have the church year imprinted in our minds and hearts is helpful. Hope and direction follow. These things flow too from some of the things committed to our memory as Christians as they certainly were in the hearts and minds of those we will pray for on Tuesday. Today we will recite the apostles creed the third section is on the spirit and we declare "and I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic church, the communion of saints"

Here we are celebrating communion together and we say we believe in the communion of saints – what does it mean?

Three questions: Who are the saints? Where are the Saints? What are the Saints like?

First Who? There is a temptation to think of them as very different from us, folk who lived a long time ago who we might read of the bible and church history long since dead and gone. This is wrong. There were of course the saints we read about in the bible and church history and many have their special days in the church calendar, BUT there is no two speed Christianity with a higher level for special ones.

Saints (Hagios) is the original name for all Christian believers.

St.Paul in his letter to the Romans chapter 1: "Paul a servant of Jesus Christ ...to all God's beloved at Rome who are called to be saints."

Such manner of greeting is echoed at the beginning of many other letters such as 1 Cor 1, 2 Cor and Ephesians

When we think of Saints on All Saints day remember not just the most famous but lots of ordinary Christians too including us. So that sets the direction for answering Who.

So now lets us think about “where are the Saints?” Dead and buried, lying in a trunk somewhere or confined to a dusty book? Not a bit of it. The clue is given by the fact that all of us are called to be saints.

It follows that some of the saints are here. However its not just some. Every time we have this service this mass, eucharist, communion, we say therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven we say “Holy Holy Holy Lord”

Communion is a fancy word for sharing or doing something together and here where we share in Christ’s body and blood. We do it with all the saints. We share in the worship of heaven – the saints are around us now and not dead – even the ones known only to you and perhaps a few others. this sets our line of answering of the second question: where are the saints?

And so to our last: What are the saints like?

Here again our reflexes are often wrong. Such reflexes often include thoughts along the lines of heroic lives, famous and great people, to be looked up to and powerful.

But that isn’t what Jesus was and is like so not his followers either. NO just look at the list in our gospel the beatitudes from Matthew.

- Know need of God
- Gentle
- Merciful
- Make peace
- Pure hearts
- Hunger and thirst for right

Not great, distant or powerful heroes but people centred on God, single-mindedly seeking peace, mercy, gentleness and a commitment to right. All Saints day is a day to celebrate, a day to feel blessed, to be happy in – not blessed and happy by the saints but blessed and happy with the saints. When we commit it to memory this is what we mean when we say I believe in the communion of saints.

These answers give meaning and hope to loss and separation in this life and the means of grace and hope in eternal life.

