

***All Saints Day – November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024***  
***ALL GOD’S CHILDREN***

***Prayer***

Abba, thank you that you’ve gathered us together as your church, your people, your royal priesthood and brought us out of darkness into your light.

AMEN

***Why is Today Special?***

In looking around, you may ask “why are the paraments white?” or “why is there a funeral banner hanging up behind me?”

The answer, of course, is found inside the front cover of your bulletin – we are celebrating All Saints Day, which is technically on the first of November. The color is white because that’s the color of celebration, like Christmas and Easter. The funeral banner is because we are celebrating all of the saints who are members of the Church Triumphant, who already see Christ face-to-face.

And Christians have been celebrating this day for close to twelve hundred years! (since 844 A.D.) One of things that Luther didn’t change about the Catholic tradition was the recognition and celebration of the Saints of the Church. In the Catholic tradition, All Saints was originally

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a ‘catch-all’ day for those named saints that didn’t have their own day set aside. Later, they expanded it to ‘all the saints that have entered heaven.’ But because of the doctrine of purgatory, members of the church still on earth – the Church Militant - don’t know whether or not those who have died are in heaven, so the focus is primarily on the known saints, those recognized by Catholics through their official process, and All Souls Day was added on November 2<sup>nd</sup> to commemorate ALL those who had died in the faith.

Lutherans, on the other hand, know that because our salvation is based on the completed work of Christ, that when we die, we, like the thief on the cross, will be with Jesus in paradise that day. Because we are ALL saints, our focus today is on those from among us who have died, especially within the past year.

***Required?***

Luther posted his 95 theses on the church door on the day before All Saints Day because it was, and in fact still is, one of ten (10) Holy Days of Obligations, where deliberately not attending church without a legitimate reason is a mortal sin. According to Catholic teaching, the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where

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they suffer the punishments of hell, 'eternal fire'." A severe punishment for missing church! But it did mean that there would be lots of people in church the next day and they would see his postings as they entered the building.

For Luther, attending church is not according to the law – something that MUST be done, but according to the promise. Church is where God has promised that you will hear the good news of the Gospel – that your sins are forgiven, will receive the sacraments – the visible word, and will be served by God. That is why what we do on Sunday morning is called a “Divine Service.”

***Rejoice!***

Whether we are members of the church militant or the church triumphant, we are all members of the body of Christ. We have been called and elected through the hearing of the word, sealed with the Holy Spirit at our Baptism, children of our Heavenly Father, and fellow heirs with Christ of eternal life. As we heard in today’s epistle reading (1 John 3:1a) and on the cover of the bulletin:

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*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.*

As God's children, we are part of His family; and just like our natural families, the members of our church family can hurt us deeply. We fight, we hold grudges, we take advantage of each other, we're angry with each other, jealous of what others have, gossip behind each other's back, and, well I could go on, but you get the picture.

Even if we don't **LIKE** one another, we are called to **LOVE** one another and treat each other with respect, as a redeemed child of God, a brother or sister in Christ.

And God has a big family. Reflect for a moment on the fact that Christians, members of OUR family, have been celebrating this day for hundreds of years. Even today, there are millions of people across the globe who are doing the same thing that we are – remembering those saints who have been called to Glory during the past twelve months. Pretty awesome when you think about it that way!

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And we got here not because of anything we have done. While the reading from the Revelation of Saint John talks about those who have lost their lives – been martyred – because of their faith in Christ, the blood of the lamb, of Jesus bleeding out because of the beatings, the crown of thorns, and agony of crucifixion, has made us white as well. God see us not as the sinners we are, but as sainted members of the body of Christ that we are as well.

We, along with the church triumphant, should cry out with a loud voice (Rev 7:10):

*"Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

And God gives us that salvation as a gift, freely given to all who hear the word of the Lord. And how do we respond? With thanks and praise in both word and song; let's continue to do so this morning.

AMEN