

ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

1st November 2020: All Saints' Day

Hazel writes:

Today is All Saints' Day and we remember all those who have gone before us spreading the good news of Christ. Very poignantly Margaret Marsh has been added to that number this week - may she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Next Sunday, 8th November there will be a service of **Holy Communion** in St. Francis' at 8am and there will be non-eucharistic Remembrance Sunday services at 9.15 a.m. in St. Mary's and at 10.45 a.m. in St. Francis'. There will also be a service available **on-line** from 9am.

Also on Sunday 8th, there will be an **on-line retreat** from 6.30 - 8pm. An opportunity to take some time out, listen to some music and use a bible reading and reflection to guide your thoughts and prayers in the theme of Remembering. An invitation with the Zoom meeting details has been circulated with this pew sheet.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently the **Bromley Food Bank** need cold meat, custard, small bottles of squash, jelly, instant whip, long life fruit juice, sponge puddings, sweets, washing detergent (non-bio), shaving gel & razors, children's toothpaste & toothbrushes and Christmas food dated 2021 onwards. Currently there are large stocks of pasta, beans, soup, UHT milk, rice, cereals, tea, toilet rolls and tomatoes and these items are politely discouraged at the present time. Thank you for your continuing support.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – A video of the service has been posted to the websites for today. All other files have been combined and posted as a pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line.

Other worship and resources that you might want to listen to or look at on Sunday:

- The Church of England's national virtual service will be available on their website at www.churchofengland.org.
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
 - Sunday Worship at 8.10 am on Radio 4 with the Rev. Alex Wimberley, leader of the Corrymeeler Community leading a service for All Saints Day.
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from Merton College, Oxford.
 - On BBC 1: Sunday Morning Live at 10.30 a.m. and Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. from Dundee with Claire McCullum and performances from Barbara Dickson and Cliff Richard.

Each week our “**coffee/tea & chat**” on Thursday at 2.30 pm is an opportunity to share with others. It is just 40 minutes and you don't need to commit to joining each week. Please let Rowena (rowena.griff19@btinternet.com /020 8777 6112) know if you would like the log-in details.

The **St Mary's Christmas Market** is happening on-line this year. There will be full details included in the pew sheet next week, but you can make a monetary donation now in lieu of all those items that you would normally have been saving up to donate during the year, either by bank transfer to St Mary's PCC (sort code 60-23-22, account number 35265450 - put 'market' as your reference) or through JustGiving at <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/stmarychristmasmarket>

Advent wreaths are a symbol of Advent. They are made of a circle of evergreen laid flat to represent eternal life. Four red candles are arranged around the circle and one candle in the centre. Advent is a journey through the Christmas story. Christians use this wreath to celebrate advent, lighting one candle each Sunday till Christmas day when the last central candle is lit representing Christ the light of the world. This year the first candle will be lit on November 29th. It is particularly significant this year as we may not be able to see our families and makes a nice table decoration for Christmas. If anyone would like to place an order, please contact Merri Womack on 8777 8772. The cost of an advent wreath is £8.

Brian Griffiths has created a catalogue of woodwork he has produced using his scroll saw and his lathe. All the craft is being sold in aid of St Mary's and St Francis' Churches. The catalogue was attached to last week's email to St Francis' and St Mary's congregations. Details of how to buy one of the 52 items listed and illustrated are included in the catalogue. Please contact Brian by telephone on 0208 777 6112 or by email at brian.griff19@btinternet.com to reserve a piece.

Southwark Cathedral said a fond farewell recently to a feline friend Doorkins Magnificat, their chief mouser, who has died after being a regular sight around the sanctuary for over 12 years, although she had been reluctant to leave the building after the terrorist attack on London Bridge. She had been living with the verger for the past year and a memorial service was held on October 28th.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl bbolton@ntlworld.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com.

Collect

God of holiness, your glory is proclaimed in every age: as we rejoice in the faith of your saints, inspire us to follow their example with boldness and joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

First reading**1 John 3:1 -3**

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.² Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.³ And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Gospel:**Matthew 5: 1-12**

5 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³ 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.⁴ 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.⁵ 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.⁶ 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.⁷ 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.⁸ 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.⁹ 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.¹⁰ 'Blessed are those who are

persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.¹¹ 'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Post Communion Prayer

God, the source of all holiness and giver of all good things: may we who have shared at this table as strangers and pilgrims here on earth be welcomed with all your saints to the heavenly feast on the day of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

TALK: SAINTS ALIVE! - Brian Griffiths

If wonder what comes to our minds when we think of Saints? If I asked a football fan, they may well say 'Southampton' – The Saints – they were founded as St. Mary's Church of England Young Men's Association and play at St Mary's Stadium. If I asked a Rugby Union fan they may well say 'Northampton' – they were originally named Northampton St. James (Saints) by their founder Rev Samuel Wigg, a local clergyman and curate of St. James' Church. If I asked a Rugby League fan they would say 'St Helen's' for obvious reasons. Here in church we might well name some of the well-known saints who have 'Saint's Days' – for example last Wednesday we celebrated the Feast of St Simon and St Jude. We might well mention St Paul, St Peter, St Andrew, St Francis or St Mary.

So what is a saint – what makes someone a saint? The best definition I can find is this:

“Saints are those who by their life and work make it clear and plain that God lives.”

We think of saints as those set apart by God and called to a life of holiness, or those who dedicate their lives to caring for others in the service of Christ. We tend to think of saints as those who have gone before us and given us an example to follow. However, it's important to realize that saints are living as well. Believe it or not, we are saints.

Our Gospel reading today is Matthew's version of the Beatitudes and it is very appropriate reading for All Saints' Day. In it we are told who are the blessed ones. The Beatitudes show us what the Kingdom of Heaven is really like. They show us how to live a saintly life. They show us that we too can be living saints – 'Saints Alive' if you like. These spiritual lessons Jesus teaches are the road we as saints travel through our spiritual journeys. The Beatitudes join us together; they are what make us one body. They teach us how to follow the way of Christ, and how we are to deal with others. The Beatitudes are a way of life common to all the saints. In the original language, the word saint is not a noun, it's an adjective. It describes someone who was "set apart" and, as Christians, we too are set apart by God to be transformed and to transform the world around us.

At the beginning of the service today we heard that wonderful hymn always sung on All Saints' Day – 'For All The Saints'. The tune that hymn is sung to is called '**Sine Nomine**' and that means '**Without a name**'. This tune was composed by a musician whose normal practice was not to put his own name to the hymn tunes he composed. He did

later become famous as a composer, and you may well find his name above the music in modern hymn books. His name was Ralph Vaughan Williams.

‘Without a Name’ – I think that just about sums up All Saints’ Day. All those Christians – Saints – who live Holy lives – mirroring the Beatitudes. Those whose names are not famous – maybe not known to us – but saints none the less. They are those who don’t seek to grab and get all the time. People with feelings – who have passions and have not become hard-hearted. Those who are gentle in their dealings with other people. Those who seek justice for the marginalised. Those who are kind and forgiving. Those who strive for peace in a world of conflict. People who reflect God’s image in them. Living saints may not be perfect people but, although they may not realise it, they are holy people. We may not know their names, but I guess that all of us have seen people like these. How many times have we said, or heard someone say, ‘You’re a real saint to me’. All Saints’ Day is our opportunity to celebrate with the saints of old and to recognise that we too are living saints.

Back last year on the Feast of St Francis I was preaching about remembering who we are – we are holy people. We have been set apart by God to show the world what the kingdom of God is like. We are holy because God is holy. In Leviticus we read:

“You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine.”

God out of his great love calls us children of God. That is what John is writing about in his first letter that we heard today:

“See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.”

So, as Holy People and as Children of God, we are Living Saints. Paul was quite sure of this. In fact often he started off his letters by addressing his readers as saints. For example, his letter to the Romans begins: **“To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.”** And his letter to the Ephesians begins: **“To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.”**

So we needn’t think of saints as people who have led particularly holy lives, died and gone to heaven. Saints are living as well. Each and every one of us here today is called to be a saint. We are called to be people who by our lives and works make it clear and plain that God lives. And, as people called to be saints, we can share in that same joy

and hope and assurance that the saints in heaven have experienced. Saints seem to come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and from lots of different backgrounds and more often than not they are ordinary people like us doing extraordinary things.

I want to tell you about someone who is about to be made a saint by the church. He was beatified a few weeks ago in the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi. His name is Carlo Acutis. Carlo lived a rather ordinary life. Born in London to Italian parents, he quickly developed an interest in social media outlets such as YouTube and Facebook. His enthusiasm for both technology and his faith led him to create a website dedicated to the locations of Eucharistic miracles. He also inspired faith in others, starting with his non-practicing Catholic mother, and went to Mass every day. Sadly, he died in 2006 aged only 15 from leukaemia. At his funeral, the church was full of poor people. Everyone else wondered what they were doing there. Well, Carlo used to help them in secret. The family knew it because his mum would go with him, since he was quite young. He would give them sleeping bags and food that he paid for out of his own money, which is why they wanted to attend the funeral. Carlo's life has inspired hundreds of social media pages as well as books and documentaries. Someone said of him:

“What makes it so extraordinary is that he was ordinary. We’re telling people the guy you should be following is a guy very similar to you. There’s really nothing extraordinary about his life. Everything that he did you can do, honestly. And that’s what gives us all a lot of hope.”

That’s hope for all of us. We too are Holy people – we too are Living Saints. We can transform the world as we are transformed by the love of God into the people he created us to be. A few years ago, the West Wickham choir sang a musical by Roger Jones called ‘Saints Alive’. In that musical the opening song was called ‘Saints Alive’ and there is a line that goes like this:

‘We call him Lord, He came into this dark lost word. He gave us light, in Him we shine – We’re Saints Alive.’

Holiness and sainthood is about being involved – it’s about going where it is most difficult, and also about looking and exploring – looking at Jesus and exploring the human world around us. It isn’t about ticking boxes or knowing all the answers. It’s about a relationship with God into which he calls every single one of us, by name, and about a relationship with all God’s people, living and departed, all those known to us

and all those 'sine nomine' – without a name - which we call the Communion of Saints. We are called to be Saints Alive.

Prayer Pointers

Thank God for the example of the saints who have gone before us and are now the 'great cloud of witnesses' encouraging us in our journey of faith. We especially thank God for all those living saints unknown to us – without a name – but known to you – all those who live a saintly life of service to others in meekness and humility. May we follow their example.

Jesus turned expectations upside down by welcoming into the Kingdom of Heaven all those on the margins of society – the poor, the disabled, the persecuted and the oppressed. Pray that we too may have a special care for all in poverty, those who are looked down upon and those who feel excluded. Pray that our two churches of St Mary and St Francis may include and welcome all of them.

Jesus called peacemakers and those who hunger and thirst for justice 'Children of God'. Pray for all who seek peace in the world especially those who seek justice for the poor. Pray for the people of the USA in this week of the Presidential Election on Tuesday. Lead them into faithful administration, lead them into wise laws, lead them into ways of justice, peace and compassion. Grant them leadership that will make the world more safe, the vulnerable more secure, and the earth more sustainable.

For all those who working in our health service as the number of Covid cases in hospital increases day by day – for all doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals. Pray that they may receive the resources they require to meet the demands that each day brings. Pray that they may be kept safe and healthy while at work, and bless their families and loved ones at home.

Jesus said that those who mourn will be comforted. Pray for all who are bereaved at this most difficult time and for all those who support them – especially our local funeral directors. Pray and give thanks for all those whom we have loved and yet see no longer especially those whose names will be read out in our Memorial Service today.

Let nothing disturb us, Let nothing frighten us.

All things pass away: God never changes. Patience obtains all things.

Those who have God lack nothing: God alone suffices. *(Prayer of St Teresa of Avila)*