

## ALL SAINTS 2020

### **Introduction**

Today, on All Saints day, we come to remember.... In our worship we will remember and give thanks for the lives of those whom we have lost over the past year, the “saints”, the loved ones in our church and among our family and friends who are now resting from their labours but are surrounding us like a cloud of witnesses. But we also come to remember what has happened to us and around us this year, especially as we live through the ongoing pandemic. The good and the bad, the challenges and the joys, what we have lost and what we have found....And as we remember we may glimpse God’s presence and Christ coming to us in countless disguises through people who one way or another have strengthened us, comforted us, healed us and have given us hope that “all is well and all manner of things will be well.”

### **Call to Worship**

In all our weakness and strength, with our youthful spirits and aging bodies, **we come to be your people, O God.**

Strong in faith or filled with questions, singing our praise and whispering our prayers, **we come to be your people, O God.**

Filled with saintly determination yet mindful of our human limitations, **we come to be your people, O God.**

Made strong in your endless love for us, we know ourselves to be yours and **we come to be your people, O God.**

### **Hymn**

*I heard the voice of Jesus say*

### **Prayer**

Spirit of Jesus, Spirit of God, Christ among us  
When we say “Come” you already sit beside us  
When we say “Lead us” you already go before us  
When we say “Guide us” you already call us forward  
Yet we say “Come and lead us, come and guide us” that we may know  
and praise your presence and promise, here today and all days. **Amen.**

**Scripture Reading** Matthew 5: 1-12

### **Reflection**

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn, blessed are the meek, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the peacemakers and the persecuted.* I am sure that if you were compiling a list of blessed people, you would hesitate to include these on your list. We may say that we would like to be merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, but the weakness, sadness, persecution and powerlessness of the blessed ones is not something we aspire to. Rather, we try to avoid it and shield ourselves from it.

However, it may well be that Jesus is not telling us that we have to be meek and poor in spirit but rather he is saying something about God. God who does not *demand* people to be weak and vulnerable but who *is* with the mournful, humble and persecuted. Even, and especially, God is with those who may wonder if they have been forgotten by everyone, even the Divine. When we find ourselves among their number, we too need to be reminded that God is surely there with us, even when we are struggling, feeling alone and hopeless.

On this Sunday in the church year, we remember those who have died, in our church, in our family, among our friends and neighbours. Perhaps we are counted among the blessed who are mourning. Also those we remember today may be the people we know and love who are ill or struggling, and this year, or at least the last eight months, have certainly been very challenging, very tough for many, near and far away, and for some among us too. But the good news is that God is present in our remembering and is present with those whom we remember.

And we do not only remember people, we also remember the ups and downs we have lived through and still experience. We remember what we have lost, perhaps the freedom to move around or travel, or celebrations with family and friends, or a job or voluntary activity, or an important medical appointment, or hope, joy, confidence.....Whether a major loss or what may only seem trivial in the larger picture of the havoc caused by the corona pandemic, it is something we mourn or are sad about. But we also remember what we have “found” over the last few months as we may have discovered blessedness in the kindness of friends and strangers, in the care and dedication of health workers and carers, in new ways of doing things and possibilities for positive change, or in a hunger and thirst for justice, etc. God was and is there too, for he is present in the brokenness of the world and equally in the

beauty of the world and its people. Surely, God is present in our mourning and in our gladness and rejoicing! Sharing the stories of the highs and lows of our lives, of the people who surround us in the cloud of witnesses, of past and present, we recognize God's presence and Christ meeting us in our lives, as Jim Burklo expresses in a rewriting of the hymn "For all the saints" (which we will sing later). *For all the ways we help each other grow/As we share stories, moments high and low/The face of Christ among us now will show. We sing alleluia, alleluia. For all the people that our church holds dear/For every precious memory made here/For those we serve in love, both far and near. We sing alleluia, alleluia. For times when silence is the truest word/Or when the prophet's thund'ring voice is heard/For tears and laughter that our church has stirred. We sing alleluia, alleluia. In all our struggles, God will lead us through/And give us strength to do what we must do/To gain the peace and justice we pursue. We sing alleluia, alleluia.*

**Act of Remembrance                      We Remember Them**

*In the rising of the sun and in its going down, **we remember them.***

*In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter.....*

*In the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring.....*

*In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer.....*

*In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn.....*

*In the beginning of the year and when it ends.....*

*When we are weary and in need of strength.....*

*When we are lost and sick at heart.....*

*When we have joys we yearn to share.....*

*So long as we live, they too shall live.....*

*For they are now a part of us, **as we remember them.***

**Prayers & Lord's Prayer**

Living God, giver of life, we pray with thanksgiving for all who have lived and loved and served you and are now resting from their labours. We thank you for all the saints, remembered and forgotten, and especially for those who were dear to us. We bless you for their life and love and take heart that for them "all is well and all manner of things will be well"

Now in prayer we reach out to the world, longing for peace, for justice, for loving kindness and for release from a deadly pandemic.....

Today we pray for those worst hit by the financial divides caused by the pandemic, especially the young adults and BME people. We pray for financial security for those hit by income cuts and those struggling to make ends meet. We pray for children suffering from food poverty in the UK. We pray for those advocating for free school meal reforms and for food security for every child. We pray for all the regions and countries that are or have gone in lockdown again. We pray that the measures taken will be effective to curb the spread of the virus, and that all the necessary support is given to businesses and people who are struggling or have to go in debt.

As we hear about tragic loss of life as refugees are making desperate journeys to reach our shores, we pray for their protection and for determination of campaigners in their engagement with the government. We pray for all who are ill or need treatment, and especially those who again have appointments cancelled because of insufficient capacity in the NHS during the pandemic. We also pray for those suffering from 'Long Covid'. We pray for more support for patients and continuing research. And as election day in the US draws near, we pray that all people can freely and fairly cast their votes, faithfully and with respect, for a government that will seek peace and justice, to counter division and inequality.

And we pray in silence as we lift up to God what is in our hearts and minds .....And we pray together....OUR FATHER

### **Dedication of Offering**

Take our gifts, our witness, our lives, O God, that we may proclaim the good news of your peace and justice in the world. Amen.

### **Celebration of Communion**

We celebrate communion in church and bring those who have gone before us as well as all that we have experienced over the past year with us as we approach the table for all the saints of God.

**Hymn**            *For all the saints, who from their labours rest*

### **Blessing**

Go in peace, to love and serve the world  
And may God surprise you on the way, Christ Jesus walk beside you  
and the Spirit lift you up, now and always. Amen.