

Reflection for Sunday 7 November

By Lauryn Awbrey

Last Sunday, on 31st October, we had several celebrations in church. In the 9:30 service, we celebrated All Saints. At 11:30, there was a baptism – the newest saint at St John’s! And then at 3 pm we commemorated All Souls, when we remember in particular those whom we love but who have already died. (And meanwhile, in the background, it was also Halloween, so costumed children and decorated pumpkins were wafting around Harpenden!) This Sunday, 7th November, is a little ‘in between’ week of ‘Ordinary time’, with Remembrance to follow and Christ the King after that.

But my mind is still on the saints whom we celebrate and those we love who have already died. In the New Testament, the word “saints” describes the entire community of followers of The Way of Jesus. From the very early church, followers whose faith and lives were particularly inspiring began to be described as “Saints” with a capital S. On **All Saints’ Day** we remember with gratitude those Saints whose lives and actions we look to as models for our own.

Bishop Stephen Charleston mused, “Can you hear them as they pass by? Can you feel them standing just beside you? They are the ones who have gone before, saints who have touched our lives. They are the family to which we belong, ancient and never ending. Our ancestors watch over us, their constant vigil keeping. Their wisdom surrounds us. Their healing a river through channels of time. Can you hear them? They speak of a love they have seen, love beyond imagining, love that holds us safe, until we rise to meet them.”*

Hebrews 12:1: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders, and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

All Souls’ Day, November 2, extends from All Saints’ Day as a time to remember and honour deceased family and friends. As The Book of Common Prayer teaches, “The communion of saints is the whole family of God, the living and the dead, those whom we love and those whom we hurt, bound together in Christ by sacrament, prayer, and praise.”

These days are wrapped in Holy Mystery, connecting all people across time and space. This is the time of year the veil between this world and the next feels very thin. On these holy days, we are invited to peek through that veil and remember we are all connected so that not even death can separate us. Whose name do you speak today? Who do you remember in your life? Feel them near.

God of all, we pray for all those whom we love but see no longer. May they enter Zion with singing. May light perpetual shine upon them. May their souls, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

* <https://buildfaith.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/The-Feasts-of-All-Saints-and-Souls.2020.pdf>