

Dear Friends,

Here we are reaching yet another month! We are often astounded by how fast time seems to fly nowadays but this year has just disappeared. It can be hard when we realise that it is time we can't get back, but we can look forward to easier times, we hope, and how we will truly appreciate then what we might, perhaps, have taken for granted before. I hope you are all keeping well and I look forward to meeting face to face again as we are able.

God bless, *Margaret*

Call to Worship: We come to worship you, not alone but as part of the worldwide family of the Church, united with our brothers and sisters in Christ across countries and continents, centuries and generations, for we are all bound together by the same God and the same faith.

We will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, for ever;

We will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

The words to 'For all the saints who from their labours rest' by William Walsham How [1823-1867]

Singing the Faith 745

1 For all the saints who from their labours rest, who thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blessed: Alleluia, alleluia!

2 Thou wast their rock, their fortress and their might; thou, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;
Thou in the darkness still their one true light: Alleluia, alleluia!

3 O may thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold, fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win, with them, the victor's crown of gold. Alleluia, alleluia!

4 O blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
Yet all are one in thee, for all are thine. Alleluia, alleluia!

5 And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long, steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are thine again, and arms are strong. Alleluia, alleluia!

6 The golden evening brightens in the west; soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest;
Sweet is the calm of paradise the blest: Alleluia, alleluia!

7 But lo, there breaks a yet more glorious day: the saints triumphant rise in bright array;
The King of Glory passes on his way! Alleluia, alleluia!

8 From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast, through the gates of pearl streams in the
countless host,
Singing to Father, Son and Holy Ghost;
Alleluia, alleluia!

Prayers: Sovereign God, Lord of history, we open our hearts to you now in reverent praise.

We long to praise you for the way you have worked across the centuries – the way you have moved in so many lives to make known your purpose, offer your guidance and express your love. Great is your faithfulness.

We praise you for the way you have spoken throughout history – to your people, Israel – to your Church – to countless generations of believers – and to us.

We praise you for the great cloud of witnesses that surround us – we thank you for our fellowship in this place and for your Church across the world – indeed, we thank you for all those who have kept the faith and run the race before us.

We praise you and thank you for the example we have been given to follow – examples from the disciples and Apostles – from the early Church and its life beyond – and by the saints of old.

Lord, forgive the feebleness of our response.

Forgive us that sometimes we forget all that you have done, losing sight of the breadth of your purpose and the extent of your love.

Forgive us when we fail to honour the heritage in which we stand – when our love is weak, our trust hesitant and our commitment poor.

Forgive us for the times we walk half-heartedly – when we are casual in our discipleship or careless in our devotion, our hearts concerned with things which are trivial and unimportant when we should be focus single-mindedly on the work of your kingdom.

Forgive us for those times when we just haven't acted or spoken as we should, Lord – and help us to start again to truly follow your way.

Sovereign God, as we remind ourselves of your activity throughout history and as we reflect on your work through your people, speak now to our lives so that our love may grow, our faith be deepened and our resolve to serve you be strengthened.

May we live always to your praise and glory through the precious name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen

All Saints: All Saints' Tide is traditionally one of the most important seasons in the Christian year, lasting like Pentecost for eight days. Its significance in times past can be seen in the number of churches dedicated to All Saints. Sadly, the Christian celebration of All Saints has been largely squeezed out by the secular festivities of Hallowe'en with its masks, pumpkins and witches on broomsticks which has obvious pagan origins – though nowadays it functions mostly as a good excuse for a party. In some places churches have put on events to provide an alternative to the increasing interest in witchcraft and the occult.

However, while this may provide some motivation, the primary objective of worshipping God at All Saints' Tide is not to express opposition to the forces of evil [important though it may be to do so in other contexts]. Rather, it provides the occasion for Christians to remind themselves of their hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ, and to give thanks for God's people who have gone before, in every age and place.

Throughout our earthly pilgrimage we are inspired and challenged from time to time by a Christian friend or leader whose example has deepened our faith or changed the direction of our life. Those of us who may now be more mature in our faith might also bear in mind those who take their example from us, often without our realising it. A responsibility which is a positive one – and to be reflected in a thankful and joyous way.

A reading from Revelation 7: 9-12. Taken from ERV. Headed 'The Great Crowd'.

Then I looked, and there was a large crowd of people. There were so many people that no-one could count them all. They were from every nation, tribe, race of people and every language of the earth. They were

standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They all wore white robes and had palm branches in their hands. They shouted loudly, 'Victory belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.' The elders and the four living beings were there. All the angels were standing around them and the throne. The angels bowed down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God. They said, 'Amen! Praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honour, power and strength belong to our God forever and ever. Amen!'

Comment: This passage is part of a wonderful description of worship in heaven, which gives a remarkable picture of the generosity of Salvation offered by God in Christ. In the first place, the number of people around the throne is countless – both an assurance that there is no limit on the numbers who are eligible for salvation, and a reassurance that those who feel alone in their devotion to Christ are far from being so. [The vision was given to John who at this time was imprisoned on an island for his faith – he could have felt quite alone but he had this vision of countless numbers of others who also believed.]

Secondly, these people are from all over the world, an indication that salvation is not limited to a few specially favoured races but is universal.

Thirdly, they are all in heaven around the very throne of God, showing that salvation is to enable everyone [not just a small minority] to be brought into the presence of God, where they will be enthralled in worship as God cares for them with loving tenderness.

Those who are around the throne in worship have been saved by their endurance and by the blood of the Lamb. One is no good without the other.

A Reading from Hebrews 12: 1 & 3 – again from ERV. Headed: 'We also should follow Jesus' example'

We have all these great people around us as examples. Their lives tell us what faith means. So we, too, should run the race that is before us and never quit. We should remove from our lives anything that would slow us down and the sin that so often makes us fall.

We must never stop looking to Jesus. He is the leader of our faith, and he is the one who makes our faith complete. He suffered death on a cross as if it were nothing because of the joy he could see waiting for him. And now he is sitting at the right side of God's throne. Think about Jesus. He patiently endured the angry insults that sinful people were shouting at him. Think about him so that you won't get discouraged and stop trying.

A Poem by Peter Dainty:

There is a famous hostel where pilgrims reach their goal,
and standing there to greet them with towel and with bowl
is Christ the mighty traveller, the saviour of their race,
who pioneered their pathway and prepared for them a place.

He kneels and pours the water on those weary pilgrims' feet,
to cleanse the dust of ages and to cool the angry heat
of the bruises and the bleeding, and to wash away the grime
that they've picked up on their journey through the world of space and time.

So he welcomes them to heaven, as he welcomed them on earth,
with the gift of living water, holy sign of their new birth.
And he brings them to the table where the heavenly feast is spread
and he pours out wine for gladness – and for love he breaks the bread.

They no longer need the miracle of body and of blood,
for their Host is ever present and their souls' sufficient food.

And they do not talk of trial or betrayal or arrest;
there's no mention of denial, even by the meanest guest.

For their sins are all forgiven, none goes out into the night,
as they make a full communion in the Lord's eternal light.
So he feeds them in the heavens, as he fed them on the earth,
with the holy bread of mercy and the wine of holy mirth.

The words of 'Ye holy angels bright' written by Richard Baxter [1615-1691]; John Hampden Gurney [1802-1862] and Robert Chope [1830-1928]. Singing the Faith 69

1 Ye holy angels bright, who wait at God's right hand,
or through the realms of light fly at your Lord's command,
assist our song, or else the theme
too high doth seem for mortal tongue.

2 Ye blessed souls at rest, who ran this earthly race,
and now, from sin released, behold the Saviour's face,
his praises sound, as in his light
with sweet delight ye do abound.

3 Ye saints who toil below, adore your heavenly King,
and onward as ye go some joyful anthem sing;
take what he gives, and praise him still
through good and ill who ever lives.

4 My soul, bear thou thy part, triumph in God above,
and with a well-tuned heart sing thou the songs of love.
Let all thy days till life shall end
whate'er he send be filled with praise.

Prayers: Blessed are you, Lord our God, for in you and your love we share with the saints in glory. For all the saints who have gone before us and revealed your love – for those who in their weakness have revealed your power, and for those who challenge us by their deeds, we give you thanks and praise. We give thanks for all who have built up your Church, Lord, through their holiness, their witness, and their faith in you. And we give thanks for those who have inspired us and challenged our way of life. Lord, give us the power to be the people you want us to be and to do what you want us to do. Bless all who minister to us and teach us your holy word.

As we give thanks for our faith and the world around us, we remember all who are being persecuted for their faith. We ask your blessing upon all who are risking their lives to maintain peace and order in our world and we ask you to bless and guide all who stand up for the freedom and well-being of the poor and oppressed.

We give thanks for all who have revealed your love to us through their own love. We ask your blessing upon our homes and our loved ones. We quietly remember all who are quietly sacrificing their lives and their freedom in the care they are giving to others. We ask you to bless all who are caring for the sick and those who are handicapped or infirm.

We give thanks for all who have risked pain or death to forward your kingdom. We ask your blessing upon all who are struggling at this time with crisis of some kind – all who are oppressed or in danger. We pray

for who are ill at home or in hospital. We remember all who are suffering because of their faith – the scorned, the persecuted and the ignored.

We rejoice in the communion of saints that we are one in you and your love. We remember those whose service on earth is done and who now rejoice with you in glory. We ask your blessing on all who have been an inspiration to us and have enriched our lives by their love, but are now departed from us.

Lord, may we be numbered with your saints in that glory which is everlasting. In your holy name we pray.
Amen.

A new way of looking at the Beatitudes – written by H.J.Richards [The Beatitudes for Children copyright McCrimmons and used with permission through The Bumper Book of Resources]

The Beatitudes, as these lines are commonly known, are often misunderstood. It is not as if 'come the Revolution', the tables will be turned and the unfortunates of this world will lord it over their oppressors. On the contrary, God's favourites will remain poor, unimportant, heartbroken, gentle and hungry. But it is they who are the really fortunate ones, because nothing stands between them and God. In fact, they are just like Jesus who identified himself with the marginalised, and in whom they were therefore able to see the face of God himself. How much luckier can you get?

'How lucky you are if you are poor! God will make you rich!

How lucky you are if you're not very important! God will make you great!

How lucky you are if your heart has been broken! It will mend even stronger!

How lucky you are if you are starving! You'll get all you want and more!

How lucky you are if you are tender with others! You know how tender God really is!

How lucky you are if you are straight with people! You see God very clearly indeed!

How lucky you are if you make friends with people! You've brought a bit of heaven to earth!

How lucky you are if people hate you for standing up for what is right!

A new world can be built on people like you!'

The words of 'For all the saints who showed your love' written by John L Bell [b. 1949] and Graham Maule [b.1958] Singing the Faith 746 [usually sung to tune: O Waly Waly]

1 For all the saints who showed your love in how they lived and where they moved,
for mindful women, caring men, accept our gratitude again.

2 For all the saints who loved your name, whose faith increased the Saviour's fame,
who sang your songs and shared your word, accept our gratitude, good Lord.

3 For all the saints who named your will, and saw your kingdom coming still,
Through selfless protest, prayer and praise, accept the gratitude we raise.

4 Bless all whose will or name or love reflects the grace of heaven above.
Though unacclaimed by earthly powers, your life through theirs has hallowed ours.

Closing Prayer

The secret of the strength shown by the saints gone before us and by the saints on earth now is down to one thing, pure and simple – it is knowing and loving Jesus deep in their hearts.

*Speak, Lord, through those who have run the race before us – through all who have kept the faith to their journey's end. Speak through those we especially remember today, examples of courage and commitment beyond the norm. Encourage and inspire us through their love for you – their willingness to take up their cross and so help us, in turn, to follow you more faithfully, love you more deeply and honour you more completely. **Amen***