



'Worship at home' Sunday November 5th 2023



We come to worship a God of love,
who we find in the holy spaces and the ordinary places of our
lives, as we reflect on living holy and authentic lives of faith.

Opening:

Give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good:

The Lord's steadfast love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord sing their praises:

For the Lord has gathered us together in love.

When we wander, hungry and thirsty,

The Lord keeps us from trouble.

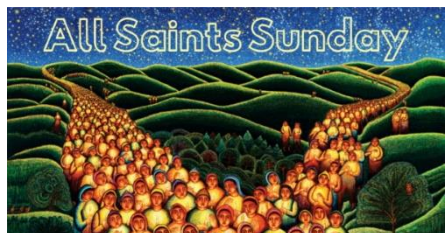
The Lord brings us home, and the Lord's promises are fulfilled.

The Lord's steadfast love endures forever.

adapted from Psalm 107: selected verses

During this past week it was **All Saint's Day** in the church's liturgical calendar. This is a day to celebrate the saints of our faith: people throughout the ages who have lived faithful lives. Also known as **All Hallow's Day**, this Western Christian celebration falls between **Halloween** (All Hallow's Eve) and **All Soul's Day**. The three days together are referred to as **All Hallowtide**, a time for honouring the saints and praying for the souls of those who have died. The use of the term *saint* has a range of understandings in different church traditions. New Testament use of *saint* seems to refer to those who are set apart for God's special purposes, as well as being used to refer to Christians collectively. We might use it for someone who lives their life in faithful relationship with God or who lives out their faith in practical ways to help others.

**What characteristics do you
associate with the term
'saint'?**





You might identify a saint as someone who lives a faithful life of integrity and authenticity, who seeks to follow God's ways and be used in service by God. In this Scripture reading, Jesus challenges the behaviour of the Pharisees, who preach the Law but do not live with integrity and humility.

Matthew 23:1-12

*A Warning Against Hypocrisy
Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. "Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honour at banquets and the*

most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others.

"But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

New International Version

Many parents have at some stage, perhaps half jokingly, told their children, "do as I say, not as I do." However, most of us also know the truth in another saying we may have been taught: "actions speak louder than words." In this Scripture, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for not practising what they preach, criticising their behaviour and the legalism which had come to dominate their religious faith. They were not living with integrity and humility. 2

- A life of faith is shown by humility, purity of heart, and love for God and neighbour.
- A life of faith is one of integrity and authenticity, where we 'practise what we preach'.
- A life of faith follows Christ, seeking to become more like him in our words, attitudes and actions.
- A life of faith allows God's light to shine through us.

As saints, God's people together, this is how we are called to live. Saints can be ordinary people, seeking to live faithful and holy lives with love and grace.

There is a story about a boy who went with his family to Europe. He was fascinated by the stained-glass windows in the cathedrals. At one particularly beautiful church there was a bank of stained-glass windows that ran the entire length of the nave; those windows depicted many great Christians throughout the centuries. Among them were martyrs, bishops, priests and nuns, but also artists, poets and politicians. The boy's mother explained the windows to him, saying that the people pictured there were saints. The little boy quickly responded, "Oh, I get it. Saints are people that the sun shines through."



Sainte Chappelle

"Saints are indeed people who let the light shine in. Through the glass it is not just any light passes through. The light is changed and reflected. It takes on colour and shape as it passes through the window into the church where the faithful gather. They are radiant, splendid and as their colourful glare illumines the church they offer us a gateway to the Divine where our world is connected to the heavenly realm where people of all colour and shape live in harmony."

Reverend Robin Ruder-Celiz, Canadian Anglican Priest

Reflect on the people who have influenced your faith over the years. How have their lives shown the following?

humility purity of heart integrity and authenticity

love for God and neighbour following Christ's ways

seeking to become more Christ-like

In what ways have they shone God's light and love?

How might others see God's light and love shining through you?

Prayer: Loving and gracious God, throughout the ages you have called men and women into relationship with you; you have guided and sustained and protected your people; you have loved and forgiven them, and your Holy Spirit has worked in and through them to minister to others.



Saints of God

We give thanks for the saints who have gone before us; for the many people who have lived, and died, in faith, and who have helped to make the world what it is today; for those who have stood up for truth, against injustice, and who have advocated for others; for those who have shown love and kindness and compassion; for those who have worked for peace in our world. We give thanks for those people who have been significant in our own lives of faith; for the people who have believed in us, and helped us to grow: parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, ministers, teachers and Youth leaders.

We give thanks for the opportunities we have had throughout our lives to allow your light and love to shine through us, and commit ourselves again to following your ways with integrity and humility; in Christ we pray, Amen.

Closing: May the God of the patriarchs, prophets and apostles, the God of saints of old and saints today, the God of our faith and life, go with you in power and strength as you serve and witness to God's love. And may almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. Amen.