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Saint John's Episcopal Church
Sandwich, Massachusetts 02563

November 7, 2010
All Saints Sunday

Today's sermon is about all the Saints.

O God, we rejoice in the blessed communion of all thy saints where thou giveth us also to have part. We remember before thee all who have departed this life in thy faith and love, and especially those most dear to us. We thank thee for our present fellowship with them, for our common hope and for the promise of future joy. Let the cloud of witnesses, the enumerable company of those who have gone before and entered into rest, be to us an example of godly life; and even now may we be refreshed with their joy that so with patience we may run the race that yet remains before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and obtain an entrance into the everlasting kingdom and glorious assembly of the saints, and with them ever worship and adore thy glorious name, world without end, Amen

We try to celebrate All Saints Day the Sunday after the celebration of All Saints Day. As you remember All Saints Day was this past Monday, and we did not have a service on that day, but today we remember all the saints. I want you to look around you. This room has many saints. There are old saints, tiny saints, crabby saints and saintly saints. In the church, there are black and brown and pink and peach saints. There are saints who stumble and fall, struggling with shame and regret and confusion, and there are saints who are always confident and happy. There are saints brave enough for anything, and saints who are afraid to crawl out of bed each day. There are saints who feel lost, and saints who lead us home. There are saints who can sing and saints who are tone deaf, saints who forgive, and saints who hold grudges. Right here in this church there are saints who fight each day the temptation to drink or to give in to despair, and saints for whom life just seems to flow with ease.

This church is crowded with saints. Take a moment to look around you and feast your eyes on this group of people, the saints of God, each and everyone made glorious and beautiful by the love that God has for each of them. Now close your eyes and listen with your heart and see if you can hear that

crucified love singing down on you from above making us new -- each and everyone made glorious and beautiful by the love of God. And with your eyes still closed, look around for all the saints of this group who have gone before us -- husbands and wives, mothers and grandmas and grandpas and dear friends and even some of our children. Can you see them just hovering above our heads, all their sorrows shed, their faces lit with laughter, and can you hear them beckon us on? Listen with your heart. "Children of God," they are saying, "claim that love which is yours; let it bring you joy, let it make you brave. Dare to believe that standing or falling you are all saints. Treasure the name -- Saint -- treasure it."

Now in your mind's eye, look up just a bit higher and see all those saints with a capital S: Saints Matthew and John and Paul and Peter and Teresa and Constance and Absalon and Martin. They are all here too. Can you see them? All those saints who touched the divine making them shine like candle flames lighting our path, lifting our hearts in hope. This room is jam-packed full with saints. Every tiny corner is filled with the glory of children of God. It's always that way, we just don't notice.

But today we start to take notice of the Communion of Saints filling our hearts and our lives. In this past year we lost Allen Swain, Eleanor Little, Betty Soule and Charles Hibbard. In our columbarium now we have the remains of our saints: Bob Jones, Ed Stupack and Joan Newman.

The famous contemplate of Monk Thomas Merton had a great definition of the church. "Here comes everybody," he said. "Here comes everybody." I'm not sure exactly what he meant by that. I'm sure at least he meant that the church makes room for everybody -- gays and straights, old and young, black and white, rich and poor. But maybe too he meant to say that only with everybody will God's heart finally be full and God's joy be complete.

Brothers and sisters, each of you is part of that "everybody" in the church. Each of you is called to do the one thing in this world and for this world that only you can do. Each one of you is gifted for that work. You are ordained in your baptism. You became priests in your baptism. You are the priest. Those who are ordained priests in the church are only a reminder of your priesthood. You are the priest. You are the saints. What makes us all saints is not that we are good or right or brave or strong. What makes us saints quite simply is that God wants it so because of God's love and desire

for each of us. What makes us saints is sharing the life of faith, and faith is nothing more or less than saying yes to that love. Saints and children of God say yes to it, come home to it, and go into the world dressed and adorned in it, filled and afire with it, so you may bring home to it too.

Amen

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