

Signs of a Saint
Revelation 21:1-6 Matthew 5:1-12
November 1, 2009

Their names are Lorraine, Melvin, Peter, Maxine, Helen, Stuart, Jean, Graydon, Rosemary, Bruce among others. These people were my first mentors in the faith – they were Sunday School teachers and superintendents, Explorer and CGIT leaders, choir leaders. They were the cornerstones of my first church community.

His name is Gord. A minister during my teenage and young adult years. He guided, prompted and challenged me as I moved toward ministry. He patiently waited until the time was right and he asked the question: ‘Connie, is there any reason why you wouldn’t pursue ministry’? Good question and I didn’t have an answer! He had my number!

Her name was Kathy – a dear soul friend for many years. She had a way of being attentive to friendship that was unique to her. She was fun to be with, deeply committed to causes that she believed in, quietly engaged in the needs of her community and lived out her faith in word and deed.

There have been others, of course, who have influenced my life:

- camp pals
- benevolent congregations

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- ministry colleagues
- George, my parents and my family
- Circles of caring friends
- and many, many others

But, the one on-going presence for all my 51 years who has shaped and molded and informed my life is Marion, my maternal grandmother. She was widowed when my mother was 11 and my aunt was 9 – left to raise them on her own, she actively worked on the farm, sewed, did whatever she needed to do to make ends meet. She loved and supported her daughters at a time when it was difficult to do. She enabled all of her grandchildren to further their education both through her financial support and her encouragement. She was wise, patient, engaging, loving, strong, somewhat eclectic and deeply committed to her faith. I was one of those lucky kids that grew up with their grandparents close by. Her place was like a second home for us. I don't think that using the expression 'beacon' to describe her is too strong a word, although she was shy away from that statement if she were here.

These are some of the 'saints' in my life who have helped me on my faith journey with God. You will never read about them in a church history book. There will never be any days of commemoration in the church calendar set aside to honour

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and remember them. No, they are just ordinary folks like you and me but because of their presence in my life, have touched it in ways that changed me – have shaped the kind of minister I am, the kind of friend I strive to be, the kind of partner and family member that is loving and attentive, the kind of colleague and mentor I hope to be for others. Each have had and some continue to have a profound effect on who I am today. Somehow, by their example, witness and faithfulness, they have made an indelible mark on me.

So, what about you? Who are the ones you remember? Who are the 'saints' in your life who encouraged you in faith and in everyday living?

That's what All Saints Sunday is about after all – setting aside a Sunday each year to remember and to thank God for all those dear ones whose faces and names are recorded in our hearts and in our memories. Some of them are long gone; others are more recently departed whom we remember today. Some of them are still alive and play a part in our lives. But, the one thing that these saints perhaps have in common is their ability to bring out the best in us, their faithfulness and how the grace, love, compassion and generosity of God shines through them and flows from them. Like the stained glass windows in our church tell the stories of

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saints of times past, what makes these who we have named a saint is that light shines through them, as well.

But, on this All Saints Sunday, as we remember the special people in our lives, the inward question that might come to mind for us is: ‘will anyone remember me?’ Will I be remembered with fondness, gratitude and thanksgiving?

Think about this for a minute. We have all encountered lots and lots of people in our lives – relatives, friends, colleagues, teachers, neighbours – lots of people. Why is it that some of them stand out in our memories, while others are just there.

I had a demeaning English teacher in high school who outwardly and overtly questioned my presence in his advanced level 5 grade 13 class and wondered out loud about my outlandish choice to apply for university. I remember him, but not with respect or gratitude.

What makes the difference in how we remember someone?

Perhaps, we can receive guidance on this in our Gospel reading for today where Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with the familiar Beatitudes. Who are the blessed ones? Who are the ones that Jesus holds up as the example

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and model for us. What are those characteristics we see in Jesus' own life?

Those who are modest in spirit, who feel the weight of the world's suffering, who are humble, who hunger after justice, who show mercy and compassion, who shun bitterness and anger, who work for peace and reconciliation, who stand up for what is right.

As I reflect back on the saints in my life, they were people who lived out these important words. And, I suspect that the people that you are remembering today on this All Saints Sunday did too at least to some degree.

St. Francis of Assisi once said: 'Preach the gospel at all times – if necessary, use words. Put another way: words are just words, until they are lived out. These important people for us preached the word with their actions and their lives.

And, so, we get back to the questions: 'Will I be remembered?' and 'How will I be remembered?'

Doesn't it seem to make sense that if we want to be remembered in the same way that we remember with gratitude and thanksgiving the saints in our lives, then we

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must reflect on the place of love, kindness, compassion, generosity in the living of each day? This is our call. This is God's great yearning for us - to be all that we are intended to be. There we discover true joy, true fulfillment. When we live into this, we will be remembered, with love and gratitude.

Let love, compassion, mercy, peace, humility, generosity and graciousness guide your life. Take a look in the mirror and see if you are becoming the person you want to be – a window through which light can shine – the loved and beloved child of God you surely are.

Words of the Dalai Lama ring out for me: 'Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.'

As we gather in worship and around this table today, let us do so in a spirit of love for one another and let us be reminded that we are joined in a mystical communion with our loved ones and saints, past and present. In and through God deep love for each of us.

May it be so.

Amen.

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References:

Dave Tietz – St. Paul Lutheran Church, Taylor, Texas

Go Deep – Spiritual Practices for Youth – Doris Kizinna

Matthew 5

5 When Jesus* saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely* on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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Saint:

1. one officially recognized especially through canonization as preeminent for holiness

2 a : one of the spirits of the departed in heaven b : [ANGEL](#) 1a

3 a : one of God's chosen and usually Christian people b *capitalized* : a member of any of various Christian bodies; *specifically* : [LATTER-](#)

[DAY SAINT](#)

4 : one eminent for piety or virtue

5 : an illustrious predecessor