

## ***The Church's prayer for this Sunday***

Almighty God,  
you have knit together your elect  
in one communion and fellowship  
in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord:  
grant us grace so to follow your blessed saints  
in all virtuous and godly living  
that we may come to those inexpressible joys  
that you have prepared for those who truly love you;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

## **Bible readings and reflection for Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020**

### **Psalm 34:1-10**

I will extol the LORD at all times;  
his praise will always be on my lips.  
<sup>2</sup> I will glory in the LORD;  
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.  
<sup>3</sup> Glorify the LORD with me;  
let us exalt his name together.  
<sup>4</sup> I sought the LORD, and he answered me;  
he delivered me from all my fears.  
<sup>5</sup> Those who look to him are radiant;  
their faces are never covered with shame.  
<sup>6</sup> This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;  
he saved him out of all his troubles.  
<sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him,  
and he delivers them.  
<sup>8</sup> Taste and see that the LORD is good;  
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.  
<sup>9</sup> Fear the LORD, you his holy people,  
for those who fear him lack nothing.  
<sup>10</sup> The lions may grow weak and hungry,  
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.**

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### **Today's reading: 1 John 3:1-3**

<sup>1</sup>See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup>Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he<sup>\*</sup> is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. <sup>3</sup>And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

**For the word of the Lord, thanks be to God.**

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### **Today's reading from the gospels: Matthew 5: 1-12**

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

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

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

‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

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

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

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

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

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

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

**For the word of the Lord, thanks be to God.**

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## **A reflection from Revd Charles Fraser, lead minister in The Eversdens and interim lead minister in Harlton.**

Every year on the first of November we celebrate the Feast of All Saints. In our worship, we consciously join ourselves to the saints in heaven. We put into practice our faith in the communion of saints.

We might ask why do we honour all of the saints? In the early days of the Church, martyrs were remembered on the anniversary of their death. The first three centuries were times of persecution for Christians; many were martyred in horrible ways. The number of free days in the calendar soon began to run out. Finally, in the fourth century, one day in the year was set aside to commemorate all the saints who couldn't otherwise fit into the calendar. The most important and well-known saints continued to have a day set aside for their remembrance. While the less well known became part of the "communion of saints" that was remembered on All Saints Day.

There is another aspect to the celebration, for this day is a reminder to us that we are all called to be saints of God. All Saints-tide is a reminder to us of our own call to holiness. Ronald Knox, a Roman Catholic theologian, commented that "the Church in Heaven is all saints, but the Church on earth is all sorts". There are all sorts of us in the Church of God. All sorts of denominations. All sorts of theologies. All sorts of liturgies. All sorts of personalities. And we are all, all sorts of us, called to be the saints of God. We, the people of God are all sorts of saints.

That is probably quite hard for us to accept. We do not like to think of ourselves as being holy. It seems so otherworldly. Besides, are we not supposed to be humble? Like Nicodemus in the Gospel of John it might be tough to be seen in public as a follower of Christ; to nail our colours in public to his mast. But to go on and accept, or even recognise our call to be a saint; Well, that's a tall order isn't it? It might call us to change the way we live our lives in profound ways. We might have to acknowledge our sense of community, our sense of belonging to the body of Christ. We might have to make a commitment. We might have to truly open ourselves to God.

That is the very reason it is so important to celebrate the lives of the saints of God. Thoughts about the saints arouse within us a longing to be with God and to share in their company. Awareness of the saints hopefully awakens within us the urge to live in the company of all the saints who have heard the call to absolute love and responded with enthusiastic faith. When we remember the saints in heaven, it enthuses us to practice the virtues that we see in their lives and to be filled with the life of Jesus just as they were. Recalling the saints reminds us of our ultimate destiny and our need for Christian living here on earth.

So today we remember all those Christians who have lived before us. We celebrate that we are surrounded by a community of believers, those from every age who have served Christ and who have trodden the path of faith. We celebrate that we are like them in a process of becoming the person God means us to be.

C.S. Lewis wrote, "How little people know who think that holiness is dull. When one meets the real thing, it is irresistible." So how do we come to the place where it becomes irresistible to us and we accept our call to holiness?

It begins, I suspect, with discovering that even the greatest of saints was a real person. Learning about their lives should convince us that they were real people with real struggles. It should

convince us of their humanity and their human frailties too. Mother Teresa of Calcutta was often referred to as a living saint. She was once asked how it felt to be called "a living saint."

"Possibly, people see Jesus in me," she replied. "But we can see Jesus in each other. Holiness is meant for all people."

She was a saintly person and is rightly now venerated as such. Her work amongst the poorest of the poor shows a dedication to the gospel that is so rarely seen. But that puts sanctity, holiness, out of reach of most of us. Perhaps we need to begin with what it does not mean. It does not mean that we are perfect; she certainly was not. Our Christian life is a journey towards holiness. We, like the saints of old, endure strife—through grief, loss, unemployment, sickness, pain, suffering and yet we struggle to keep the faith. We struggle against the indifference of the world. When we are in the midst of pain and suffering, it is easy to feel as if we are alone. But the wonder of it all is that we aren't. We are part of that great community, the communion of the saints. Those who have given loyal service to God. Those who have faithfully witnessed to the Gospel truth. Pope Francis reminds us that: "The Saints were not superhuman. They were people who loved God in their hearts, and who shared this joy with others."

Through baptism we became children of God. It is a humbling yet awe inspiring thought to know that when we worship God and especially in the Eucharist, we are joining our worship with every Christian in heaven and on earth from the beginning of time until the present day. May we know that no matter what happens we are Saints, and may we live as the saints we are called to be.

Amen.