

St. Paul's Church Healdsburg
The Reverend Sally Hanes Hubbell
All Saints' Sunday, November 2, 2014

Texts: Revelation 7:9-17 Psalm 34:1-10, 22 1 John 3:1-3 Matthew 5:1-12

After Easter, All Saints' Day is the oldest Christian holiday. It came into being in the fourth century, among the first generation of Christians to be free of persecution by the Roman Empire, as a way for them to hang onto the significance of what it means to profess Christianity in the face of death. It was a way to remember the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the life of the Church and to relive that sacrifice in a new time, to make it alive in the present. Some of you may remember last year I told the story of how the pageantry of Halloween has its roots in these ancient Christians reliving the passion of the martyrs as they processed through town on their way into church.

Now of course on All Saints' Day, Dia de Todos Santos, we remember not only the martyrs of the Church, but all of the mothers and fathers in faith who have fostered us in the family of God. Today we remember all of the saints who have come before us within this family into which we have, by God's grace, been adopted.

This family is called "the communion of saints," and it entails quite literally all of us. It entails all of us, because in the mystery and fullness of God's time the communion of saints includes not only those who have come before us, but also we who are alive now, and also all of the future saint: those children of the Church who we are and will be fostering, those known and yet unknown to us who will be the heirs of St. Paul's Church and of THE Church – those who will be saying our names at the altar on All Saints' Sundays after we ourselves are of blessed memory. You see the communion of saints happens in God's time, which is far more encompassing than our sense of time. And it happens on God's terms, which are far more expansive than any terms we humans can come up with.

Today we are also celebrating Dia de los Muertos. The people remembered on the altar before us may not be "saints" in the sense of having led extraordinary lives in service to God and to the Church – but they are certainly part the communion of saints.

Think of the hymn, "In Christ there is no east or west, in Him no north or south." More than any other day in the Christian year, on All Saints' Day, we are asked to see the Church as that sacred space of Christ in which there is no division along geographic, political, cultural, or social boundaries – because if we don't get it that we're all in this together, we won't understand what it means to be part of this family at all.

The communion of saints is a miracle in which we are blessed to participate now – right now, today, and forever into all eternity. This moment in time is nothing short of the fullness of God's time, and we exist in it along with Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the twelve, and all of God's children who have come after them until kingdom come. And according to Jesus, that's now. Kingdom come is now.

That's where we are right now, today, on this All Saints' Sunday. When asked about the resurrection of the Dead, Jesus reminds us that ours is the God not of the

dead, but of the living. (Matt. 12:27) Like Lazarus and everyone whom we remember today at the altar, let yourself be alive in Christ, along with all the Saints.

The Light has become one with the lightless and illumined it.
The Strongest has become one with the weakest and empowered it.
The Vastness has become one with the smallest and glorified it.
The Blissful has become one with the agonized and loved it.
The Adored has become one with the cursed and loved it.
The Wholeness has become one with the fragmented and united it.
The Life has become one with the death and resurrected it.
Was this the inner cry of Mary as she gave birth to Jesus?
Was this the heart's cry of that other Mary when Jesus spoke her name in the garden
of the graves?
Easter, Christmas, all of our days of life and life beyond death are gathered up into
the One everlasting day that is in God's heart.

By Flora Slosson Wuellner