

Sermon for All Saints Sunday
November 2, 2025
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Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church
Los Alamos, New Mexico

Ecclesiasticus 44:1-10,13-14
Psalm 149
Revelation 7:2-4,9-17
Matthew 5:1-12

I just want to thank Mother Mary Ann for choosing the Prayerbook lectionary for this All Saints Sunday. Ecclesiasticus is such a rich source of wisdom literature that the Revised Common Lectionary leaves hidden in the Apocrypha.

I remember the first time I was a lay reader for All Saints.
It sent shivers down my spine when I read that first verse:
“Let us now praise famous men.”
Of course, it has never been just about men.
All Saints is about men and women.
My first thought has always been that the saints are those who rise above us. Like Mother Teresa. She worked among the absolute least of us, and never gave up her faith.
She and so many others offer us such extreme examples of goodness that we recognize them as saints with a capital “S”.

Those are the saints we mark with red or white on the church calendar.
The one’s John refers to in the Revelation reading today:
“These are they who have come out of the great ordeal;
they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.”

We tend to forget that these people are human, just like the rest of us.
And that is precisely why I find our first reading so relevant because it is not just the famous, but those who lived their lives as godly women and men no matter their names. These are people whose lives had an impact, and they do live on.
They live on in the collective memory of all of us.
They are our lineage. We are their legacy.
We all contribute to the fabric of our world.
What we do affects everyone else in the world.
We change the texture of life by our relationships with each other, like throwing a stone into a pond and watching the ripples.
So our lives touch the lives of others who touch the lives of others who touch the lives of others.
Saints change the world, it is said, and in reading these words we reflect on who we are as saints of God, whether we’re famous or not, because we are all saints – those who have gone before, those who are with us now, and those who have yet to be born.
Saints. All Saints.

I can see some of your faces. You don't think of yourselves as saints:
"maybe my mother or my grandmother, but not me." I beg to differ.
If we look to our lineage, we can count those who came before as saints.
We can see many of their faces in the photographs you see in the Ofrenda. Some we remember, some we forget, but they are with us.
We are what they have left behind. They are our lineage to the past.
We are their legacy to the future.

Being their legacy carries a responsibility, a debt, if you will,
a debt that they paid forward so our lives would extend their faith
into succeeding generations of believers.
We stand here today because of where they stood,
just as our children here and those yet unborn will look to us as their lineage.
They will stand as our legacy to the faith of tomorrow.

Our celebration of the saints is rooted in the Eucharist,
instituted by Jesus at that last meal in the upper room.
Each week we call on those who came before to join us in this eternal moment when we celebrate the Holy Eucharist.

Just before we say/sing the Sanctus, Mother Mary Ann will say:

And therefore we praise you, joining with the heavenly
chorus, with prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and with all
those in every generation who have looked to you in hope,
to proclaim with them your glory, in their unending hymn:

This is the vision reflected in the reading from Revelation:
"I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count,
from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages,
standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white,
with palm branches in their hands."

I'd like you to imagine, back behind the altar, beyond the organ screen:
stadium seating stretching high into the heavens.
There at the back are the angels and archangels and the hosts of heaven.
In front of them are all those who have gone before.
And they are all watching, participating in the Eucharist
to see Jesus breaking the bread and blessing the wine here at this very altar.
We sit here with the disciples who sat there at the last meal,
just as those in our future will sit with us in the seats of heaven
participating in what they did, what we do, and what they will do,
all united in the glory of God.

They are all with us as we witness the celebration of our lineage.
Those men and women, the saints we celebrate today, were, like us,
"first and foremost redeemed sinners in whom
the risen Christ's words to St. Paul come to fulfillment,
"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Perfect in weakness... that's a good way of putting it.
We can see that in the Gospel today:
Blessed are the poor in spirit...Those who mourn...The meek...
Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness...The merciful...
The pure in heart...The peacemakers...
Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake...
and...Blessed are you...Sitting here – the Legacy of all who came before.

Jesus is not reciting a litany of how to succeed in his world.
The meek, the grieved, the poor, the merciful, the pure in heart,
the peacemakers, were not held in high esteem
in the world that Jesus walked through.
I'd question whether they're held in high esteem today.
But these are the attributes that Jesus blesses.

What is blessed is a way of living that is counter to the prevailing culture.
Jesus is giving a job description to those who would follow him.
He walks away from the crowds, goes up on the mountain,
and teaches his disciples, those closest to him.
He tells them that this is the way they are to live.
It's kind of a Christian Job Description.
So, as Christians, these are words we must live by.
Please take out your bulletin and turn to the Gospel.
I'm going to read the beginning of each of Jesus' admonitions,
and I'd like you to finish the sentences – the underlined portions.

"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.

And the people say: Amen.