

Because today is All Saints Day, this evening is when Hallowe'en begins.

I have two areas of focus. Secondly, I shall spend a few minutes suggesting that God's Saints are ordinary people – including you and me – ordinary people who live with an extraordinary hope.

But, before that, let me share a few thoughts about Hallowe'en.

As you may know, the word Hallowe'en means 'the eve of all Hallows', and All Hallows is the Christian feast of All Saints. On All Saints Day we think particularly of our departed loved ones who now enjoy the active delight of Heaven. Today is an opportunity to once more thank God for them. It is, of course, their love for which we give thanks, particularly that their love kindled a light for us; or to speak more

exactly, reflected for us and to us, the ever-burning light of Christ; and we also thank God that they have gone before us into the light of Heaven.

This season of remembrance is a time when we feel that the veil between time and eternity is thin and we can sense that greater and wider communion of saints, living and departed, to which we belong.

This poem, by Malcolm Guite, remembers the light that shines in darkness, who first kindled it, and how we can all reflect it.

All Saints

Though Satan breaks our dark glass into
shards

Each shard still shines with Christ's
reflected light,
It glances from the eyes, kindles the words
Of all his unknown saints. The dark is
bright

With quiet lives and steady lights
undimmed,

The witness of the ones we shunned and
shamed.

Plain in our sight and far beyond our
seeing

He weaves them with us in the web of
being

They stand beside us even as we grieve,
The lone and left behind whom no one
claimed,

Unnumbered multitudes, he lifts above
The shadow of the gibbet and the grave,

To triumph where all saints are known
and named;

The gathered glories of His wounded love.

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The wounded love of Jesus is also reflected in Matthew's version of the Beatitudes – our Gospel reading. It gives us a vision, not just of the bliss of Heaven, but of our wounded society transformed, here and now, by the living the Beatitudes. That vision is both exciting and challenging. It is a vision of the Church modelling how God has created all humanity community to be.

In Bournemouth's YMCA they have summarised it this way:

This is where those who are broken and alone discover healing and belonging.

This is where those who have lost so much receive comfort and hope.

This is where those who know emptiness discover fullness of joy.

This is where those who are ashamed of their mistakes receive mercy and forgiveness.

This is where those who don't know their value find dignity and purpose.

This is where those who carry the pain of troubles discover freedom and peace.

And the challenge for us is *how to get to there from here*.

The answer implicit in the Beatitudes is through a 'community of hope'. Each person cannot do all that is commended by the Beatitudes by themselves.

Rather, each person needs others who are also committed to living with these hopes and beliefs, not as doable for each one, individually, but doable by the community. In this way, some – the living Saints of God - will keep the hope alive for the rest.

Let me leave you with one last example of a Beatitude for All Saints:

Blessed are those who base their lives in the upside-down reality of the Resurrection.

Really?! On one level, it's a pretty silly thing to do. Why? Because we have no direct experience of resurrection. Our experience is of the opposite. So why do this silly thing and base our lives in what we know little about? What sort of craziness is this?

I'll tell you: It is the craziness of the victory of love. It is the craziness of persisting with hope and joy, when most of the solid evidence says, 'No way.'

It will always be paradoxical – so don't be surprised that our weak bodies, and souls and minds can contain and share so much joy and pain, and also live with such devastating horror, and yet still – beyond all that is reasonable - retain and shout about a very *unreasonable*, yet totally irresistible, hope.

This is the hope shown to us in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

To whom be ascribed, as is most justly due, all might, majesty, dominion and power, with the Saints in glory, and All

Souls in bliss; henceforth, and forever.
Amen.