

Sine nomine... The Hallows, Named and Claimed.... by Love



Well, yesterday and last night the ghosts and ghouls were abroad and in the great traditions handed down from our Pagan forebears we acknowledged that. But in the light of Christ, we also met it.

In our ancient pagan heritage the forces of evil were allowed one night to maraud, and it was wise to lock up your children and chickens. And yet, when the pagans met Christ, they kept and transformed that night. They changed the name of the old Pagan Festival of *Samhain* – into *All Hallows' Eve*. The eve of *All Hallows' Day*. The night before the Hallows. The Holy Ones of God. The Saints.

When the clock struck midnight, they said, at that hour the

saints would walk abroad and all evil would be overcome, and all the ghouls would cower away for cover for another year. Because in the face of that light they could not stand.

Yes, it is true that there are forces of evil in our world. Things that oppress, and depress, that frighten and twist the beauty of Creation out of shape. And it is wise to acknowledge that.

But, in the faith, we can stare that darkness in the face. We can stare down evil and darkness and things that try to corrupt and misshape, and we stare them down in the name of Light and Love that will not take no for an answer. We stare them down in the Light and Love that has looked full on evil, raided the forces of hell, and walks triumphant in a resurrection morning. And we stare them down in the Light and Love that at the end of all time will gather all to itself and will have the final judgement and the final redemption

And so... the feast of fear, became a feast of laughter. We can dress up as witches and ghouls and demons and laugh in the face of darkness, because we have a resurrection faith and we stand in the light of the victory won for us by Jesus our Lord.

'Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation' says the prophet Isaiah, for light will win and there will be fullness and feasting,

I love the images in that reading – everyone coming together to feast together – family and food, it is at the heart of our faith - the goodness of God – the rich food full of goodness, the mature wines, strained clear, the defeat of death and darkness, the wiping away of tears.

Sharing together around the table. Everyone. With no one left behind.

Most of the canonised saints are clergy or members of religious communities, which might lead us to believe there is a kind of hierarchy here, but it's just the stories get written down and kept of those within whom the love of God burned particularly strong and who shone particularly brightly with the inner light of who they were meant to be, or those who were well-known because they were in prominent positions.

It is of course wonderfully true that the saints were a motley bunch anyway – with stories of great grace, and also many human fragilities. We do not honour the saints because they were perfect and impossibly righteous, but because in some way we can see that they allowed the light and grace of God to touch their lives, and they shared that light within the community in which they were placed to serve, and continue to share it with us in their protection and their prayers.

I find that of great comfort, the motley humanity of the saints, and their lack of perfection. It implies that *all* of *all saints* and *all souls*... might be an *all* that might include us.... Even the bits of ourselves we know to be ... a little tattered and ragged

As Christians we were all created full of dazzling light and love, beautiful in God's eyes, with a unique being whose story is essential to the whole pattern of creation. The people that we were born and meant to be can get buried under the shadow and stresses of everyday life, but we can be confident in love that casts out all fear.

The hymn *For all the Saints* has a tune called *sine nomine* which is Latin for *without a name*. All Saints celebrates those whose story of living the love of God is not held in the great halls of fame, but known only to God.

With God there are no unknown or forgotten saints.

Within us all is a saint who God named and claimed from before the very beginning. The saint we are each called to become. That is the mystery of our faith. That we are born saints, and yet in a way also spend our lives becoming them. We have a Name – we take the name of Christ. We Christians are the Hallows – born to be channels of his light and love. Today's feast calls us to celebrate that. To see and celebrate it in each other... and to trust and celebrate it in ourselves. And to continue to uncover that Saint within, to speak their names tenderly, speaking kindly to ourselves from under all the bumps and bruises and confusions of human life. To trust in the Light that names us. To let it shine.

I bet you know some Saints.

Have a think... I'm sure some great names will come to mind, some of the Huge Dazzling Lights of the world for whom we give thanks. But what about those alongside us? The company of the faithful with whom we share the journey in the everyday? Because that's what changes the world too. All those small acts of service, of care for others, the local sphere, the small acts of kindness, justice, truth, hope, endurance, patience... all the gifts of the Spirit we see in those around us?

For sometimes – often – it is the smile, the hug, the piece of cake and cup of tea, the word of belief, the shoulder to cry on, the voice that speaks out – often it is those that banish the forces of darkness; of isolation, grief and fear. And of course, the hearts of prayer. Those who pray and pray year after year, faithfully and from wells of compassion and hope. These are also part of the Hallows – the company of the faithful who spread the Light in the Darkness of the world.

So many people become what society, or other people expect them to be, but here today we celebrate that we uncover our inner Saint, by becoming the person that God wants us to be. The person that Jesus calls by name.

So today, sisters and brothers, let us celebrate the saints – the glorious holy company of the faithful in Christ in whose light and love we walk and in whose company we can face down any evil. Let us celebrate their stories – known and unknown – and walk in their footsteps.

Let us turn again and take up the journey, the journey to become who we are - the sacred, holy, irreplaceable person touched by Jesus, little fragments of his light in the world - and to see and recognise it in each other. As we celebrate All Saints' Day – for the Saints whose names we do not know - we celebrate every single life

For there is One who calls us by Name – and he says, Come, Follow me.

For together, with all the company of heaven and the faithful
through the ages we are caught up into a light in the world
against which no darkness can stand.