

Good morning Saints of God!

I have always loved All Saints. That is at least partly because my childhood church was All Saints and made a big thing of its patronal festival. I remember the priest wearing special clothes and processions around the church. But also I love the specialness of being a saint. Yes we think of saints as people who had visions and who did amazing things and around whose relics miracles happened, but that is rather a human view. A saint is simply one who is sanctified, and since the Holy Spirit is at work sanctifying each one of us who is enrolled in the reign of God, we are all saints. In the eyes of God we are already fully sanctified. So today is a special celebration of our present and future Christ-likeness.

So let's try again, Good morning Saints of God!

Our readings give us the full paradox of being saints. On the one hand, our hope is the immeasurable greatness of God's power, and on the other, we should be prepared to be slapped across the face. I choose the fully realized reign of God!

Let's start there. Ephesians tells us "In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance... so that we... might live for the praise of his glory." That, saints of God, is what it's all about. That we might live for the praise of God's glory. Those of us who see visions, those of us who have inner sight, may have glimpses of the glory of God among us, but those of us who don't, can see the glory of God in the magnificence of a sunset, in the early morning light on coastal oaks, in a Bach cantata. We can even see the glory of God in one another – the patriarch Irenaeus said that the glory of God is the human being fully alive. God's glory constantly intersects our lives.

And we are called to live in praise of that glory.

I find it's not as easy as it sounds. Jill and I usually take a few minutes each morning to call to mind things we are grateful for. Of course, there

are a zillion things I am grateful for, but when called on my mind is often a blank. For what am I grateful? Where have I seen God's glory? Nothing comes. It takes an effort. On the other hand, ask me what I'm worried about and I am immediately in touch with the concerns and anxieties of my life.

Living in the praise of God's glory takes effort. It means constantly bringing to mind the reality and the promise of our baptism. We have been sealed as God's own for ever. We have been made part of the solution. Our anxiety is in the old world, our hope is in the reign of God.

In the first reading we heard about one of Daniel's dreams. Not a good one. He said, "As for me, Daniel, my spirit was troubled within me, and the visions of my head terrified me. I approached one of the attendants to ask him the truth concerning all this. So he said that..."As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever—for ever and ever."

Now if you have a dream like that, which bit do you focus on? If you're like me, it's those sea beasts. But the attendant reminds Daniel that that's only part of the story. The saints of God will possess the kingdom for ever and ever. The beasts of our minds, the beasts of the darkness of the world, are not part of the glory of God – it is the glory of God that overcomes them.

Remember, "In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance... so that we... might live for the praise of his glory." God's glory is everywhere. Our job is to praise it. Why? Because we were created for a life of praise.

I am firmly convinced that praise is basic to the health of the cosmos. The dance of the Trinity is based in glory and praise and we are invited into that dance. As we take on the mantle of praise, so we take our

rightful place in the life of God and the life of the cosmos, so we step into the inheritance of the saints. And so we bring healing and new life.

Solving climate change is not just about living more lightly, using less stuff, reducing waste, caring for our neighbors; it is also about the saints of God doing the work God has given us to do – living to the praise of God’s glory.

Which brings us to the cheek slapping bit.

While we are living to the praise of God’s glory we are also paying the bills, walking the dog, going to work, cleaning the house. Today’s gospel reading is Luke’s version of the Beatitudes. It tells us in a very succinct way *how* we are to live to the praise of God’s glory. While we are internally praising God and choosing to see God’s glory all around us, we are also living in a counter-cultural way.

We embrace the times of sorrow and suffering. We are embracing them because Jesus has declared us blessed. Blessed are you who are poor, blessed are you who are hungry, blessed are you who weep, blessed are you when people hate you. And we actively seek to share our money, our wealth, our laughter. These are wonderful but they do not truly last, they are not the glory of God which is permanent and in which we hope. Unlike the rest of the world, our hope is not in winning the Powerball jackpot – our hope is in the immeasurable power of God, living to the praise of God’s glory.

And our work is in loving our enemies and non-violently resisting injustice. And it takes work. This is where the rubber hits the road. It is relatively easy to love those who love you. But what about those who don’t, or what about the villains you love to hate. I encourage you to vote if you haven’t already done so. I also encourage you to pray not only for the candidates you hope will win but the ones you hope won’t and the ones you find laughable.

In today's world our enemies are often our political opponents, whether they are our neighbors or those on the national or international stage. We don't have to agree with them. We don't pray that their views will win. But knowing that they are also beloved children of God who are doing the best they can at their present level of awareness, we can pray that they will find the deepest desire of their hearts. For the deepest desire of all our hearts is the knowledge of God and the praise of God's glory. This is truly non-violent resistance; praying for our enemies, loving our opponents. And it is what Jesus told us to do.

Saints of God, let us make a daily practice of praying for our enemies; and of knowing and sensing the presence of the glory of God, and let us exult in praising God at all times, thus joining in the redemption of the planet and indeed of the whole cosmos. It is for this that we are made.