**Reading and Reflection for All Saints Sunday**

**The Collect**

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: grant us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that we may come to those inexpressible joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, **Amen.**

**First Reading Rev: 7.9-17**

9After this 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. 10They cried out in a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!’
11And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, 12singing, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.’

13Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, ‘Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?’ 14I said to him, ‘Sir, you are the one that knows.’ Then he said to me, ‘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.
15For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. 16They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; 17for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’

This is the word of the Lord.  **Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Reading Matthew 5.1-12**

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying:

“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 be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

**Reflection**

No Christian is solitary. Through baptism we become members one of another in Christ, members of a company of saints whose mutual belonging transcends death:

One family, we dwell in him,
one Church, above, beneath;
though now divided by the stream,
the narrow stream of death. (Charles Wesley)

All Saints’ Day and the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed on All Souls’ Day both celebrate this mutual belonging. All Saints’ Day celebrates men and women in whose lives the Church as a whole has seen the grace of God powerfully at work. It is an opportunity to give thanks for that grace, and for the wonderful ways in which it shapes a human life; it is a time to be encouraged by the example of the saints and to recall that sanctity may grow in the ordinary circumstances, as well as the extraordinary ones, of human
living.

The Commemoration of the Faithful Departed celebrates the saints in a more local and intimate way, it is about our family and friends. It allows us to remember with thanksgiving before God those whom we have known more directly: those who gave us life, or who nurtured us in faith. Those who may never quite become a saint, but whose lives made a difference to ours, whose example and love are written in the marrow of our bones.

The life, death and resurrection of Christ is the means to our being part of the who family of faith, part of the household of God. Through Jesus we are redeemed, like in a pawn shop we have been brought back. Back into the family of God.

Redemption is a work of God’s grace; it is God who redeems us in Christ and there is nothing to be done beyond what Christ has done. But we still wait for the final act of God’s new creation in Christ; those who are Christ’s, whether or not they have passed through death, are joined in prayer that God’s kingdom will be revealed finally and in all its fullness. We also sense that it is a fearful thing to come before the unutterable goodness and holiness of God, even for those who are redeemed in Christ.

On All Saints Day we remember – that is make members again those who live on a distant shore, those whose life on earth is over but life in heaven is just starting. And as we re-member them, so we can have hope and faith that we too will be held in the love of God, part of God’s family and nothing can separate us from God. We are saints in waiting but we are waiting not in hope alone, but in the promise of Jesus. A promise we can trust with all our hearts.

**Prayers: The Church of England Common Worship for All Saints Day**

In faith and hope we pray, Lord of mercy, Lord, hear us.

Almighty God, you bring your chosen people together
in one communion, in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
We rejoice in your light and your peace with your whole Church in heaven and on earth. Lord of mercy, Lord, hear us.

Give to all who mourn a sure confidence in your loving care, that we may cast all our sorrow on you and know the consolation of your love. Lord of mercy, Lord, hear us.

Give your faithful people pardon and peace, that we may be cleansed from all our sins and serve you with a quiet mind.
Lord of mercy, Lord, hear us.

Give us strength to meet the days ahead in the joyful expectation of eternal life with those you love. Lord of mercy, Lord, hear us.

Give to us who are still in our pilgrimage, and who walk as yet by faith, your Holy Spirit to lead us in holiness and righteousness
all our days. Lord of mercy, Lord, hear us.

May all who have been made one with Christ in his death and in his resurrection die to sin and rise to newness of life.
Lord of mercy, Lord, hear us.