



ALL SAINTS

Year B

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

1 John 3:1-3

Matthew 5:1-12a

GATHERING

(A large candle surrounded by a dozen or more tea lights and some fresh flowers are arranged on a table in the gathering place. Small sheets of paper and pens, one for each member, are held on reserve.)

We celebrate God's holy people across the ages this week and we call on them to pray for us. In last week's session we reflected on how God call us to *see* with the eyes of Jesus. When you looked with the eyes of Jesus, what did you notice or see differently this past week? *(Members share briefly.)*

OPENING PRAYER

(The leader calls the community to a time of quiet. The large candle is lit. After an extended pause, the leader prays, "All you holy men and women, pray for us." A member lights the tea lights. The community dwells in a few more minutes of silence. After a time of quiet, the community prays as follows.)

Leader: Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

All: Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

Leader: The LORD'S are the earth and its fullness.
the world and those who dwell in it.
For he founded it upon the seas.
and established it upon the rivers.

All: Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

Leader: Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD?
or who may stand in his holy place?
One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean,
who desires not what is vain.

All: Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

Leader: He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,
a reward from God his savior.
Such is the race that seeks him,
that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

All: Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

Psalm 24:1bc 2, 30–4ab, 5–6

(A selection of instrumental music is played.)

Focus Question

- ◆ Recall a festive occasion when you found yourself surrounded by family and friends gathered to celebrate with you. What was that like for you?

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the gospel reading, the facilitator invites members to mention a word, a phrase or an image from one of the readings that particularly struck them this week. Members then read over the commentary and consider the questions in silence for several minutes before entering into conversation.)

Commentary

Up and down the right and left walls of the nave in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, there hangs a magnificent set of twenty-five fresco-like tapestries.

[Together, they] depict 136 saints and blessed from around the world, including holy men and women of North America canonized by the Church. Twelve untitled figures, including children of all ages, represent the many anonymous holy people in our midst. All the figures direct our eyes to the light of the great Cross-window above the Altar where the Eucharist is celebrated.¹

As a set, these tapestries are simply titled, *Communion of Saints*.

Hanging as they do, the tapestries serve as a reminder that when the church on earth is gathered at Eucharist, we are not alone. We are, as the letter to the Hebrews tells us, “surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.” (Heb. 12:1) Indeed it is the *whole church* that celebrates Eucharist with Christ himself as the great presider. It is this great mystery of communion that we celebrate in the feast of All Saints.

It is so easy to get bogged down in the pressing immediacy of everyday life that the imagery of the communion of saints joined with us at Eucharist might seem like just so much skywriting. But a living sense of their presence with us can be a powerful support.

Perhaps you can recall the singing of the Litany of the Saints at a celebration of the Easter Vigil, as we pray for those about to be baptized. The invocation of name after name, coupled with the petition, “Pray for us,” can be so uplifting. And it culminates with the resounding invocation, “All you holy men and women, pray for us.” Those about to be baptized and all of us need their prayers. We have a right to their prayers.

However harried and tarried we may be in this busy and noisy world, when we gather at Eucharist, all God’s holy people, known and unknown to us, across all generations, join us and support us in the great remembrance, not only of what was or is, but of what will be. Eternity is present in the Great Thanksgiving.

“[W]e are God’s children now,” says the first letter to John; “what we shall

¹www.olacathedral.org

later he has not yet been revealed.” But when it is revealed, “we shall be like him.” Eucharist anticipates that culmination of communion when God will be “all in all,” because we are *all in God*.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

(The facilitator poses the question, “What does God ask of you/us in light of our sharing of life and faith this week?” After a few minutes of reflection, the facilitator invites conversation in response to the question.)

- ◆ Name some saints with whom you feel a special connection.
- ◆ When has being alone made you feel deeply at one with life, with the world, with God?
- ◆ Recall a celebration of Eucharist in which you experienced a strong sense of communion with Christ and the whole church.
- ◆ How does the press of everyday life weigh on you these days?
- ◆ Name some time in the past year when you had some sense that you were *in God* and God was *in you*?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

(The facilitator poses the question, “What does God ask of you/us in light of our sharing of life and faith this week?” After a few minutes of reflection, the facilitator invites conversation in response to the question.)

- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for quiet. Open yourself to the sense of God’s presence and the presence of all God’s holy people, canonized or not, throughout the ages. Ask for the prayers of one or more of the saints who have special meaning for you.
- ◆ Pray for the people who are on death row that they may be prepared to die should they be executed. Check the website of the Catholic Campaign to End the Use of the Death Penalty (www.usccb.org/sdwp) or call (202) 541-3190 to see what pending legislation is being supported by the Catholic Church to substitute life in prison for the death penalty. Promote its adoption by contacting your legislators.

- ◆ Get acquainted with a new saint, one with whom you are not familiar. Visit www.catholicsaints.org/. Be inspired.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(Members join in singing, “Angels, Saints and Holy Ones.” The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, the leader distributes the sheets of paper and pens to the members. He/she invites members to jot down in silence on their sheets the names of six saints or blessed who have special meaning for them. The community rests in silence for at least three minutes, after which the community prays a litany with the names members have written down. One member mentions the name of one saint and the community responds, “Pray for us.” Then another follows. The community prays as many rounds as needed until all the saints are invoked. Repetition of saints’ names is just fine. When the naming is complete, the community prays together, “All you holy men and women, pray for us.”)

Members stand, join hands and pray the Lord’s Prayer. The session then concludes as follows.)

Leader: Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power and might be to our God forever and ever.

All: Amen. Amen. Amen.