

All Saints C — November 3, 2019

Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18; Psalm 149; Ephesians 1:11-23; Luke 6:20-31

I love to see the costumes that the young ones choose for Halloween (or I guess we need to say “Beggars’ Night” in Des Moines). Actually what I love most are the silly jokes. “What do you call a possessed chicken? A Poultry Geist.” “Why did the chicken cross the playground? To get to the other slide.” But I digress. Super hero costumes are perennial favorites: Supergirl, Spiderman, Wonder Woman, Superman. Did any of you dress up as your favorite superhero this week?

Superhero stories tend to have a common theme. Most of the time the superhero is an ordinary, everyday person, who then transforms into a superhero whenever super powers are needed. In his everyday life Clark Kent is a humble newspaper reporter, but when arch villains threaten to blow up the world, Clark steps into a telephone booth (if you remember what those were) and transforms into Superman!

There’s a tendency to see the saints who are remembered by history as sort of superheroes of the faith. (I think I’ve even heard that phrase used before.) On this All Saints Day, I am here to say no, saints are not superheroes of the faith.

First of all, you need to remember the good news that you are sitting right now in a room full of saints. You are a saint. The person sitting next to you is a saint. To be a saint is to be loved by God, which all of you are.

Saints become saints in the font. It is baptism—that one-way, unilateral action of God on our behalf—that makes us saints. We are saints because of God’s gracious love for us. And remember that “grace” means “gift.” You did nothing to earn your status as “saint.” It is a title gifted to all of us by God. God puts the “all” in *All Saints*.

But even those saints remembered by history for some particular reason were not superheroes in some extraordinary sense. They were no more “saintly” than you or me. In fact, most were quite ordinary in their day, not regarded as superheroes or famous in any way. It was later that people remembered how the light of Christ was reflected in some particular way through that person’s life and work—some way in which the light and love of God shown through them for the good of others and for the healing of the world.

And the community wanted to preserve the witness of that particular saint, so that we might be inspired to take up our saintly calling in daily life, our calling to let God’s light shine and love show through our actions for the good of others and the healing of the world. Or as we say in that eloquent phrase at the end of the baptismal liturgy, our response to the love of God poured out for us is to go from the font in gratitude to bear “God’s creative and redeeming word to all the world.” This is our saintly vocation, a mission that each of us has been given for our ordinary, everyday lives.

As we remember on this day our loved ones who have gone before us, we so often remember the ways in which they witnessed faith and faithfulness to us. As I think of my own father—who died in 2012 and whom no one would have ever thought to call a superhero of faith—I am grateful for his ordinary actions and how they impacted me. He took seriously the promise he made in baptism to bring me to the services of God’s house, without ever saying specifically *why* he was doing it.

He never said, “At your baptism, I promised to bring you to the word of God and the holy supper, so finish your cereal. It’s time for church.” But there we were in the pew most Sundays.

Whether we particularly felt liked it or not, there we were in the pew of our very ordinary church, listening to very ordinary sermons, singing very ordinary hymns (and sometimes some really crappy songs—these were the days of guitar-playing nuns in the Catholic church), surrounded by very ordinary, occasionally mean and hypocritical, people. And sometimes we did this even when we were on vacation! Simply by making sure we showed up, my parents were taking seriously their promise to put me in the path of faith, to set me in the road where the gift of faith could come at me.

And of course, by these ordinary, everyday actions mom and dad were putting themselves in the way of faith as well. As I said, I would never paint a picture of my dad wearing a cape as Super Christian. But his very ordinary church was there for him as he came to the end of his days, and I know he valued the visits of his priest, and I think that his very ordinary faith brought him to the end of his life in peace.

On the day of our final 75th anniversary event, we might remember the ordinary Lutherans of Windsor Heights who founded this congregation in the midst of World War II. Looking around at their world, they likely didn't find a lot of reason for optimism. Whether we would emerge from the Great Depression. Whether their loved ones would come back from the war. Whether the Allies would prevail. Yet in the midst of this uncertainty, in a climate of undeniable fear and anxiety, these ordinary people gave of themselves to birth this congregation, so that we might come to the place where faith is possible for us. Thanks be to God for all who have received the gift of faith through the labors of these ordinary saints.

All Saints is a day for remembering. We remember those who have gone before us, giving thanks for the many ways that these ordinary people let God's light shine and love show through the ordinariness of their daily lives. And let us remember our call as ordinary men, women, and children to take our place alongside all the saints, letting God's light shine and love show through the ordinary actions of our lives.

With a spirit of profound gratitude, let us then remember all those who have died in Christ. We begin by naming the saints of this congregation who entered eternal rest in the last year. Then I will allow time for you to speak aloud or in your heart the names of other ordinary saints for whom you are grateful.

Let us pray.

O God of the pilgrim's way, we give thanks for those in generations past who have been examples for us of God's love at work in the world. As we pray, we know that we are surrounded by this great, rejoicing cloud of witnesses. Yet even as we name these holy ancestors, we thank God for others whose names we never knew or have forgotten, who showed us the meaning of life in Christ.

We give thanks for the life and witness of

Bob Plath  
Ed Brown  
Cecil Mease  
Shirley Mease  
Sue Groh  
Cyndee Young

And for other saints we now name before you, O God . . .

Holy God, we honor these, our ancestors in faith

and members of our family.

We, too, seek to do your will: guide us.

We, too, desire to be your servants: strengthen us.

We, too, long to know you clearly: teach us.

And in time, bring us to our eternal home of peace and joy.

**Amen**

*Notes*

Litany of thanksgiving taken from [sundaysandseasons.org](http://sundaysandseasons.org).