

Sermon and Scriptures for November 1, 2015

By Faith Formation Facilitator Diana Pelletier

John 11:32-44

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked

upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

This is the Word of the Lord... **AMEN**

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight oh Lord you are our rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

All Saints Sunday is typically a day in the church when we celebrate the lives of all those whom we have loved and lost in the last year as well as all of the saints throughout time. I want to be sure we are on the same page in understanding who we are talking about when we are talking saints.

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines a saint as:

1 one officially recognized especially through canonization as preeminent (distinguished, outstanding, well known) for holiness.

Did you know there are 810 canonized Roman Catholic saints?

St. Anthony – patron saint of lost things

Sts. Peter & Paul & Thomas– apostles of Jesus

St. Francis – patron saint of animals

Saint Patrick - patron saint, or apostle, of Ireland

Mother Theresa - Not recognized as a saint because she needs a second miracle attributed to her but is known as “Blessed Teresa of Calcutta” because of her charitable life’s work

I would like to share with you the story of another saint, **St. Scott...** (read Scott’s story)

This does not sound like the story of a saint, does it? After all, Scott, who is a friend of mine from college, did not do what we would consider the *‘right thing’* but instead he gave into his fears and insecurities which he allowed to render himself frozen, unable to use his gifts to help someone in need. He now allows himself to live with guilt and regret because of his decision.

I believe this is indeed the story of a saint, however, for you see, **the second definition of**

saint found in Merriam Webster's dictionary is: one of *God's chosen*. Scott is a baptized child of God, washed and forgiven, chosen and sent by God, marked with the cross of Christ forever.

I share this story with you because on All Saints Sunday we so often focus on people we have lost, people in the Bible or Church history who did great things, or those who died for the faith. We even remember people we consider of such great moral courage, kindness or discipline that they set examples for the rest of us. I believe All Saints Sunday is perhaps an even better time to be reminded that through our baptism ***each one of us is*** a saint, worthy of God's love and sanctified, or set apart, to be God's light in the world.

3 Things I would like for you to leave here sure of today are:

- 1. you are a saint**
- 2. in your humanness you are prone to bury yourself in tombs of fear, insecurity, doubt and regret**
- 3. Jesus calls you by name to come out of those tombs, to be unbound by those feelings and to shine with God's light so others can experience the beauty of God's creation in you**

Just like my friend Scott, I believe that at one time or another we all make choices we regret. We allow our fears, our insecurities and our doubts inform our decisions. We place pieces of our hearts in dark tombs where we hope to forget about them, but where they fester deep within us. We let ourselves forget the promises of our baptism: that we are loved by God, forgiven by God and that our whole life is now sanctified – that is, made holy and given a purpose – through God’s promise to be with us and for us and to use us and all of our gifts to God’s own glory.

God’s light is in us whether we acknowledge it or not. When we bury it in a self-made tomb we become dull and despondent. We are likely to trip and fall in the dark times of our lives letting one dark moment lead to another.

When we accept God’s light and allow it into our being not only will others see and experience God through us but perhaps in our reflection we will see God in ***ourselves***.

God does not judge us on our worst moments. God created us human; frail, prone to breaking and even failing, so God understands when we make mistakes. As saints of God the one thing God

requires of us is faithfulness. By putting our faith in the God who created us we are freed to make mistakes and to receive forgiveness. Now, that does not mean we have license to just go out and wreak havoc on the world, but it does mean that when we fall short we can land knowing that Jesus has died for our sins and that God's light continues to shine in us and through us.

In today's reading from Isaiah we hear:

And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;
he will swallow up death for ever.

God does indeed swallow up death forever, even the small deaths we experience when we put ourselves in tombs of fear and regret.

"Lazarus, come out!" Jesus calls and Lazarus comes out and is unbound.

"Susan, come out!" "Cole, come out!" "Diana, come out!" Jesus calls to each one of us inviting us to come out of the tombs we place ourselves in, to be unbound from the emotions we allow to keep ourselves down, so that the world can see the

beauty of God's creation shining bright through our lives.

Listen! Jesus is calling the saints! Jesus is calling you. Will you come out of the tomb?

Amen.