

Prayer of the Holy Spirit

Praise the Lord, Saints! Hallelujah!

We continue our series focused on a Wonder-full life here within the Saint James faith community... where we love and serve God and God's people. And this week pause to celebrate and to remember: who we are, whose we are, and what wonder God has provided to our faith family, and be renewed that God is still calling us to love and serve in hope.

Saint James has been blessed with many servants who have shared their love of God through their service to God's people through this church. HOW WONDERFUL IT IS TO SEE THE PHOTOS OF LOVED ONES OF THE CHURCH ... WHO NURTURED AND SHARED THEIR LOVE OF GOD. WE WILL continue TO USE THEM IN WORSHIP IN THIS SEASON OF WONDER AND GRATITUDE. Truly surrounded by the saints of the church.

Speaking of SAINTS, anyone have an idea of what 'saints' has as a point of origin and meaning? Many think that SAINTS is a term reserved for persons honored or revered for demonstrating great virtue (purity, moral excellence, or righteousness). Certainly, that is one understanding of the term.

However, in the biblical witness, particularly the New Testament, *hagioi* (gk) is the common title for Christians... it translates as 'holy ones' and was given to describe Jesus-followers. This term came about because of the understanding that the followers of Jesus were consecrated to God by the atonement of Christ and the gift of Holy Spirit (Eph 1:11-14). We hear that in the first few verses of this passage read today.

Indeed, the writer of this letter makes it plain in the first verses ... 'to the saints who are in Ephesus' ... might as well be Saint James!

***So Praise the Lord, Saints!... Hallelujah!*** For in Christ we know who we are and whose we are... we are gathered into ONE... in unity... our blessing of belonging, becoming and believing in a wonder-full life in Christ! (v11)

All Saints is a long-standing tradition for Christians since the 4<sup>th</sup> century when Pope Gregory IV set November 1<sup>st</sup> designated as the day to remember all saints & martyrs, the living and the departed...all who responded 'yes' to God's call.

All Saints Day helps us REMEMBER our call and our response, and to proclaim God's purpose and plan.

This scripture, particularly the prayer in v15-23, prays for wisdom and enlightenment, open eyes of the heart, and clarity in focus to respond to our mission and vision of loving and serving and transforming lives.

The writer prays for us to have the vision that sees with more than facts and knowledge about God, but lived experiences...embodiment of the incomprehensible love of God!

This is self-giving love...as is revealed in the death AND resurrection of Christ.

In a little bit, as we share in Holy Communion, we will remember 'all the company of heaven'... and we will have so many at the Table, gathered here in one place. IN the pew there are place cards, write the names of your loved ones on these place cards, bring them with you as you come for Communion. After receiving the bread & juice, put the place card on the table, signifying All the Saints who have reached the blessed homeland.

We have two points of focus on All Saints Day... 1) For the CHURCH: to praise Christ's glory through the church in unity with Christ & in our response to love and be agents of transformation that brings about UNITY; and

2) For HOPE: to reflect generous generations who lived in hope and faith, trusting in God's promises.

Paul prays for LIGHT to shine from the eyes of heart; to see with the heart = imagine the future God is preparing! We are shaped by experiences and our hope, the future we live into, and our conviction by which we live.

May we be a hope-filled/wonder-full faith community that lives with eyes of the heart wide open...shining a light for all to see...full of hope in the company of 'saints', living and departed. May it be so. Amen.

Naming those who have died acknowledges our human grief, but also provides the opportunity for gratitude, comfort, and encouragement in the goodness of God we've received in the treasure of their lives.

Let us remember the members of this faith community that have died: