

The Saints Are With Us All The Time

For 8th Day Church

Message by Margaret Schoap
November 7, 2021

Greetings from your sisters and brothers at Dayspring Church.
Joy to have your community stay overnight on the land.

- 6th month of Ordinary Time - that time after Pentecost where we take a great journey of awakening the fuller meaning of Christ's resurrection in ordinary life.
 - Each month in Ordinary Time leads us deeper into unpacking the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and culminates 2 Sundays from now in celebrating Christ the King.
 - Feasts of All Saints - used to be an 8 day festival, than shortened to 3 day - All Hallows Eve, All Saints Day, All Souls Day
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- So who do you turn to for spiritual guidance? Who is embodying God and the Holy Spirit for you - for us - to help us on our daily life journey? Who are OUR spiritual leaders, OUR martyrs who show their great sacrifices, their great suffering in order to further God's love for all creation? To be a martyr, there doesn't always have to be suffering by a physical death. What is our connection with them? And why do you choose them as your guide to God's Holy Spirit working IN YOU for love of all creatures, all creation?
 - I'm going to share writings from FIVE people, which say where their holy strength and insight comes from. And what or who is that "saint" for them - where did their holy strength come from to do their work for God?
 - Ask you to hold your saint, the one person - one thing (or more) which is of God for you, and which you have relied upon for guidance, to give you holy and spiritual strength beyond your human capacity alone.
 - If one of my readings doesn't speak to you, hopefully the next one will. I've tried to select a variety folks to speak to us today.

Robin Wall Kimmerer -

Robin is the author of the book, Braiding Sweetgrass.

- She writes by braiding of stories meant to heal our relationship with the world. This braid is woven from three strands: Indigenous ways of knowing, scientific knowledge, and the story of a Native American Indian scientist. She intertwines science, spirit and story that can be medicine for our broken relationship with earth. Here are two short pieces in her book where she writes of her connection with the saintly earth:
 - *To be native to a place we must learn to speak its language.* I come here to listen, to nestle in the curve of the roots in a soft hollow of pine needles, to lean my bones against the column of white pine, to turn off the voice in my head until I can hear the voices outside it: the *shhh* of wind in needles, water trickling over rock, nuthatch tapping chipmunks digging, beechnut falling, mosquito in my ear, and something more - something that is not me, for which we have no language, the wordless being of others in which we are never alone.
 - *Becoming Indigenous to Place.* It is said that the Creator gathered together the four sacred elements and breathed life into them to give form to Original Man before setting him upon Turtle Island. I can imagine how it might have been for him in the beginning, before anyone knew him and he did not know them. I too was a stranger at first in this dark dripping forest perched at the edge of the sea, but I sought out an elder, my Sitka Spruce grandmother with a lap wide enough for many grandchildren. I introduced myself, told her my name and why I had come. She asked me to sit down, and there was a place right between her roots. Her canopy towers above the forest and her swaying foliage is constantly murmuring to her neighbors. I know she'll eventually pass the word and my name on the wind.

Thich Nhat Hanh -

He is a Vietnamese Buddhist Monk, a Zen master, spiritual leader, and founded Plum Village in France. During the Vietnam war, while visiting the U.S., he was exiled from returning to both North and South Vietnam for 39 years. He is currently residing in Vietnam, in the Tù Hiêu Temple where he was ordained at age 16. It is written that Thich Nhat Hanh's return to that Temple has been a bell of mindfulness reminding us all of how precious it is to belong to a spiritual lineage with deep roots. Whether we have attended a retreat, read one of his books, or watched a talk, we have been touched by his teachings, we are all connected to this ancestral stream of wisdom and compassion.

- Thich Nhat Hanh has written many books to help people development mindfulness. He wrote a series of short "*How To*" books: *How To...Eat, Love, See, Walk, Relax, Fight, Sit, Connect, Focus.*
- I see them in MoM's food store, and have purchased some over time. But the one which took me the longest time to buy was, *How To Fight*. I want to read one short story from *How To Fight*, written by Thich Nhat Hanh:

- Do you regret not having said the right thing to someone before they died? Do you regret something you did during their lifetime, and now you feel it's too late? You don't need to feel regret, because that person is still in you. There's no need to feel guilt. Everything is still possible. The past is not gone; it is still available in the form of the present. If we know how to touch the present deeply, we can touch the past, and even transform it. Smile to the one who has died and say the things you wish you had said but didn't have a chance to say. Express your love and your gratitude. That will bring you peace and will renew your relationship. It will also bring joy to the people around you and to future generations.

Thomas à Kempis -

He lived in the 13th C. Was a German-Dutch canon, never was canonized to sainthood by the church. He is one of my most beloved spiritual guides. He is best known for his authorship of *The Imitation of Christ*, and *The Inner Life*. Both his books were written as devotional exercises for disciples he was teaching.

- Thomas wrote a dialogue titled, *On Learning Patience*. The Disciples - O Lord God, I know that I need patience above all else, for in this life there are many trials. For however earnestly I seek peace, I cannot escape struggle and sorrow. Thomas then speaks what he felt Christ would say to them. My will is that you do not try to find a place free from temptations and troubles. Rather, seek a peace that endures even when you are beset by various temptations and tried by much adversity. Endeavour patiently to endure for God's sake all the ills of this life.
- This last one is Thomas speaking for Christ in the dialogue titled, *On Obedience, after the Example of Christ*. Whoever tries to withdraw from obedience to God, withdraws from grace. Learn to obey your will to God, for the Enemy without is sooner overcome if our inner fortress remains intact. There is no enemy more wicked or troublesome to the soul than yourself, when you are not in harmony with the Spirit. Learn to obey what you hear from God, you who are but dust; learn to humble yourself, you earth-and-clay; learn to yield yourself to complete obedience to God, from where comes your strength.

Marian Wright Edelman -

She is founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund in DC. Often attended CoS church.

- Marian writes in the opening pages of her book, *Guide My Feet*: I set out to write a very different book - a policy book - but out tumbled prayers instead. A long time ago when I read that Martin Luther prayed four hours a day, I wondered how he found the time. It was, he said, the only way he could gain enough strength to carry on his work. As I have grown older and wearier trying to help get our nation to put children first and become more worried about my own and other people's children

growing up in an America where moral and common sense and family and community values are disintegrating, I pray more and more. I know that only with God's help and only with prayer, can some mountains be moved. In this book, I share my struggles through prayer as a parent, as a person of faith, and as a child advocate. As I contemplate the kind of future I want for children, I believe we must look inward to God for guidance and strength and backward to draw on the values and legacies of our families, ancestors and communities. Without a sense of core values like honesty, discipline, work, responsibility, perseverance, community and service, we all become easy prey for the false idols and vultures of culturally manufactured materialism, greed and violence. No value, even the Cross, has been left uncommercialized.

- Marian shares many prayers of many people she turns to who are *her* saints:
- She writes: Thomas Merton's wonderful prayer captures my frequent despair when I wonder what in the world I'm doing and whether it adds up to anything. In this time of fickle fads, citizen confusion, and seething anger, I have turned to Merton's prayer again and again as I've asked for guidance.
- My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.
- Ref: 1Kings scripture: Elijah - God led him from place to place; he did not seethed of him, but he learned from God to trust.
- Ref: Ps 146 - "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help...Blessed is the God of Jacob."

Saint Teresa of Calcutta -

Mother Teresa founded the religious order Missionaries of Charity in 1950. They serve the poorest of the poor in over 130 countries with 4,500 nuns, and now brothers. I have prayed with her words for many years; and one day I heard myself calling her my patron saint, and it still remains so.

- Mother writes: Now, more than ever we need to live out the teachings of Jesus: "Love one another, as the Father has loved me." We have to love as the Father loves his Son Jesus, with the same mercy and compassion, joy and peace. Try to find out how the Father loves his Son, and then try to love one another in the same way. Find out in all humility, how much you are loved by Jesus. From the time you realize that you are loved by Jesus, love as he loves you. In each of our lives Jesus comes as

the Bread of Life - to be eaten, to be consumed by us. That is how he loves us. He also comes as the Hungry One, hoping to be fed with the bread of OUR life, with OUR hearts that love and OUR hands that serve. In so doing, we prove that we have been created in the image and likeness of God, for God is love. When we love we are like God.

- Mother Teresa's known quotes:
 - I know God won't give me anything I can't handle. I just wish he didn't trust me so much.
 - I want you to be concerned about your next door neighbor. Do you know your next door neighbor?
 - Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat.
 - We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.
 - Peace begins with a smile.
 - Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do, but how much love we put in that action.
 - There's a book compiled of Mother Teresa's private letters written to her confessors during her lifetime. It's titled, *Come Be My Light*. Her journey is very powerful for me, as she describes her inner torment as her life progressed; as she connected w/ Jesus and became more bonded/wedded, more at-one. and she became more and more aligned with Christ. We are very fortunate to have her letters which were kept and preserved for others to glean Mother's inward journey w/ Christ and the world.

FINAL -

Let us honor those we have selected as our saints -

- through our continual work towards equity wholeness for all creatures and creation;
- through our fervent prayer life which is always calling to us to deepen;
- through honing our inward journey on a daily basis;
- through our call to our outward journey which many times is more difficult b/c of our encounters w/ opposition, darkness and and has us searching for the Light;
- and always, always through your ever-growing life with each other in this fragile, holy and life-giving community of 8th Day, and in our life together with the communities in the Church of the Saviour diaspora.