

All people are the saints of God. And Nov 1<sup>st</sup>—was the official feast of All Saints.

The protestant church has taught for years that everyone is a saint. We sang “I sing a song of the Saints of God” on Wednesday at chapel—and if you know it-- we sang about all the saints: queens and soldiers and people having tea—and in the interest of inclusivity that would probably also mean those who imbibe alternative hot beverages at the Owl and the Turtle.

Then yesterday we moved through the feast of All Souls. Is it different from all Saints? The same?

The Roman Catholic tradition tells us they are very different traditions. On All Saints' Day we are called to live as saints, who remind us how we're supposed to live. On All Souls' Day, we're asking God's mercy for all our souls. But for today—we are celebrating the feast of All Saints.

So sainthood—what's that all about? Acting perfect and sanctimonious all the time? I have to tell you, that's not exactly an inspiring vision for me.

Learning to live like Jesus? Better. But being perfect like Jesus was is still daunting. But we are taught, that Jesus came to become fully human—he was not coming to be perfect.

Jesus became a part of humanity in part to experience what it is to be a part of our human, mortal experience. Jesus had a deep connection to God, but he experienced life as we do—one moment at a time. One experience at a time. One emotion at a time.

So he felt all the things we feel as human beings: love, anger, hunger, frustration, agitation, happiness, grief.

He had to, in order to understand humanity. So how about on this feast of All Saints, instead of attempting a saintly perfection, we instead focus on trying to be fully human, like Jesus?

Jesus' goal was to love us and to teach us to love God and to love each other. But he didn't necessarily come from the womb knowing the intricacies and the physicality of being a human being. He had to learn it as we do-- from his mother, from his father, from his family, and from connecting to God as a human being. All of us do.

Scientists have determined that a child's caregivers – particularly in the first 18 months of their lives- are vastly important in teaching their children about connecting to one another as fellow humans. Pathways in our brains that connect us with other beings are forged rapidly when we are young.

These connections can also be forged later in life, but much more slowly. Babies and children learn so much from studying our faces, learning trust, safety and love. And as adults we continue to learn it throughout their lives.

Jesus also learned these things. He learned to connect. He learned to trust, and he definitely learned about love. He was disturbed at times, angry; he wept. He had to grow into his vocation to love God and neighbor.

And so do we.

We only come gradually into who we are and what we're doing. We become lawyers and doctors, teachers and librarians. And we take the lessons we learned about love and faith and courage, and we become followers of Christ in our vocations, in our lives.

It is said that when we are in pain, sickness or distress the person we want the most with us are the people that make us feel most safe. Often that is our earliest memory of our caretakers, our moms and dads. Sometimes it is a spouse, or a dear friend—but it will always be someone with whom we feel cared for, loved and safe.

Here's my theory—we come from God at our beginning of our life here, and we go to God at the end. So when we are in pain or sick, it is the face of God we most want to see, it is God's face that we trust, that gives us the

most comfort. That's what we really want. But how do we see the face of God while in this physical, mortal existence? We see the face of God in each other. We see it in nobility and integrity. And we especially see it in those we cherish- our families and friends.

In fact—I would say much of the whole reason that human beings are put in families is because in our families we are most likely to see God reflected: in our mothers and fathers, our siblings, our spouses, and our children.

But it doesn't end with family. We also see reflections of God in friends, communities, the families we choose.

Victor Hugo in his masterpiece *Les Miserables* says it well:

*And remember /The truth that once was spoken  
To love another person /Is to see the face of God.*

This All Saints day we remember those from our community who have gone back to God in the past year, those saints in whom we glimpsed the face of God.

We also welcome all new members to this community – especially those who have become a part of St. Thomas' in the past year. We hope and pray, that our newest friends here will always see the face of God in us. May we love and care for them, and help them realize that we are all one in God, interconnected, and may they join us as we assist each other to live into our vocations, as fully human, fully connected people who always—as Jesus says-- treat others as we would like to be treated.

By living that one rule of life--we all become the bright saints of God, and become the face of God to others. Amen.