



The Light Shines Through

How many of you played “dress up” this weekend? Wow...There’s a lot of you who “dressed up.” What did you “dress up” as?

On Halloween we “dress up” in costumes and put on masks to “hide out” to conceal who we really are.

Originally the “disguises” worn on “All Hallows Eve” were supposed to fool the demons and other dark forces roaming the planet on that fateful night.

The idea was that good Christians would be left alone by evil spirits if they dressed to look like they themselves were part of Satan’s army.

But for a lot of us the “dressing up” in costume didn’t stop with Friday night. We also “dressed up” to come to church on Sunday morning. We exchanged our Friday night “sinner” for our Sunday morning “saint” costume.

I had a great-aunt who used to make her requests using a very particular vocabulary.

She would ask, “Would you be a saint and bring me that sweater?”

Or maybe, “Would you be a saint and pick up those dishes?”

All of her requests gave us the opportunity to register ourselves as “saints.”

But is that all there is to being a “saint?” Would all of us be real “saints” if all we had to do were run helpful errands? Isn’t there some deeper commitment, some greater impulse required of a “saint?”

We all know there are true saints in our midst this morning.

Can’t you feel their presence?

We have but to recognize and celebrate them. And this is our problem.

The problem with real “saints” is that they are slippery.

Jesus identified the revealing qualities of a true “saint” in today’s text.

They don’t proudly peacock their achievements.

They do not insist upon recognition of their deeds,

or need special placement in the community, or the best seats in the sanctuary. True “saints” slip under the radar.

They are the ones who give without expectations...

who love without reservation...

who sacrifice without expectation...

who give love and sacrifice without ever wanting recognition or recompense, these are those who qualify as “saints” within the Body of Christ.

Although yesterday was “All Saints Day,” today is “All Saints Sunday.”

It is the one day we should especially make a concerted effort to recognize and celebrate “For all the saints/who from their labors rest.”

These are the “saints” whose legacy of love continues on – saints like St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Francis, St. Theresa.

But there are also our local saints.

The ‘sainting’ process that the church runs all potential ‘saint candidates’ through is both rigorous and sanitizing.

Candidates must pass through a strict series of tests.

They are processed through a saintly sanitizer.

That is a far cry from the biblical standard. Why do we have the need for our “saints” to be utterly sinless? Why is there no room for unsanitized saints?

If we think about it ... St. Peter denied Christ three times ... St. Paul persecuted Christians and cheered at Stephan’s stoning ... St. Augustine was a spoiled, promiscuous, rebellious youth ... St. Aquinas was gluttonous, rude, and abusive

Or read Hebrews 11, the great “communion of saints” chapter.

Can you find one member of the “communion of saints” that isn’t portrayed in the Bible with warts?

In some ways, this great “by faith” chapter of “saints” resembles more a “Rogues’ Gallery” than a Hall of Saints.

In fact, in the Old Testament the faults and foibles of the patriarchs are paraded not hidden. In the Bible, we see saints in their underwear.

The way we play on Halloween is by putting on a mask, pretending to be something we are not.

The way Christians reclaim their identity on All Saints Day is by stripping off all those masks.

We expose who we really are, what we really care about, how we really love - once the masks come off.

If All Hallows’ Eve is all about Masking, All Saints Day is all about Unmasking - unmasking the saints.

Saints do not wear masks.

Saints do wear their hearts on their sleeves.

Saints do wear weariness in well doing.

Saints do wear crowns of suffering.

Saints do mess up and bleed and fail... because saints always love.

Today is the day the Church celebrates all those saints that stand in our midst. “Saints” are those people who keep the heart of the Body of Christ beating, who keep the Body of Christ warm, vital, and alive for the whole world to see. ***Saints let the light shine through!***

They clean bathrooms- they drive three or four extra kids home from an event- they volunteer time time, talent, treasure.

The number cruncher who spends a lifetime balancing budgets and then spends her “down-time” helping un-scramble church finances . . . you’re a saint.

Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted, Jesus promises.

The true saint is one who humbles themselves, serves others, and does not concern themselves with the outcome. Or, as the little boy replied, "*A saint is a somebody the light shines through.*"
Let those who have ears hear! Amen

