

Reflection for All Saints Patronal 2020 Revd Becky

1 John 3 v 1-3

See what great **love** the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

The Beatitudes Matthew 5

Jesus said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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If we named some of the most missed things in the tiers of lockdown, I know many of us would include missing out on love being lavished upon us in the open arms of a grandchild, niece or nephew or friend.

Children are great at expressing their love in an uninhibited manner- arms open wide, running in for a cuddle, or with their tired heads snuggled in on a shoulder. God's love is welcoming and embracing. God's love is not based on performance but acceptance. We are God's children and we learn to be embraced by God through prayer and receiving from others in community.

And our calling in life is one of love- to love God in response and to love our neighbour. Saint Therese of Lisieux says “Let us love, since that is what our hearts were made for.” This love is giving and costly. This is difficult. Saint Theresa of Calcutta stated, “For love to be real, it must cost—it must hurt—it must empty us of self.” The teaching of love and sacrifice can be uncomfortable especially in our world where we are influenced by a wider culture to want so much. If we read the Beatitudes listed above, most of the blessings require work on our part – to be merciful requires us to work at forgiving, to be meek requires us to let go of pride, to thirst for righteousness means continuous action and perseverance within ourselves to decide to bring justice and peace into action. As St Augustine puts it “Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.”

*Your love is so pure
Your love so divine
Your love transforms my soul, my
mind
Your love has the power to
Bring new hope
Amazing love...
I will live to honour You my Lord
You are the gold, treasure of all life
I will rest in You and praise
eternally
(Hillsong)*



The prayer of another saint, St Ignatius, is "Teach us to give and not count the cost." I like this- it speaks to me of how all of us spend our whole lives learning how to love, we never stop learning as we are in relationship with each other and God- we can ask God to teach us. As the lyrics of the hymn Dear Lord and Father of Mankind explains so well, we need to be *re clothed* again and again, to put on God's love again and again in order that 'In purer lives thy service find, in deeper reverence praise.' In loving we praise God.

So I encourage you to continue to give and receive radical love, for God has lavished love upon each of us. As Ephesians says, 'May we understand how long, how deep and how high God's love really is.'

Hymn Reflection from Malcolm Sturgess

For all the saints I expect we shall sing it if we are allowed in church. It is a good hymn (which did not originally go to Vaughan Williams rousing tune). It is not suitable for all kinds of saints (Bernadette, Mother Teresa, Lawrence). It is also very long, and there is always a danger that people will cut out verses without thinking what they are singing (e.g. verses 6 and 7, although there is a full stop, are in effect two parts of the same sentence; sing both, or neither). There are plenty of other hymns about saints, including some very beautiful old ones and some new ones. A hymn can actually be both new and beautiful, and if it's new it will make us think afresh what we are singing about.

So here is another hymn by Fred Pratt Green, the Methodist Minister we met earlier in this series of reflections. Chris Idle, whom we have also met before, wrote a hymn beginning, "What's a saint?" Both authors recognise that a saint is not some ancient semi-fictional being with a halo in a stained glass window. Not only that, anyway. There are saints now, living here amongst us. Fred's words are sensible and straightforward, and nothing needs explaining.

Some people will buy any new fashion, or anything labelled in Tesco's as "NEW", but recoil in horror at the thought of any hymn they haven't known since childhood. It helps if the new words are set to a well-known tune, as in this case. The suggested tune is *Hanover*, which we all learned to *O worship the king*. So we can "rejoice" and "praise" in comfort and security, and with gusto!

Rejoice in God's saints, today and all days!
A world without saints forgets how to praise.
Their faith in acquiring the habit of prayer,
Their depth of adoring, Lord, help us to share.

Some march with events, to turn God's way;
Some need to withdraw, the better to pray;
Some carry the Gospel through fire and through flood:
Our world is their parish; their purpose is God.

Rejoice in those saints, unpraised and unknown,
Who bear someone's cross, or shoulder their own:
They shame our complaining, our comforts, our cares, :
What patience in caring! What courage, is theirs.

Rejoice in God's saints, today and all days!
A world without saints forgets how to praise.
In loving, in living, they prove it is true:
The way of self-giving, Lord, leads us to you.