Sermon :: 01-Nov-2026
All Saints' Day, Year A

" you have knit together your elect in *one communion and fellowship*
in the mystical body of your Son "

Do you have a mental *image* of heaven? a conception of what Paradise is *like?* a *vision* of how we'll spend eternity in the bosom of God … the arms of Christ … the BEING of the Holy Spirit?

- Maybe, like St John's[1] *first* vision of heaven in our reading from Revelation, you see the Christian afterlife as a glorious, never-ending act of *worship:* those from every tribe and language, people and nation, joining hands around the throne of God, in one constant song of praise and adoration.

- Maybe, like St John's *second* vision, you conceive of heaven primarily as *rescue* … as *relief* … as the final, ultimate *righting* of everything *wrong* in *this* world: a Paradise where hunger and thirst … suffering and oppression … hopelessness and horror … are no more. (And aren't there millions, if not billions, of people living *right now* who could get behind *this* vision?!)

- Or maybe like so many of our Christian ancestors stretching back over two millennia, you—like *I*—conceive of eternity as a forever-*feast* … a perpetual *banquet* … a *ceaseless celebration* of light and love: convivial and communal … everyone attentive and attended to … and, at last, at *peace* … at *rest* … and at *home,* in Christ.

On *this* side of the veil, of course, there's no one 'right' answer … can be no certainty … and, in any event, that's not really what I'm after this morning. Rather, my point is the *communal*—the highly *social*—nature of all our visions of heaven. No one I've ever read or spoken with has thought of heaven as some giant *condo* in the sky, with each individual soul securely ensconced in its own little private 'apartment'; or as some sort of *pod farm:* each of us hermetically sealed in a 'bubble' so no one or no-thing can ever again touch us. Can you imagine *that* being the Resurrection Life of Christ?! No! The life we're *destined* for … the eternity we've been *promised* … is one of *company* and *community* … of *companionship* and *communion* … of finally coming *together,* and finally coming to *rest*.

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Over the Church year, we have occasion to renew our baptismal vows *four times*. ¶In January, when we commemorate Jesus' *own* baptism, we reflect upon our emulating Him in *faith* and taking up His *mission* in this world. ¶At the *Easter Vigil,* we celebrate the eternal life He procured for us—the *forever*-ness of God's love *of* us, and joy *in* us—in Jesus' Rising again. ¶On the Day of *Pentecost,* we revel in the gift of the Holy Spirit Jesus gives us, to inspire, companion and comfort us. ¶And *today,* the Feast of *All Saints,* we recollect the *communion of all saints:* our *sharing* in … our *participating* in … our *dwelling* in—and not just at some vague, future *'then'*—but in a very definite and present *'now'*—the heavenly life of those saints who have gone on before us: not because we're already *there* ... but because we're in *spiritual communication* with them … because we're *not-separated* from

[1] Whether John the (Beloved) Apostle or John of Patmos—the debate will swirl forever—he is to be distinguished, of course, from John the Baptist.

them ... because we're in *union* with them … through the indissoluble *baptismal bond* of Christ's grace that links each and every *one* with each and every *other*.

For our collect for All Saints' Day teaches us that God has "knit together" all the faithful "in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of [God's] Son." Therefore, *whatever* heaven is … while it may now be hidden from our *earthly eyes,* we can *see* it with our *holy hearts;* although unreckonable by our *rational knowledge,* heaven we can grasp it with our *faithful wisdom:* We are spiritually, mystically, communion-ally *open* to … we are in prayerful, sacramental, free-flowing, every-day *relationship* with … all who *already* dwell in the fullness of Christ's triumph into which we, *too,* will one day ascend. Our baptisms, then, are not just a promise of a heaven-to-*come*, *later* … but also of a heaven-to-*hold*, *now* … through the bonds of love and mercy, grace and peace, "communion and fellowship," that link every single one of Christ's siblings who ever *have* walked this earth … and who ever *will*.

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Does this sound like 'pie-in-the-sky' to you? Strike you as 'too ethereal'? Not 'practical' or 'grounded' or 'actionable'? Well, *I* might argue, that that's precisely the *point* of this day: ¶In a world tottering, it seems, on the edge of conflict of very human *making* and, also, of very human *exploitation* … ¶in a country stretched almost to the breaking-point by strident, sometimes violent competing narratives of what is 'good' and 'right' and 'just' … ¶in an era of previously unimaginable technology not only coming *alongside* us to *help* us, but also, it increasingly seems, capable—not so long from now—of maybe *overtaking* us … ¶on a planet whose climate is gyrating in ways that threaten massive disruption for all life upon it, unless we begin taking it seriously … ¶in a time when *older* people are spending all their savings simply to keep a roof over their heads and health in their bodies; and *younger* people aren't saving at *all,* because there appears be so little to save *for* …

In *this* world ... at *this* time … under *these* circumstances … at *these* crossroads ... the call is upon *us,* as *baptized Christians* … both *believing,* in *faith,* and *brave,* in *spirit* … ¶to *see*—really *see*—the clear vision of heaven the saints offer us, in their *companionship* with us … ¶for us to *open*—*wide*—the window to Paradise the saints present to us, in their *community* with us … ¶for us to *seize*—*live*—the promise not only of God's *glory* but also of God's *goodness* that the saints share with us, in their *communion* with us … and, then, *speak* this heaven to … *offer* this Paradise to … and, if need be, *thrust* God's goodness *upon* … a world that either doesn't *know* them or chooses to *reject* them … but still so very desperately *needs* them.

We know them through the grace we experience *right here,* at this Font and this Altar, Sunday after Sunday: gathering and hearing, thanking and receiving. We step, in effect, *into* heaven, with the saints, every time we come together.

But this *place* … this *worship* … is neither an *'escape'* nor a *'distraction'* from whatever 'hell' is out there. No! We feast upon the Good News the saints proclaim and impart *to* us … live and share *with* us … so that we may go out and *feed* it to the *world:*

- We're one with Christ's saints in heaven, and so *we* comfort those who mourn: giving them a taste of heaven, *now*

- We're one with Christ's saints in heaven, and so *we* fill those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: giving them a taste of heaven, *now*

- We're one with Christ's saints in heaven, and so *we* share the resources of this earth with the meek: giving them a taste of heaven, *now*

- We're one with Christ's saints in heaven, and so *we* show mercy to the merciful … *we* embrace the peacemakers … *we* pray with the poor in spirit … *we* encourage the pure in heart: giving them taste after taste after taste of heaven, *now*

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In these times—uncertain and challenging, unaccustomed and corrupt—it's a temptation to gaze upon only what we see with our *earthly* eyes and say, "I don't know." To ponder only the thoughts of our *rational* minds and conclude, "It's hopeless."

But, my baptized friends, we *do* know … we *do* have hope! We can *hear* the saints-in-heaven with our hearts … we can *sense* them with our spirits … we can *feel* them with our faith … … and we can *gather, with* them, around the heavenly throne of God, in praise. ¶Look *'up,'* to heavenly family of Christ, in peace! ¶Look *here,* to this heavenly banquet we consume with them, in communion. ¶And *let* the saints *open* you to their *joy*. ¶*Let* the saints *open* you to their *hope*. ¶*Let* the saints *give* you their *vision* … their *assurance* … their *words* to share with this weary, wobbling world. *With* them, let us proclaim—nay, let us *promise*—that the flawed futility of this earth is *neither* the *plan nor* the *end* God has in store for creation. For God will not *stop creating* … Christ will not *cease praying* … the Holy Spirit will not *quit inspiring* … until we are all—*all—all—one:* the saints in *heaven* and the saints on *earth,* singing to "the Lamb," the "shepherd," Who *will* "guide [all] to springs of the water of life, and [the] God [Who] *will* wipe away every tear from" every eye.

Heaven *is, indeed, within our reach* on this earth, through all the saints who dwell alongside us. And we need only ask them to *help* us *grasp* it: not only for ourselves, but also for the *world*.

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