

Feast of All Saints, 1/11/2015, Terrigal

John 11:32-44

Spring Festivals are being held in various parts of Australia.

They celebrate the end of winter with new growth and life leading into summer.

To-day's celebration of the Feast of All Saints is a great spring festival of the spiritual life.

As I look at the long line of the saints who have been formally named in our Church's calendar, I find the diversity and variety of people – women and men, from every Christian era, from all walks of life, living under varying conditions – breathtaking and at the same time encouraging.

To look at the saints in this way is a recall for us to take our place in the spiritual community to which we belong and to which those who have gone before us still belong.

In talking about this I am speaking of us in the now, in the present.

We are members of that spiritual community now as an individual and also of us collectively, along with the whole Church.

We are called to holiness even in the face of our sinfulness.

We face up to our sinfulness individually and of the spiritual community of the Church at large.

When I look at All Saints, those who have been formally named and those unnamed and those who are presently still living in this life, in the midst of their great diversity, there is one thing they have in common – at some stage in life we/they recognise our deep need for God.

Here is the very heart of the matter – not only for them, but for us also and for every Christian of every age – a recognition of their need for God.

“My soul is restless, until it finds its rest in God.”

“Like as the hart desires the water brook, so longs may soul for Thee, O God.”

“How blessed are those who know their need of God.”

All Saints' Day is no roll call of past heroes.

They are our brothers and sisters, they are with us on the way – alongside us as companions and guides, sustaining us with their prayers and guiding us with their example.

And here, as we come together in the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ, that we share with angels and archangels and all

creation, with apostles and prophets, with holy men and women of every age and with the whole church in heaven and earth in our praise of God.

It is in these Holy Mysteries, in this Eucharist that we see our brokenness, our sinfulness and the sinfulness of the whole of humanity that we know our need of God.

At the same time we rejoice in the abundant grace, mercy, forgiveness and love of God who in Christ has come among us; who accepts us, just as we are and whose Holy Spirit is already at work in each one of us in this sacramental celebration.

“How blessed are those who know their need of God.”

One film of which I am very fond is “Dead Poet Society” with the late Robyn Williams.

On the first day as a teacher at the school, Mr Keating takes the class down the corridor to where the treasures of the school are kept.

When they come to the glass cabinet in which there are photos of principals, teachers and students along with other memorabilia, he tells the students to move in close and listen to what previous teachers and pupils have to say.

As they huddle in closer Mr. Keating urges them to listen and from behind them he whispers “Seize the day, boys. Make your lives extraordinary!”

Here we are gathered around all the saints with God at the centre of it all.

Now quietly lean forward and hear what they have to say.

They remind us of our inheritance.

They call our attention to the treasures of life and they tell us of God’s great love, forgiveness and compassion for us.

Then they whisper, “Seize the day, our sisters and brothers. Make your lives extraordinary as the saints of God still on this earth.”

Those who say this to you are a great cloud of witnesses who are gathered among us here to-day.

Thanks be to God who knows our need and who gives us the Communion of Saints who pray for us and help to sustain us with their example.

AMEN.