

All Saints Sunday

I think this is the first time in my priestly career that I have been able to celebrate an All Saints Eucharist on two different days. Of the seven Principal Feasts, the prayer book allows only All Saints to be observed on the following Sunday, in addition to its fixed date. This year November 1st was on a Tuesday, when we usually have a Eucharist. On that day I told those who showed up that I would postpone talking about the lessons until today. So I had best do that!

It's not as easy as I would hope, however. Sometimes it seems that the best readings have been assigned to Lectionary Years A and B, and Year C gets the leftovers. I really feel that way today. For the life of me I cannot tell you why that obscure passage from Daniel was chosen. It must be because of the last verse in which the holy ones shall receive and possess the kingdom.

The reading from Ephesians is much better. I love that section about enlightening the eyes of our hearts. Today, in particular, our eyes are enlightened as we remember that we are in communion with those who have come before us as well as those who will come after us. God's time encompasses past, present, and future. It is not just those who once sat in our pews that are present today; it is those who will be here after us.

I see hope for that future in the children who processed as saints this morning for the first time in several years. It was present when they sang today's hymn of praise. "This little light of mine" is not quite a Gloria in excelsis, but for today it sufficed.

The Gospel reading we heard this morning was Luke's version of what in Matthew we call the Beatitudes. Where Matthew provides only blessings, Luke balances each blessing with a woe. And Luke's blessings are much more concrete. He makes the choices very clear, and they are no easy ones. We continually struggle to love our enemies, do good to those who hate us, and bless those who curse us. For weeks now we've seen just the opposite of that in this election cycle, and it won't end after this coming Tuesday, either.

That's what makes our faith so critical to our lives. At last week's diocesan convention we heard video greetings from the current bishops of our companion dioceses. I still remember when the late Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya came to Iowa from Swaziland early in my time as Dean. Something she said then still sticks with me. Within her diocese, she said, "People come to church on Sunday because that is where our hope is restored." Think about that. People come to church on Sunday because that is where our hope is restored.

God calls us to hope, as the letter to the Ephesians said. That's what we see with the eyes of our heart, that we may know what are the riches of God's glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe.

Hope comes to us through Jesus Christ. In spite of all evidence to the contrary, God has redeemed God's good creation, that all will be made new, that death will be no more, that all of the saints, past, present, and future, will not have died in vain. It is a hope sealed for us at that first Resurrection which we celebrate every Sunday, that one day we will dwell with God forever. May your hope be restored today and every day as you live your life surrounded by the communion of saints and the love of God in Jesus Christ.

[All Saints Sunday: Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18; Psalm 149; Ephesians 1:11-23; Luke 6:20-31.]