

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

Today is All Saints Sunday. Luther famously said we are “simultaneously saint and sinner”. I suspect we all have a pretty good idea of who and what a sinner is, all we have to do is look in a mirror, but saint, well that’s another matter.

There are *the* saints of course, St. Olaf, St. Benedict, St. Urho, St. Bruce, those who when we think of, we may think of as radiantly holy, incredibly wise. One of my favorite authors, Frederick Buechner, in his book *Wishful Thinking*, had a great definition of a saint. He said, "In his holy flirtation with the world, God sometimes drops a handkerchief. Those handkerchiefs are called saints."

Holy flirtation, so has flirting has gone out of fashion? I think folks still flirt, but maybe they don’t. Everything seems to move at a tremendous pace nowadays. Tweet a comment on Twitter, put a picture on Instagram, and within seconds you get responses from the other side of the globe. It seems that there is less time for relationship now, for that deliberately delicate delicious give-and-take that comes from really getting to know someone, sharing secrets. Perhaps it’s always been so to one extent or another, but relationships now seem to ebb and flow with each electronic pulse that shares with the entire world.

And speaking of the world, consider that there is a spirit in the world, an evil spirit which tempts us into immediate fulfillment, toward the down and dirty, especially if done quickly in a raw sort of fashion. There’s not fulfillment there, only seduction without life, there’s no lovely mystery, secrets are out and open for everyone to see.

But God comes to us in lovely mystery, a relationship that develops over time, as Buechner says, in a holy flirtation with the world. One way we will know God is to let time stop, let the hurried life pass us by, and learn from the person sitting next to us. The folks I call every day saints.

Someone who knows emptiness, who needs no pretense or deceit. Someone whose heart allows God to be present in a perhaps unexpected way. Blessed are the poor and the poor in spirit. Poverty and poverty of spirit are the reasons that infants and children can be saints, too. Can there be any more empty person than an infant like Charlie, hungry and curious, with such an enormous capacity for God? If we have eyes for it, these infants like Charlie show us the mystery, the wonder of God. And the sick and elderly are saints showing the mystery and wonder of God.

Even your intimate other-half can be a saint, the one you love. If you look into her eyes or his eyes and see mystery, and if you know at that moment that there is something else besides the material and the obvious, then you look into the eyes of a saint. You know, an advantage of growing older is that we come to know many saints. When we are young it might be we respect only our parents, perhaps other family. And of course the neighbor who looks so much like us. But the broader our lives, our horizons, the more we know the grace of God through others. Recognizing

that other people who are different from us, are not strangers but saints.

I think that if the stars are light, then perhaps those whom the Light of God shines through are saints. Not just the big name saints like Olaf and Francis because they are stars too, but the saints around us. The Light of the World shines through them and illuminates what they see, it just goes right through them and we see beauty.

Saints are the people the Light of the World shines through. Blessed are the saints, and you who are poor, materially or in spirit. Blessed are you who hunger and thirst for physical sustenance and who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are you who weep and who mourn, the meek and the peacemakers.

All Saints Sunday, when we remember the saints who have gone before us, everyday folks whom the light shone through. Most of us are not big name saints. We are the saints who mourn and weep, hungry and thirsty.

The truth of this day is that each of us baptized is a saint in the eyes of God. God sanctifies us when we are baptized. God chooses us and claims us, we are his vessels through whom the light shines.

The older I become, the more saints I get to know, they haven't all acted the same, or even all believed the same way. But they give and serve, poor or rich, weeping and laughing, hungry and full, all pointing to God, looking to God, the Light of God shining through them as they look at the love of God. Can you see it? Can you see that love through the communion of saints, that cloud of witnesses? Saints in every generation showing us God's love affair with humanity.

Today we celebrate All Saints Day, not just the famous saints, but the non-descript bumbling inept saints. The proud and humble. We've all known the poor in spirit, who are empty enough to show us God. Each of them has provided an opportunity for us to know God.

AMEN