



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Feast of All Saints – Sermon for 10.00am 1 November 2020
Bible Readings: Revelations 7: 9-end & St Matthew 5: 1-12
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

What is greatness?

The saying goes that some people are born great and others have greatness thrust upon them. Whereas I've been destined to take our service this morning in terms of greatness, even I'm not big-headed enough to be referring to myself! I refer to the innumerable generations of godly people who didn't seek attention, I mean the saints most of whom are now known only to God. Of the ones mentioned in the Bible, I'm sure, it would never have entered any of their heads that decades, centuries and even millennia later anyone would recall them; let alone revere their memory and above all, find their faithfulness a source of encouragement and inspiration in daily living as also adversity.

As we know, at the end of the month we'll celebrate our Patron St Andrew's Feast Day who together with his brother Peter were Jesus' first disciples. Andrew, the reflective thinker and listener who gently pointed people to Jesus paired with Peter the charismatic, enthusiastic disciple who seized the day for Christ. No matter what personalities each of the saints displayed all made a valuable contribution towards furthering Christ's ministry and mission. An important encouragement for us is that not one saint was perfect, they were after all only human like the rest of us, however, each displayed faithfulness, resilience and tenacity in holding fast to their God-given calling. How, I wonder, did they achieve what so many of us hope to emulate yet often feel that we fail miserably. Here are three ideas I plucked from this morning's reading.

Saints use reverse logic

In the Gospel Jesus compares worldly thinking with godly thinking. The world strives to forge ahead wielding power, displaying wealth, never going short of food, shelter or clothing, but Jesus says don't amass these material comforts, for long-term blessings don't come from these. Rather, blessed are you when you stand firm for your faith in the cause of righteousness, for you'll be rewarded in heaven. All of the disciples who walked the way of the cross with Jesus had a talent for reverse logic or, as today's Collect says, 'virtuous and godly living'.

Saints show endurance

In the descriptive account of Revelations, we learned that the saints gathered around the throne of the Lamb had "come out of the great ordeal; & they will hunger and thirst no more; the sun will not scorch them; they will be guided to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." In daily living we are often challenged with disturbing events, Covid being one of them that test our faith and

natural resilience. We wonder why such events occur and what the long-term effects might be. The patient endurance of the saints knuckling down and getting on with the task of ministry and mission is spiritual life-skill setting them apart from those who were swayed by worldly pursuits and hence fell by the wayside.

Saints support in community

Revelations also shows us that despite the hardships endured, when earthly life is over all who have been faithful to Christ are honoured by God gathered together in restful community before the Lamb. Such a community of saints is a great encouragement to we Christians who are Christ's risen body here on earth. For a topical example, it's not dissimilar to the early months of Covid when 'Guernsey Together' secured our health and freedom that was unimaginable elsewhere, and now, as an island we are asked to shoulder that commitment of togetherness again. I consider is an example that has lateral application. Those of us who were at the recent Deanery Synod know that all Deanery Churches await receipt of the Deanery Review. We will be asked how our churches plan to continue and thrive over the next 2, 5 and 10-year horizon. For a tangential secular example of fresh initiative in these challenging times, I was impressed with the Guernsey Press article yesterday featuring a hotel in Sark and how it is reinventing itself to revive and thrive. We too, with vision, can do likewise. Christians are stronger when we look out for each other. Might it be that some mission initiatives could be more effective if shared with other parishes pooling knowledge for Deanery benefit and mutual support?

How do we do that?

Easy to say but how do we as the Collect says of the saints, 'knit together in one communion and fellowship? St Andrew and his bother Peter give us inspiration: two personalities so utterly different, one the introvert the other the extrovert and yet, they both served faithfully supporting each other to further the mission of Christ in their very different ways.

God asks for the possible: he does the impossible

God doesn't ask us for the impossible just faithful Commitment to him and his people. The saints whom we remember today were ordinary people like you and me. With daily commitment they learned what togetherness meant. Saintliness, it's within our grasp too!

Amen