

The Reverend Renee L. Fenner  
St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church  
All Saints' Sunday/Year B  
November 4, 2018  
Text: John 11:32-44

We remember the Saints

*“For all the saints, who from their labors rest, Who thee by faith before the world  
confessed, Thy Name, O Jesus, be forever blessed. Alleluia, alleluia!”*

Be still. Listen!  
Can you hear their voices?  
Can you remember their words of wisdom even now?  
Can you feel their arms surrounding you?

We did more than speak their names. We remember. There are those who went home to God after living long and full lives and those who left us unexpectedly and far too soon. Each had their own story to tell. Each had an impact on our lives.

We remember-not just on this day but perhaps every day, every moment. We hear their voices, their laughter, their sighs. We replay and pass on their words of encouragement and of instruction, those pearls of wisdom even now. We feel their comfort, their presence surrounding us, perhaps the light brush of a kiss, the gentle pressing of their hands in ours or upon our shoulders, the small of our backs encouraging us to continue on.

So many names. So many who were and are loved still. They are among the latest now joined with the multitude of ancestors and of the communion of saints. Each one committed to the dust from which we all came and one day we will all go. And from our lips we prayed, *“Give rest, O Christ, to your servant(s) with your saints, where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting.”* We mustered the strength that only comes from God to say, to sing our *Alleluias*.

God's Word comes to us on this Feast of All Saints. From the Wisdom of Solomon, the promise that *“The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God.”* They and we will be at peace. The image of a new heaven and new earth as found in Revelation. And for our hearing, the awesome story of God's glory shown in

the raising of Lazarus. The reactions of Mary and Martha who had sent word that their beloved brother was ill and then died. A weeping Jesus, disturbed and grieved as he approached the place where his friend, Lazarus, laid *dead-stone cold and stinking dead*. And the miracle of miracles, the sign of signs as Lazarus stepped out and Jesus directed those nearby to *“Unbind him, and let him go.”* Unbind him and let him go, so that the symbols of death; the stone, the tomb, the grave clothes can no longer hold him in the dark-so that the glory of God can be revealed. Unbind him and let him go, so that he can once again experience life, life changed and anew. Unbind him and let him go, so that he can be free.

The story of Lazarus is shared on this Feast of All Saints to remind us there is more to the story of a corpse raised from the dead. For the story of Lazarus points to the glory of God and to his Son, Jesus Christ whose death and Resurrection banished the power and sting of death once and for all. It reminds us that God in Christ will do for us what our Savior did for Lazarus. It reminds us that we cannot and must not be held captive by those things that threaten to keep us bound on this side of the grave like jealousy, hatred, envy, expectations, broken relationships, insecurities, and sin. It reminds us that we need not live in fear for death does not have the final word. Death is only the portal to new and everlasting life. The saints; our family, friends, and loved ones have only gone before us. The sting and stink of death has dissipated. They have been set free. We walk in their footsteps. And there is for us the promise and hope of new life, and freedom. The glory of God being revealed even here and now, and in the life to come.

In the Letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul wrote, *“Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the power of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life”* (Romans 5:4). And so today, saints of God, let us remember our own baptisms as we renew our Baptismal Vows and bring into this into this community of faith and into the communion of saints, Suzie and Barry Schuler.

Come, let us go to the water...