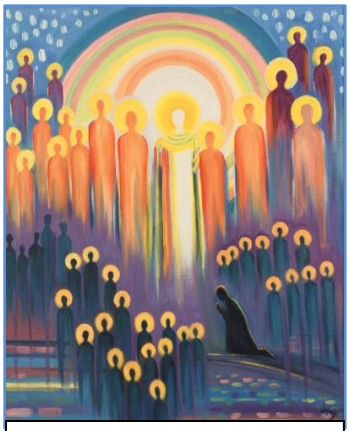
REFLECTION FOR ALL SAINTS DAY AND ALL SOULS' DAY
THE COMMUNION OF HOLY ONES
01/02 November 2026

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

Catherine McAuley joyfully asked, "Will we all meet in Heaven? O what a joy even to think of it!" We say this traditional prayer for everyone of our loved ones who dies, "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen." Like many of the sayings and prayers that are so well known to us, we say them without reflecting on the deep understanding of what the words truly mean. As we celebrate the feast of All Saints' Day on Sunday and All Souls' Day on Monday, may we be mindful of the depths of richness in these special days and the critical importance of understanding them as one feast with two dimensions.

Elizabeth Johnson, csj, helps us see the interconnection between these two feast days with her reflection on the "communion of holy ones":

> The communion of saints is a Christian symbol that speaks of profound relationship. In traditional usage, it points to an ongoing connection between the living and the dead, implying that the dead have found new life thanks to the merciful power of God. It also suggests a bond of companionship among living persons themselves who, though widely separated geographically, form one church community. Insofar as the original Latin term *communio sanctorum* is ambiguous, referring in one instance to a communion of holy people but in another instance to a communion of holy things – it also signifies eucharistic sharing and, by extension, sharing in the sacred community of life that is creation itself.



Elizabeth Wang, T-00042A-OL, All Saints, © Radiant Light 2006, radiantlight.org.uk

In Johnson's reflection, she speaks about this emerging awareness: from emphasis on the dead alone to the whole living community as all saints; from emphasis on heroic virtue and the miraculous to everyday struggle and creative fidelity; from canonized saints alone to the whole company of the dead, embraced in the life of God and accessed through memory and hope; from holy figures as elite practitioners of virtue to those same persons as companions cherished for their witness and the encouragement it gives; and from a purely human-centered circle to a community of the whole natural world imbued with God's blessing.

We hear in today's reading from the Book of Revelation, "After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing

before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands" (Rev 7:9). Retelling the stories of those faithful ones who have died before us brings the subversive, encouraging, and liberating power of their love and witness into our present generation. Among this great multitude who stand before the throne and the Lamb are many whom we knew personally. Their number increases as we get older: grandparents, mother and father, sisters and brothers, community members, teachers, students, patients, clients, friends and colleagues, relatives and neighbors, spiritual guides, and religious leaders. Take time this week to dwell in the memory of your loved ones who have died but remain connected to us by a very thin veil.

And the "All" includes you and me! With all our vulnerabilities and our flaws, we, too, are holy ones. In the words of the Wesleyan spiritual writer, Bethany Broadstock, "*We* are *they*; that we by the grace of God take our place in the unbroken circle of the living and the dead, only human yet made holy in belonging. In life, in death, in life beyond death, we belong to God." All of us are called to be saints, on Earth as well as later in heaven. I treasure these wise and down-to-earth words from the Presbyterian theologian, poet, and pastor Frederich Buechner:

> On All Saints' Day, it is not just the saints of the church that we should remember in our prayers, but all the foolish ones and wise ones, the shy ones and overbearing ones, the broken ones and whole ones, the despots and tosspots and crackpots of our lives who, one way or another, have been our particular fathers and mothers and saints, and whom we loved without knowing we loved them and by whom we were helped to whatever little we may have, or ever hope to have, of some kind of seedy sainthood of our own.

And we are called to love ourselves – with all our heart, with all our being, with all our mind and with all our strength (Matt 22:37-39). Again, I turn to another wise spiritual writer, the Episcopalian African American Bishop Michael Curry, to say what this means for us:



The call of God, the love that bids us welcome, is always a call to become the true you, not an imitation of someone else. The true you: someone made in the image of God, deserving of and receiving love. There is a Jewish proverb, "Before every person there marches an angel proclaiming, 'Behold, the image of God.' It is impossible to know, in the moment, how a small act of goodness will reverberate through time. The notion is empowering and it is frightening – because it means that we are all capable of changing the world, and responsible for finding those opportunities to protect, feed, grow, and guide love.

Imagine if you truly believed that an angel walks before you proclaiming, "Behold the image of God!" Imagine how you would see yourself, how you would act differently, how would hold yourself in greater respect and love!

Psalm 24 begins with the words, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it" (Ps 24:1). All Saints Day and All Souls' Day have even more profound meaning as we grow in our understanding of integral ecology. Indigenous peoples give us two powerful yet simple metaphors to help us: (i) seven generations, and (ii) seeing with two eyes. The *Seven Generations Principle* is common within many Indigenous communities across North America. Jayla Rousseau-Thomas, an Anishinaabe social worker, describes this Principle as a guide for how to live our lives through the use of respect, love, bravery, wisdom, humility, honesty and truth: "Each person is to consider the decision they are seeking to make by considering what would the seven generations before them have done and how will this decision impact seven generations into the future."

Can you imagine how different decision-making would be if, every time we make a difficult decision, we ask what our ancestors would have done! What would Jesus or Mary Magdalene do if they were faced with this decision? What would my Grandfather Davis or my Grandmother McGrath do if they were faced with this decision? What would Catherine McAuley or the first three Sisters of Mercy who came ashore in St. John's do if they were faced with this decision?



The Mi'kmaq people have taught us the word *Etuaptmumk* meaning "Two-Eyed Seeing." With one eye, we view the world through Indigenous ways of knowing and with the other eye, we view the world through Western, or Eurocentric, ways of knowing. A beautiful illustration of this philosophy is found in *Walking Together* by Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall, a book that reflects the spirit of our synodal journey. An excerpt from that book reads, "When we walk together in a good way, we learn to see the world through two eyes. We receive the gifts of Mother Earth through stories. When we walk together in a good way, things are revealed. We are never alone. We need each other. Mawikwayk. Together we are strong." We have no problem seeing the world through Western eyes. But how would our decisions change if we imagined seeing the world through the eyes of the Quechua and Aymara peoples of Peru or the Mi'kmaq, Innu, or Inuit peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador?

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says to the crowd, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the

merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (Matt 5:1-12).

The pastor-poet, Roddy Hamilton, re-imagines the beatitudes for all of us as, on these days of All Saints and All Souls, we follow the ways of Jesus and celebrate one another, ourselves, Earth beings, Earth and the cosmos:

Blessed are you who make room at your table
for in that way even tax-collectors shall be redeemed
Blessed are you who seek out lost sheep
for your seeking you find more than a lamb
Blessed are you who touch the leper
for you make a home for the excluded
Blessed are you who welcome the prodigal
for you express the fullness of the love that is God
Blessed are the silenced
for you hear the cry of God
Blessed are you who make friends with your enemy
for you know the way to lasting peace
Blessed are you who turn the other cheek
for you show more strength than the oppressor
Blessed are you who break bread with the stranger
you will have a foretaste of the kingdom
Blessed are you who heal on the Sabbath
you will reveal what is important to God
Blessed are you who seek company with the outcast and unclean
for you shall be accompanying Jesus
Blessed are you who overturn the tables
you are the freedom fighters of love
Blessed are you who love your neighbour
for you already live in the realm of God
Blessed are you who walk the way
for you shall move within the company of heaven
Blessed are you who carry a cross
for you shall see God's wisdom
Blessed are you who wait for the morning
for you shall see the renewal of life.



The Communion of the Saints