

Neighbors in Christ,

Grace and peace be to you, my beloved family and friends. We have entered into the month of November and I cannot believe how quickly this year has flown by. It was as if we were just running around in short sleeves and relaxed clothing only weeks ago, and now the sweaters, jackets, and gloves are taking their places in our closets and coat racks. November brings the hopeful end to the harvest, a change in our clocks, and families coming together for Thanksgiving toward the end of the month. But November also brings another festival I want to mention...All Saints Day.

All Saints Day, celebrated the first Sunday of the month of November, is the festival time that we honor those family and friends who have gone home to God ahead of us. Our worship services commemorate a special time when we read the names of those who have died during the last year since the last All Saints Day. We also toll the church bells as the names are read, while pictures and candles are visible to the congregation as a visible sign of their loss to us and their family and friends. It also allows us to express our faith that has been nurtured by people who have journeyed before us, some known dearly and others we have never met.

When we remember the saints who have gone home to the Lord before us we also can lift up our heads to notice the living saints that are all around us, the children of God, who worship with us each and every week. Some worship services may be grand events while others will be more simple. Yet every time we gather in Word and Sacrament (the hearing of God's Word and the bread and the wine of Holy Communion), we too are reminded of the great hymn "For All the Saints." The lyrics and beautiful melody give example to us so we may lift our heads held high, and sing with loud voices. This expresses that we too are saints, even as we live in the here and now.

The hymn's first stanza is as follows: "For all the saints who from their labors rest, who thee by faith before the world confessed, thy name O Jesus, before forever blest. Alleluia! Alleluia!" We remember those who have gone before us with joyful hearts in hope of the One who calls each of us saints, and beloved children of God. Their confession is our confession too.

So as we go forth and remember those who have died and are now at peace with God, let us also realize that we too are saints and are called to love and serve our Triune God, as well as our fellow humanity. Dear Saints, thank you for the great work that you do in the name of Jesus Christ.

I look forward to seeing you in worship this month.

Peace be with you!

Rev. Erik Karlson
Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish