

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

November 3, 2024



## ALL SAINTS

*and All Souls*

by Drew Downs

This week we will celebrate a fall Triduum of All Hallow's Eve, All Saints, and All Souls: three days of honoring life, death, and resurrection among the people of the world.

The principal feast of All Saints is beloved by many as a means of honoring those who came before. This, of course, is supposed to be the function of All Souls, in which we honor and remember those non-canonized saints of our lives.

Centering a day on sainthood, however, has the challenge of disembodiment—making the saintly of something greater than humanity—while also *too* embodying us—making the saintly of all of the people we have ever known. This, of course, is the power of Christian sainthood. These are mortal men and women who were more or less like us, gifted like us, privileged like us, and their commitment to Christ reveals that, even for us, sainthood is possible.

# ORDINARY TIME

2024

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### For All the Saints

The Episcopal Church, like other "liturgical" churches, has a collection of saints that we honor with feasts and fasting. Some are ancient and some are new. Some were terrible people in modern terms and some unbelievably good. Some are saints because they did incredible things and others simply because they died a particular way (we call them martyrs). And within all of this diversity, we can see beauty, diversity, and all manner of possibility.

We often reserve All Saints Day in our hearts as the day to remember the dead—the saints we knew in life and cherish in death. This seems useful to our understanding, if not a bit unfinished. It strikes me that when we do this, it is like we're only doing half of our homework.

Years ago, at another congregation, after a saintly figured died, the most common refrain I heard was how "he taught me everything I know." But none of these people *acted* like him. This felt illustrative of modern sainthood—that we might be so moved by a person that we make an icon of them and yet fail to act much like them ourselves.

We're being invited, not to think the best of a loved one, but to see the best of what we are capable of—to learn from one another and do things in our world that match the devotion to Christ others shared before. Not that we might be numbered among the saints, but that the saints display a way of being that is not just attainable—but something most anyone could do.

With love,  
Drew

# ORDINARY TIME

2024

## FOR SUNDAY

*All Saints B*

November 3, 2024

### **Collect**

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

John 11:32-44

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

# ORDINARY TIME

---

## Reflection

Mary and Martha send word to Jesus that his friend, Lazarus, is dying. He delays his journey to them, but not enough to get there to save him from dying. And his coming to them comes in spite of the opposition from the disciples, who consider this journey to dangerous.

All of this is true. And yet we hear Mary scold Jesus. What a recognizable response. It isn't rational. Even if he had hustled, he would have been two days late. But that isn't the point, right? Not to the grieving sister. He should have *tried*. It reminds me of the king's delusion in *The Lord of the Rings* when, in the midst of grief over the death of his elder son, he sends his younger son on a death mission. That there is a kind of virtue in trying in an impossible situation, which renders not trying a display of uncaring.

The strange familiarity of this delusion makes its rationale nearly universal, though never truly rational. And even as she says it, Mary seems to know its stupid. That its the grief talking.

The impossibility of Jesus getting there in time is set against the impossibility of rising from the dead. And it seems *this* is the sort of impossible thing made possible by God. We aren't able to teleport like on Star Trek or run really fast like the Flash. But God does seem willing to play with the matter of life and death.

Wouldn't it make more sense for followers of Jesus to find his way more familiar than Mary's? That we seek to see God's place in resurrecting rather than trying to save? Which is not to say that we don't save lives in general, but that our faith is better served in seeking resurrection than in bemoaning missed opportunities to save the dying? Particularly with our institutions, relationships, and the people who have received all manner of medical interventions. God resurrects. We unbind them and let them go.

---

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807  
812.232.5165

STSTEPHENSTH.ORG