

Throughout the human story the Spirit of God continues to speak, in visions and voices, in images and ideas, and in all languages and all times, to all people in all places, inviting the people of God to discover new revelation. To Abram it came as a sign in the stars and the sand that he had been chosen by God, to Moses it came in the sense that earth was ablaze with God's glory, to Rahab it came as an unexplainable feeling that her enemies should be befriended, to Esther it came as courage to speak, to act, to imagine, to risk, to Mary it was dramatic, angelic, unbelievable—an overpowering realization that neither her life nor the world---would ever be the same. To the disciples and a blind man, and a bleeding woman, and a boy in seizures, and a woman caught in guilt, and a dying thief, and a Roman soldier, and thousands of others, it was the personal touch, the eyewitness experience of the teacher-healer-lover of people, the human being they called Jesus of Nazareth, to three women at the empty tomb it was a gift in return for their faith, an ecstasy no one else remained to enjoy, a story no one else had faith, at first, to recount or believe and the words and the life and the power of this Jesus have tunneled through tomb and have flown through time and culture and continue to live for us today. The Spirit continues to speak in visions and voices, in images and ideas, in all languages and times, to all people in all places, to people like Irenaeus, Paula, Aquinas, and Theresa, through prophets and popes and priests and peasants, and through women whose names are forgotten, but whose faith will endure, etched in the hearts of those they have taught and nurtured, resounding in the songs they have sung and passed on, incarnate in ideas and questions they shared and inspired. The Spirit has spoken through people of many faiths from the Buddha to Gandhi whose lives and teachings seem to echo those of Christ. To Luther and Calvin and Wesley and Mary Dyer, Susan B. Anthony and Rosa Parks, Spirit came as a reformer's fire, blazing in the heart and still the Spirit comes to us today, in new voices and new visions and in new understandings of the voices and visions passed on to us from yesterday, it may burn in our hearts like fire or whisper in the silence as a still, small voice. It may sing to us from the stars or sneak up on us from within, or embrace us in the touch of another child of God. But we are here today, because the Spirit speaks to us and we respond.

“Saintly Souls”

**I sing a song of the saints of God, patient and brave and true,
who toiled and fought and lived and died for the Lord they loved
and knew. And one was a doctor, and one was a queen, and one
was a shepherdess on the green; they were all of them saints of
God and I mean,
God help me to be one too.**

(I Sing a Song of the Saints of God, vs. 1)

In the daily devotional, ‘Saints,’ Rev. Quinn Caldwell wrote: ‘Here’s what it means to be a saint: it means you have direct access to God. It means that you can see the Heart that breaks for all that is broken. Here’s who is a saint: every member of the church, and that means you. You know that throughout history the church has recognized certain people for their closeness to God, people like the apostle Peter. But in our tradition, everyone who is a member of the church is a saint, able to communicate directly with God, gifted at least sometimes, with visions of God’s heart. And when we’re really getting it right, we saints then find ways to pass what we know about God on to the people around us, spreading vision and grace freely.’

(365 Devotions, p. 285-286)

**They loved their Lord so dear, so dear, his love made them
strong; and they followed the right, for Jesus’ sake, the whole of
their good lives long. And one was a soldier, and one was a
priest, and one was slain by a fierce wild beast; and there’s not
any reason no, not the least, why I shouldn’t be one too.**

(vs. 2)

From Uncle Bill, ‘My Final Journey’ . . . To be read after my porch light goes out.

Sing no sad songs for me. My life has been a full one. If one must cry with my passing, let them be with tears of joy. If there be sufficient of them, perhaps they can become a river – a river of happiness flowing to a distant sea. Along the way, my eye shall be on the sparrow, and it’s true, butterflies really do fly free. Let me assure you that this distant sea shall not be a Sea of Doubt but rather the Sea of Certainty—a certainty that the life

I've lived has been with the awareness that I was never alone. My Heavenly Father is with me. Upon this Sea of Certainty, I see a vessel. It is the good ship Bountiful Blessings. It is to carry me on this my last journey. It is equipped with three masts. These three masts carry an individual sail each. The first is the foresail. It is called FAITH. It leads the way with steadfast assurance that all is well. Aft, or to the rear, is the stern sail. It is called HOPE. It serves as the rudder to keep our vessel on course. In the middle is the main sail—it is the largest of all. It is called LOVE. Throughout time, it is known that without FAITH and HOPE, there can be no LOVE. At the helm of the good ship Bountiful Blessings stands Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. He too is with me all the way. The sails FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE begin to fill with the gentle breezes brought about by the wings of a host of heavenly angels. Ahead of me I see a beautiful rainbow. It has every hue and color, some of which I've never seen before. It is truly glorious. Alleluia! Alleluia! I am surrounded by a profound sense of peace and joy. There is. Straight ahead. The Golden Shore. I have arrived at the Kingdom of God. My Heavenly Father is here as is my Lord Jesus Christ. And there, right between them, with her radiant smile and her arms upraised to me is my Beloved Dee. Welcome home, Uncle Bill! I love you "little Ducky!"

They lived not only in ages past, there are hundreds of thousands still; the world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus' will. You can meet them in school, or in lanes, or at sea, in church, or in trains, or in shops, or at tea; for the saints of God are just folk like me, and I mean to be one too.

(vs. 3)

In 1864 Bishop William How wrote the hymn, 'For All the Saints,' to celebrate All Saints Day. He cited Hebrews 12:1 in his original title, but he drew on all of Hebrews 11 for inspiration. That's the famous "faith chapter," which praises the faithful deeds of a score of Old Testament heroes. Bishop How might be considered a hero of the faith himself. He was a man of the people, regularly reaching out to minister to the poor and needy in his area. Once he listed the characteristics that a minister should have; among them was being "wholly without thought of

self." Those who knew him said that Bishop How was like that, selflessly caring for others.

'Every year on Nov. 1, All Saints Day,' wrote Christina Villa, 'I remember Sacred Heart Cemetery in the town where I grew up. It was a huge Polish cemetery situated on a long sloping hill next to a busy intersection. Starting at dusk on November 1, the eve of the Catholic All Souls Day, the entire cemetery would be lit up with thousands of red votive candles, one on nearly every grave. It looked like the dead were getting ready to have a party and had turned on all the lights in the house. It sounds weird to say that the cemetery looked festive, but that's exactly how it looked. Lit up like Times Square, it looked more like life than death. It confused the categories of living and dead. It made the dead seem less separated from us, and not so different from us. When I was a child, those candles burning all night on all those graves used to make me think that it must make the dead people happy. Of course that's a childish belief with no theological depth, but now I wonder: why not? If death is not the end, then it's not the end of celebration or joy. And not just the theoretical, pie-in-the-sky kind of celebration and joy, either. The real thing, the exact same happiness we know now, the kind that makes us light Advent candles and put up Christmas lights. The kind of happiness that makes us wish it could last forever. And possibly, it does.' (363 Daily Devotionals, p. 287-288)