

**Sunday, November 2, 2025**  
**All Saints' Sunday**  
Ephesians 1.11-23; Luke 6.20-31  
*The Rev. Michael K. Fincher*

**“Inheritance”**

For a society and a people that seem to spend a fair amount of time denying our mortality, not wanting to think about the one event that we are all certain to experience—our own death—it is interesting that we devote not one but three days to remembering the dead. These three days are, of course, Halloween, All Saints' Day (November 1) and All Souls Day (November 2), in which we remember and celebrate all those who have gone before, including saints, martyrs, and all faithful departed believers. While secular society focuses primarily on Halloween, a time of reveling in and even poking fun at the more gruesome and normally terrifying aspects of death, the Church primarily focuses on All Saints' Day and All Souls Day (also known as the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed). On All Saints' Day, we remember those whom we typically think of as saints, those who have been canonized, or specifically declared a saint, by the Church. These include the likes of our patron St. Gregory the Great, and other big names such as St. Francis of Assisi, St. Patrick, the Blessed Virgin Mary, etc. On All Souls Day, we remember all the faithful departed—all the “ordinary” folks who have died. We remember our own loved ones who have entered into eternal life.

Some churches, including our own, combine All Saints' Day and All Souls Day into one commemoration, remembering all the saints who have gone before—famous and ordinary, known and unknown. After all, in the truest sense, a saint is any faithful person—that is, all believers. In more recent times, the celebration of all these saints, both famous and ordinary, occurs on the Sunday immediately after All Saints' Day, and is known as All Saints' Sunday. Which brings us to today. So just why do we spend all this time and energy focusing on the saints who have gone before?

The ancient Celts have a concept of “thin places.” These are locations where the veil between the physical and spiritual world is believed to be particularly porous, allowing for easier and closer connection with the divine. They are places where one may experience a profound sense of peace, altered time, or a transformative encounter with the sacred. While these places are often ancient holy sites, they can be any location where one can feel a close connection to the divine. In something I recently read by Richard Rohr, a Franciscan friar and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, he talks about the related concept of “thin times.” He writes:

It seems we need special (sacred) days to open us up to all days being special and sacred . . . What became All Saints Day and All Souls Day (November 1–2) was already called “thin times” by the ancient Celts . . . The veil between this world and the next world was considered most “thin” and easily traversed during these times. On these days, we are invited to be aware of deep time—that is, past, present, and future time gathered into one especially holy moment. We are reminded that our ancestors are still in us and work with us and through us. We call it the “communion of saints.”<sup>1</sup>

This is why we have this time every year to remember the saints in our lives who have gone before. As Rohr noted, it is at this most sacred time, this “thin time” when we are particularly and most intensely “reminded that our ancestors are still in us and working with us and through us.” That they continue to have a part to play in our lives of faith by virtue of the influence they had on us in life; by their teachings and examples, which continue to guide us to this day.

Our Epistle reading from the Letter to the Ephesians provides another image of just why we celebrate the saints in our lives. This section opens with the words, “In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance.” Certainly, Paul is referring to the inheritance of forgiveness and new and eternal life we obtain through Christ’s death and resurrection. The inheritance by which we are made the Body of Christ. The inheritance we share with so many saints who have gone before us. The saints who have shown us the way to faithfully live into that inheritance. The saints themselves becoming an inheritance. Their example, their legacy, becoming ours. And when we eventually die, our own example and legacy will be joined with theirs, adding to the inheritance that will be passed on to those who come after us.

An example of this inheritance is found in our Gospel reading of the Sermon on the Plain, which gives us an outline for a grace-filled life in which all the woes of the world, all the woes of our lives, are reversed. Providing us with a blueprint of a new way of living and being in the world. A world filled with love, compassion, and mercy. A world built and ordered on God’s justice. A world in which, as our Baptismal Covenant reminds us, we “proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ”; as we “seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving [our] neighbor as [ourselves]”; as we “strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.” In the history of the Church and in our own lives, we have had examples of those who exhibit these qualities. These are the saints we celebrate today.

Our commemoration of All Saints’ Sunday is a way to individually honor those who have gone before us, providing examples in our own lives of faith of what it means to be faithful, of how to live a grace-filled life. At the same time, this commemoration, particularly in the communal setting of the Church, provides an opportunity to share our ancestors, our own personal saints, with the broader community. In so doing, we celebrate those who have gone before, the examples they have provided, while also honoring the reality of the pain of loss we continue to experience. Providing an opportunity to take the pain of our private loss and transform it into a communal celebration of our collective inheritance that is the communion of saints. As the Body of Christ, composed of so great a cloud of witnesses, we become living memorials, embodied tributes, to those who have gone before in the faith.

Today, the Body of Christ, the communion of saints, gets a little bit bigger. In a few moments we will baptize Juhani Palomaki as the newest member of the Body of Christ and as the newest member of St. Gregory’s Parish. Using the term Paul notes in Ephesians, Juhani will be “marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.” The seal we have all been marked with. The seal being an ancient sign of ownership and of guarantee. That Juhani, like all who have gone before and all who will come after, will forever belong to God and as such, are guaranteed of salvation and new life. As he lives into that sacred truth, he will be guided and formed in the faith by all the saints who have gone before, and by all the saints he encounters through the course of his

life. He will add the richness of his own life and experiences—as yet to unfold—to the inheritance of all who have gone before. The inheritance we all share, the inheritance we all participate in, the inheritance we celebrate as the family of God in this time and this place.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Rohr, “Connecting with Our Ancestors: Fullness of Time,” Center for Action and Contemplation, October 31, 2025. <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/fullness-of-time/>.