



November 1st is All Saints Day (The Feast of All Saints') in the church year, a High Festival celebrating the gifts given by Christ. This year, All Saints Day falls on a Sunday as we near the end of the church year. We belong to the Church Militant (the Church on earth) and anticipate the joy of the Church Triumphant (life everlasting).

The Feast of All Saints' celebrates our "communion/fellowship" with the saints who have gone before who rest in the Lord. Those who are depicted in the reading from Revelation (For All Saints' Day) are those who have died in the faith who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb; their sins forgiven holding the palm of victory in Christ in their hands.

The First Reading for All Saints' Sunday shows us **"a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and the before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands, and crying out to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7:9b-10.** People from all nations, tribes and languages, who had faith in Christ, who suffered and many died for the Name of our Savior are unified together with us The Church Militant (believers still living on earth) as belonging to the Church or our Lord Jesus Christ, one in faith, one in belief, the true "invisible church" that no one can number, known only to Christ.

This one group, the saints gone before us, calls no attention to themselves or what they suffered on earth for their faith. Instead, they look with undivided attention to The Lamb of God on His throne, our Lord Jesus Christ. Our communion/fellowship with the saints gone before is with complete trust in Christ as Savior which He has purchased through His death on the cross and in His resurrection!

We share the same faith with those who have gone before, not by works done or merit or worthiness or belong because of nationality, family ties or any other human trait. We share the same faith, the same future because of Christ. We share faith with them in Christ because we were called to the one hope that is ours in Baptism, as the sacred writer declares **"one Lord, one faith, one baptism one God and Father, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift."** Ephesians 4:5-7

We celebrate The Feast of All Saints' within the church not as a form of worship toward the saints gone before, not because they are better people or had a stronger faith, nor do we pray to the saints as **we should pray to the true God only, Father, Son and Holy Spirit never to "idols, saints, or anything God has created"** (Luther's Small Catechism, CPH, Saint Louis, 1991, pg. 175, Question 195).

We celebrate The Feast of All Saints' not as worship or veneration of the saints, but as commemoration of their faith; given by God's grace in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9), giving thanks for Christ to the glory of God's name as we praise God for His mercy. The hymn of the day, for All Saints' Sunday, lifts our hearts to the future glory of heaven by saying; **"For all the saints who from their labors rest, Who Thee by faith before the world confessed," "Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest. Allelulia! Allelulia!" "O blest communion, fellowship divine, We feebly struggle, they in glory shine; Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine. Allelulia! Allelulia!"** As the Saints gone before celebrate their Savior Jesus Christ, so too, we look only to Jesus our Savior who has prepared a place for us. The Collect for All Saints' Day also calls attention to our communion with The Church Triumphant in the "mystical body" of Christ's Church, that we live to the glory of God to be united in the eternal joys for all who believe in Christ.

Almighty and everlasting God, You knit together Your faithful people of all times and places into one holy communion, the mystical body of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us so to follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that, together with them, we may come to the unspeakable joys You have prepared for those who love You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

In Christ,
Pastor Ahrendt