

Not alone

A Reflection for All Saints' Sunday – Sunday 2 November

Today is All Saints' Sunday. Today, we give thanks that we do not live our Christian lives alone.

There are two sides to this.

Firstly, Christians are people who stand at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. As we gaze up at Christ crucified, we see the One who has paid the price for our sins and we place our trust in Him as our Saviour. And today, All Saints' Day, is the day when we are invited to look around, and to notice that we do not stand alone at the Cross. We gather with a great multitude, 'robed in white', 'washed [...] in the blood of the Lamb' (Rev 7:13f.). So we give thanks today that we are part of that company of people across the ages who trust Jesus as their Saviour. We thank God for the gift of the Church.

And then secondly, Christians are people who follow Jesus, who walk with Him. This too is a matter of trust. We trust that Jesus tells us to live this way, and not to live that way, because He loves us and knows what is best for us. We trust Him as our Lord. And today, All Saints' Day, we are invited to look and to see that we are not alone in this either. Jesus does not leave us alone with His commandments. No: He prays to the Father to send the Holy Spirit (John 14:15ff.), who places in our hearts a longing to live life with Jesus, and who answers that longing.

It is this longing and this life that we see pictured in the words of Jesus which we know as the Beatitudes (Matt 5:1-11). Jesus tells us that we are blessed when we know that we come to God empty-handed and long for the gift of the Spirit. That we are blessed when – strengthened by the Spirit – we live lives like that of Jesus, who is merciful, whose motives are unmixed, who makes peace. That we are blessed when, like Jesus and the prophets, our lives attracts the resistance of those who oppose goodness.

So today, All Saints' Day, we give thanks that we do not live our Christian lives alone. We thank God for the great company of saints among whom we stand at foot of the Cross, and whose faith can inspire us and encourage us. We thank God for the gift of the Spirit, who places in our hearts a longing to join the saints in living Christ-like lives.

'Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in us the fire of your love.'

The Rt Rev Dr Joe Kennedy, Bishop of Burnley