

A SERMON PREACHED BY THE REV'D GLENN MAYTUM

ALL SAINTS' DAY 2021

“The Script” are an Irish rock band formed in 2007 who have sold over 20 million albums, worldwide. (Their three main musicians are Keyboardist Danny; Lead guitar Mark and their drummer is ... Glen!)

Their third album, released in 2012 has as its lead single one of their most recognised songs: “Hall of Fame”.

The lyrics include: ‘Be a champion; Be students, be teachers, be politicians, be preachers, be believers, be leaders, be astronauts, be truth seekers; Be a Champion.’

This is a good song for celebrating “All Saints’Day”.

Are the saints the big names: St Paul, St John, St James, St Mary McKillop, ...?

Yes!

They are the protectors or Champions of Special causes. St Francis de Sales is the champion or patron of Journalists; St Martin of Tours is the champion or patron of Soldiers; St Cecilia is champion or patron of musicians, singers and poets.

They were called to be God’s own people. The word “Saint” comes from a translation of Hebrew and Greek words in Scripture, meaning “separation” and “consecration”.

However, as we all know, the “saints” are not just the big names, but also as Scripture and our communion motet this morning says, those who are “meek, afflicted, thirsty for justice, merciful, pure of heart, peacemakers, persecuted because of the Gospel.”

All Saints is the day dedicated to all those who DON’T have an official day in the Church calendar. So, that’s most of us! November 1st is a public holiday in many European and South American countries. A HOLY-DAY for the PUBLIC. That’s you and me. It speaks of and recognizes those who are not normally famous.

I find it fascinating when you watch the French news when the weather for tomorrow also includes the name of the saint for that day. As I understand it, it is the “old tradition” of naming your new-born child after the saint on which he or she is born. That saint becomes their life guide. In today’s pewsheet Alanna notes the early Christians adopted new names to signify their conversion (Baptism names) and to idealise particular virtues.

I have to admit I don’t really understand why parts of the wider church want to move away from the concept of “saints”. Why wouldn’t we want to know who are the champions of our faith? Why wouldn’t we want to emulate the actions of those we see as heroes? Especially those, who by their lives and actions can teach us how to really follow Christ?

We do it for sporting champions: kids who want to kick like Buddy, or play tennis like Ash Barty.

So, why not our Christian heroes, as well? I don't quite understand what these Christians are afraid of.

After all, the history of the Christian faith is that of people who have offered a cloak to the freezing; offered shelter to the poor; helped those shipwrecked in the Mediterranean; shown respect to creation; talked to the birds; brought about reconciliation by treating all people as members of God's family; and so on...

They are people who have mentored a child and mourned with the bereaved.

So, yes, these champions of the faith can be martyrs, bishops, nuns and priests, but they are also artists, judges, lawyers, dentists, doctors, sportspeople, farmers, business owners, and people from all walks of life and, ironically, one thing "The Script" don't mention is ... "Be Musicians"- one of the special God-given talents we enjoy so much here, at St James'. They do it because they love God and their neighbours, in their daily work or retirement.

Maybe you are a person who visits the sick, maintains contact with the aged or bedridden (especially during lockdown); delivers Meals on Wheels to the needy; assists at Sr Freda; arranges the church flowers; sings in a choir; joins in with Kids at Church; whatever...

These people are the living saints of our time!

Today, we recall all those whose names are written in The Book of Life. These people are not faultless. They may not always think or behave wisely. They can fall short in their commitment. But, they are Champions!

The Letter of James tells us it's one thing to HAVE faith: that's very important, but it is what you DO with that faith that's also important.

Biblical commentator Julian McDonald has noted: "we are all flawed and in need of healing; we are all slow and reluctant to take up the crosses that come our way; we've all had it rich and poor- but prefer it rich; we all like status and power and know that we sometimes fall short of what we want to be".

So, I am talking about you and me. All Saints' Day is the day when we remind ourselves we are the Saints of God.

So, pray for yourself in your witness to Christ: "Be truth seekers", and, pray for those around you, and in whatever you do for Christ today, this week, next year:

BE A CHAMPION.

Happy All Saints' Day!