

Reflection for 3rd November

**“For all the saints who from their labours rest,
Who thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy name, O Jesu, be for ever blest.**

Alleluia

**Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might;
Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well-fought fight;
Thou in the darkness drear their one true light.**

Alleluia”

I grew up, was confirmed and left for theological college from All Hallows church, Gedling, in Nottinghamshire. For a term in my post graduate year I lived in a small convent opposite All Saints Margaret Street in London. My parents were married and I was baptised at St. Mary and All Saints, Bingham, where my maternal grandfather was Church Warden and for many years part time organist. So All Saints tide has many special memories.

But what do we mean by all saints?

First, we do not mean those celebrated with a capital St. before their names.

St. Paul addresses his letters to churches, not to their leaders.

Romans 1, 7 “To all God’s people called to be saints.” Look also at 1 Corinthians 1, v2,3 “to the church of God which is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints”.

2 Corinthians v 1 “with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia” Ephesians 1, v1 “To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus”, Philippians 1, v1 £”To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi,” Colossians 1, v2 “To the saints and faithful bretheren”...

The only three of Pauls letters to a church without these words are Galatians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians, probably the first he wrote.

This means all of us who trust in Christ, you, me and every Christian you know, are called to be saints.

What does saint mean? The Greek lexicon gives several meanings for the word Paul uses. It can mean separate from the common condition and use; dedicated; hallowed when referring to things, and when referring to people pure, righteous, holy.

Think on all these meanings, for we too are “called to be saints!” In the context of our opening hymn it refers to every faithful Christian who has ever lived. It means the saints and martyrs of the first few centuries and up to and including the many martyrs of this century.

**O may thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win, with them, the victor’s crown of gold.**

Alleluia

O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
Yet all are one in thee, for all are thine.

Alleluia

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave again and arms are strong.

Alleluia

The golden evening brightens in the west;
Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest!
Sweet is the calm of Paradise the blest.

Alleluia

But lo, there breaks a yet more glorious day;
The saints triumphant rise in bright array:
The King of Glory passes on his way.

Alleluia

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
Singing to Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Alleluia.

W. Walsham How (18312-1897)

The Bible quotations are from the Revised Standard Version