

In 1845...the U.S. Congress decided...that on the *first Tuesday after the first Monday in November* there would be a national *Election Day*. That would have the effect of Election Day always falling sometime from November 2nd to the 8th. An *early November* election was preferred, before year's end, since agricultural harvests would have been completed by then, and the most severe winter weather would likely not yet have arrived. *Tuesday* was chosen so that voters could attend church on Sunday, have time to travel *by horseback* Monday or Tuesday morning to their polling location which was usually in the county seat, vote, and then be back home before Wednesday which was usually when farmers would sell their produce at the market. November 1st was intentionally avoided because business owners would generally be doing their bookkeeping for the previous month on the first day of the month. But, it was my surprise to discover that Congress decided to avoid November 1st also because that is the feast of *All Saints' Day*.

So there is a curious connection, historically, between Election Day *and* All Saints' Day. And, if you recall, All Saints' Day is actually *a triad of holidays back-to-back*: All Hallows' Eve (Halloween), All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day. I can't help but imagine that, in the providence of God, the timing of Election Day is especially related to...*Halloween! There is definitely something resonant between...a holiday that acknowledges our fears of monsters and the unknown...and Election Day...some years more than others, of course.* |

There is some recognition of that kind of *Halloween sensibility* in the scripture readings today, referencing “the shroud that is cast over all peoples”. October 31st—*Halloween*--can remind us...in a safe and playful way...of our darkest fears.

All Souls' Day—November 2nd, yesterday...has been a feast day where that general fear of destructive forces...gets very specific and personal...with the *remembrance* of those known and dear to us...who have died and whom we have grieved. We will invoke an *All Souls' Day* tradition shortly with the solemn naming of our dearly departed...who have died within our parish since the last All Saints' Day. And, in the moments of silence there, we may also be thinking of others whom we miss within our private circles of families and friends.

So, within the Christian tradition of these past few days--when we realize it--there is a *poignancy*...a sense of *gravity*...and of *vulnerability*. But that is not all. Because, right between Halloween and All Souls' Day is *All Saints' Day* which is the *centerpiece* of these three days. Our Sunday observance today incorporates aspects of all three of these days, but the principal note sounded on All Saints' Day is *encouragement*...through words and music.

Despite death...monsters...the unknown...and an abundant awareness of human sinfulness...*there is still so much more that is of God*. There is, as we prayed the Collect of the Day: “one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of Christ our Lord”. And God still calls us...and “gives us grace so to follow the blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living”. |

The *Communion of Saints*, drawn from people of every historical moment, *has seen it all*: an unimaginable procession of grave and fearful moments throughout history. Think of all the moments of history that Christians past have experienced in their lifetimes... And yet, throughout all the tides of history, the *Church* is still here...and the *Communion of Saints* grows larger and larger and still abides...our home and refuge...in this life and the life to come. |

As much as we may have other things on our minds these days...and as much as we are responsible to discern the shape of “virtuous and godly living” in our time...it is especially important that the Church does what only the Church knows to do: *to set our eyes beyond this temporal moment*. All Hallows' Eve, All Saints' Day, and All Soul's Day—these three holy days just past--invite us to *a larger vision of what shall endure*...that exceeds what we can accomplish...or what we can mess up. |

Remembering the gospel teaching of the Communion of Saints, it is possible for us to realize something about the people we still love who have died before us...*our dearly departed*. They died with their lives very much *unfinished*. What they shall become...what we shall become...awaits God “wiping the tears from our eyes” and making us whole and complete...beyond what we can do for ourselves.

This *daring American experiment of democracy*...has evolved much...and yet it too is still very much *unfinished*. What our nation, and all the nations, shall become...also very much awaits God doing what we cannot do for ourselves. |

It is not enough for Christians to live mindful only of what we can see. We have a larger calling...from a larger vision...of what shall endure...in the Communion of Saints. We have been given to hold dear the promises of God...through... *faith, hope, and love*.

We humbly beseech thee, O Father, mercifully to look upon our infirmities; and, for the glory of thy Name, turn from us all those evils that we most justly have deserved; and grant that in all our troubles we may put our whole trust and confidence in thy mercy, and evermore serve thee in holiness and pureness of living, to thy honor and glory; through our only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

--from The Supplication, page 155, The Book of Common Prayer