

November 1<sup>st</sup> is All Saints Day also known as All Souls Day and, other times, called the Feast of All Hallows Day which is why we call October 31<sup>st</sup> All Hallows Eve or Hallowe'en. The Christian Church sets this day aside to think back and remember all those who have gone before us in the Christian faith.

Sometimes, those who are recognized as saints by the church such as St. Francis - patron saint of the environment and animals, St. Jude – the patron saint of desperate or lost causes, or St. Anthony- the patron saint of lost things are recalled. Over the centuries, many Christians have come to believe that these various saints can guide them to be better followers of Jesus and can also help them to express their needs to God in prayer.

All Saints Day is also about all of us who have been influenced and impacted by saints in our lives. I think of the word 'saints' as it is used in the Bible and it is really a word that is used to describe all of us who are attempting to follow after the way of Jesus. Some of us do it better than others and some are willing to let go of more than other to follow that path. Saints is actually an incredibly

In the New Testament there are over 60 references to "saints". The apostle Paul, or as some of us know him as St. Paul used the word "saints" over 40 times to refer to the church and its members. When Paul talks about saints, for example in his letter to the Ephesians, he is talking about ordinary people like you or I who love God and who try to love others the way God does.

All Saints Day invites us to think back and remember, to celebrate, and to honor all of those who have died and who have contributed to our faith journey. For some of us that might be writers, musicians, or the traditional saints of the church but for a lot of us it is going to mean a loved one, a friend, or perhaps, someone who at one time or another contributed to our spiritual journey and our personal growth and is no longer with us.

Faith is not something that we do on our own. It is something we do together and for each of us, there are mentors, there are influencers, there are people who pop in and out of our lives and who contribute in special ways to the journey we are on. And All Saints Day is a particular time when we can remember those persons.

I never met my great grandmother Anna. She was among the angels many years before I was born. However, the little I know about her has inspired me. Anna arrived in Canada as an immigrant of German descent. And like so many, she endured many hardships creating a new life on the prairies including the death of her husband from the Spanish flu. I am told that she was a devout Roman Catholic. With little or no money, and often bartering goods and services to get by, she still managed to set aside a weekly donation to her beloved church. People would give her wool and pay her a few pennies to make socks and mittens. Those coins always

went to support her church before anything else. When I face tough situations, I think of how her faith gave her the strength to do what had to be done.

I often think of St. Cranch.... Now if you look in a book of saints you will not find that name. Some people would remember her as Miss Cranch... the grade 3 teacher at Imperial School in Regina. I am told that Miss Cranch had declared long before I was one of her students that every child that came in her classroom would be a good reader before the end of the year. She spent recess, lunch, and after school tutoring. And for those avid bookworms like me, she encouraged my love of the written word by introducing me to many more authors than I would have discovered on my own.

No matter who we are, there will be times we will feel like it is too difficult to put one foot in front of another, too hard to follow the way of Jesus, and too challenging to keep being part of a church in the midst of Covid and everything else that is going on in our lives. When those times happen, may you remember the saints in your life and in the life of Balzac United Church. May their lives be an inspiration as you follow the way of Jesus.

Thanks be to God. Amen.