

THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS': TWO REFLECTIONS

A City of Light Resource

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WHAT'S THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS'?

A friend asked me this week, "What do you do for All Saints Sunday? Do you talk about a few famous saints?"

What a great question!

The Feast of All Saints is a beautiful ancient Christian holiday, like Christmas and Easter, that tells the story of the Gospel— the good news that receiving Jesus' forgiveness through his cross and Resurrection transforms us from sinners to saints.

Who Is a Saint?

A saint isn't some sort of super Christian. And it doesn't mean that we are suddenly holy and perfect. It means that when we're not good, Jesus is. And it means that because he loves us, he's making us more like him! A saint is everyone who has believed and been baptized into Jesus.



On All Saints we celebrate what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:2, that the church is the family of those "sanctified in Jesus Christ, called to be saints." When our first identity is as saints, then we live as brothers and sisters together with all those "who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," because he is "both their Lord and ours."



We are also connected with saints who gone before. The Apostle John tells us that saints who have died are worshiping around throne of God in heaven, robed in white, and that their prayers are rising from the altar as incense (Revelation 8:3-4). They are the great cloud of witnesses that surround us and urge us to persevere (Hebrews 12:1). As our communion prayers remind us, when we worship we join “with saints and angels and all the company of heaven who forever sing this hymn to the honor and glory of his name: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord; God of Power and might” (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8).

On the Feast of All Saints, we join in prayer and worship with saints around the world. We pray especially for our brothers and sisters who are suffering and being persecuted for their faith. We remember that we are not alone and that, “There is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:4-6).”

So, why don't we have more All Saints Household traditions? Here are some ideas for starting some new All Saints traditions:

- Learn about a saint, especially one who is from a different time, place, or culture than you are.
- Tell the story of your family becoming part of God’s family. Was it in your generation? Your parents’ generation? Tell the stories of those were faithful in your family tree. Tell the stories of the brokenness in your family tree that God is healing.
- All Saints is a baptism feast. Remember your baptism. Tell the story of when you were baptized. Ask someone about the story of their baptism and what it means to them.
- Have a fun fall meal or a dance party and incorporate something multi-ethnic as we look forward to celebrating with brothers and sisters from every tribe and tongue and nation in heaven.
- And if you are comfortable with it (if not, no worries), take some of the fun and innocent secular Halloween traditions and make them a secondary part of All Saints day. After all, the word Halloween just means “the night before All Saints Day.” In the same way we practice fun Christmas or Easter traditions that don’t distract from but point toward the joy of the Incarnation or Resurrection, we can have fun on Halloween and let that joy point us toward the joy of our family of saints.

So let’s celebrate the Feast of All Saints and enter into our identity with all the saints throughout history and throughout the world who are our first kingdom family!

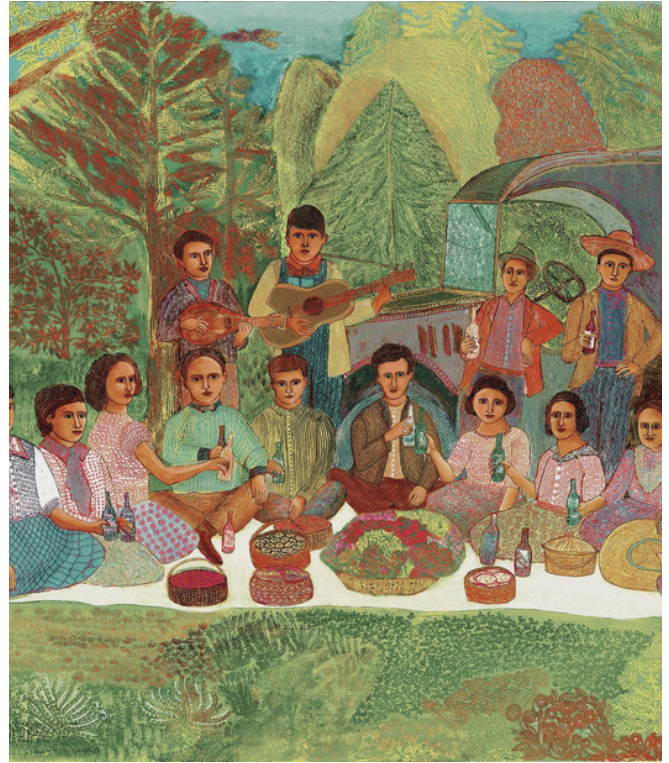
¡CELEBREMOS LA FIESTA!

In our communion prayers we say the phrase, "¡Celebremos la Fiesta!" which means "therefore let us keep the feast." I have always loved that line from 1 Corinthians 5:8, but praying it in Spanish has filled me and I think our church with an infusion of celebration.

Celebration takes hope.

Celebration is always an act of faith. To celebrate you have to believe that the truest thing about the world is not the brokenness and suffering of our world, it's that God is Father who invites us into his house and spreads a table before us.

To rest and feast we have to believe that God will never rest until he brings us into the feast. Alleluia!



Art by John August Swanson

The celebration of the church takes hope but it also *gives* hope. When you come and enter into the feast, not ignoring the brokenness and sin of your life but bringing it with you and laying it down, you receive a gift of hope. You enter into the heavenly feast where we are made whole.

We enter into the feast that we were made for where God is our shepherd and he wipes away the tears of every eye. We join with the Saints who are already where we believe we will one day be. Climbing up the mountain of God toward wholeness is a long journey, but on feast days like this, the mountain is a little bit closer. Heaven comes down and earth is lifted up and we get to taste where we are headed and who we will be with:

"The dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. AND SO WE WILL BE WITH THE LORD FOREVER!" (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18)

For a few moments, our broken hearts beat more in time with eternity and our shallow lungs breathe in more deeply the air of the heaven.

¡Celebremos la Fiesta! Happy Feast of All Saints church!