

November 1, 2015
1 John 1:1-3

All Saints B
A future Family Reunion

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Many families have the tradition of annual or biannual family reunions. They get together at a resort, a camp, or another destination for days at a time and catch up on family news, meet the newest additions to the family either by marriage or birth or adoption. Perhaps your family is one of them and you look forward to these reunions. My family never had that tradition. I can only remember one “family reunion” and that was on my mother’s side of the family.

Other times families get together are for weddings and funerals. During these events, photographs are involved. Weddings, photographs are taken. Funerals, photographs are displayed and looked at. Photographs bring back memories.

Today, November 1, All Saints Day is a day to remember, to look at the old family photographs...but more than that it’s a day to look forward to the future family reunion. For All Saints Day is the family reunion day for all the baptized, the entire church as it hopes in him who will appear.

It’s remarkable that today, along with other feast days on the church calendar such as Epiphany, Baptism of our Lord, Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday, Pentecost, and the Presentation of our Lord have a decidedly baptismal focus. Today, All Saints Day focuses upon the lives of all those made holy, sanctified to the Lord through the waters of Holy Baptism.

As you get to know me, one of the things I really enjoy is being able to be the hands and voice of God as I am the instrument in which God brings another one of His children into His family through baptism. The two baptisms I remember the most was Easter Sunday, 2013 when I baptized Hannah and February 9, 2014 when Miriam was brought into the family of God. I can only wait with eager anticipation to the baptism I get to do next summer to Baby Nielsen, when God brings another one of His children into His family and names them Saint.

Our Epistle from 1 John 3 manifests the reunion of the children of God, namely those beloved of God, those living with sustaining hope in God.

There are three primary themes that come out in today’s reading, that relate to baptism: love, epiphany, and hope.

First, love. The love of the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is the basis for adoption as children of God. It is because of His love that the Father calls us his children. It’s not because of us. When we look inside of ourselves, we see people that are poor

miserable sinners. We might even call ourselves unlovable. What good is there inside of us that would cause someone to love us? NOTHING!!

It's not because of us. For we were chosen, we were adopted into God's family. As Rev. Dr. Bruce Schuchard says in his commentary on 1 John: "Because he loves, God gives to all his faithful both new life and a new identity. Possessing a "new name", they belong to him." You were given a new name at your baptism. You were given the name of Saint. You were given the name of Christian. Saint Christian. Perhaps it's St. Michael or St. Brian or St. Hannah or St. Delores or St. Justin. What truly matters is that your new name is Saint instead of Sinner Michael or Sinner Brian or Sinner Hannah or Sinner Delores or Sinner Justin.

When I was at Peace Lutheran School, once a month in chapel we would remember those with baptismal birthdays in that month. We would use the order of "Baptismal Remembrance" in the All God's People Sing hymnal. The opening words to the Remembrance section said this: "In Holy Baptism our sins are forgiven and we are granted a new life in Christ our Lord." I might even add to make it say this: "In Holy Baptism our sins are forgiven and we are granted a new name and new life in Christ our Lord."

It's also been my tradition as well as the tradition of the church to name those who have died in the faith since last All Saints Day. Today we remember John Eggebraaten and Evelyn Wagner and Carrol Goergen. With these rites the church remembers that through baptism we are God's children now, as the Father calls his beloved by name.

Second, epiphany. Epiphany comes from the same root word, φανερω or φανομαι. This is the primary theme word of 1 John 3:2. Christ Jesus was made manifest at His epiphany in the Jordan River, as the Father called Him His beloved Son and invited all who hear to listen to him. This same Christ Jesus will again be made manifest at His second epiphany. And here is a second primary theme of All Saints Day. You the saints that are still alive, live with the knowledge that you will be like Him because only those who are like Him will be able to see Him as He is. That will happen on the day of His appearing. The day that He comes again in glory. The day that we anxiously await for.

For those Saints that have died in the Lord, they too wait for the Lord's appearing again. In St. John's Revelation they cry, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." These Saints who have died in the Lord are reminders to you, living saints, as they proclaim the outcome of their knowledge and hope. Their lives of faith and hope now past, help the living saints, with those who preceded them, will see Him as He is. We will fully see Him as He is, when the Lord returns in glory at His second and greater Epiphany.

Yet, we are not what we will be. We are still living on this earth, simultaneously Saints and Sinners. We have yet to be made manifest completely. We are still living in this veil of tears where we suffer divorce, disease, depression and death. We still live where

suicide, sin, suffering, and sickness are all real. We still live where thirst, tears, and tragedy run rampant. We still live in a broken world where abuse and abortion are norms.

Yet, we live with the third primary theme...hope. In the baptismal liturgy, those that are to be baptized are called to live in hope. "Live always in the light of Christ, and be ever watchful for His coming, that you may meet Him with joy and enter with Him into the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom. Hope is a condition of the mind and the heart.

Through Holy Baptism this condition is formed within the baptized because they have been purified as Jesus is pure. In the waters of purification they have been made like him: cleansed and pure, as one who is without sin. The baptized are the purity of God; loving, merciful, and faithful as He is. The baptized are you. Because you have been purified and have glimpsed Jesus, you can live in the hope that flows from your baptism: hope that you will see Him as He is and will one day fully be like Him.

Hope is what you have, and you can hope, because of Christ and His Work for you. You can hope, because Christ has given you examples, the Saints who have died in the faith. They persevered in their lives and now have a glimpse of heavenly glory that will be fully theirs and ours when Jesus returns.

You are loved by God, a love that is made manifest in His Son, your Savior Jesus Christ. You are loved by God, because God is love. You are loved by God, because HE loved you so much, that His Son, our Savior was made manifest to die on the cross and to rise from the dead. You are loved by God and through His Son calls you who are baptized into Him, by name, to live as His Children. And to live, as the saints named and unnamed, in hope for what we will be when we see him as He is.

We also hope for the reunion of All the Saints on that great and glorious day. Perhaps you are like me, and really have never tasted a family reunion and you eagerly anticipate a great family reunion of all the saints. Or maybe you are one that has come from a family where it is a tradition. Or maybe you are one that likes to look back at the memories that come from family photographs. Today, All Saints Day, we more than ever long to be reunited with the Saints that have gone on before. Today we hope for the day that we live in a place where there is no more hunger and thirst, no more pain, no more tears, no more death, but only life that comes from the Lamb of God.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

Now may the peace of God that passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.