

American Saints
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"American Saints" Pilgrim Church UCC Homily Outline, All Saints/Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Luke 20:27-38) November 6, 2016

All Saints Day: Jesus Teaches about Resurrection

-On All Saints Day we remember Paul's teaching that there are a great cloud of witnesses who remain a part of the Church and our lives even if they're no longer physically with us.

-Today we hear Jesus teaching about the Resurrection in Luke's Gospel. Sadducees didn't believe in the Resurrection because they only followed the Pentateuch and said this belief wasn't found there.

-So they challenge Jesus about what life will look like after we die—this poor woman married seven brothers and then died, so whose wife will she be in the resurrection?

-Jesus basically says that human relations don't exist in the same way after we die. There's the life we live now and the life that is to come and we can't assume everything will be the same. (But no details given!)

-Jesus reminds his fellow Jews that God is still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob even if they are no longer alive in this world—our faith ancestors become part of that great cloud of witnesses.

-We can turn to them for inspiration, courage, wisdom, and much more. God is with us and God is with them.

In these hard times: we look to some who came before us^[1]

-In a few short days we'll know who the next President of our country will be—Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton. Anxiety and fear are present, those feelings permeate our lives.

-For courage and wisdom, we can contemplate the American saints who came before us, specifically the Presidents who led us through difficult moments in our country's history.

-We can turn to President George Washington (my favorite!) who wanted nothing more than to retire to his farm in Mt. Vernon Virginia after six grueling years of leading the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Yet his country needed him to not retire to his fields just then, and he answered the call to service once again when he unanimously was elected President by the Electoral College.

-Here's what we may not remember: Washington didn't want political parties and in his Farewell Address he encouraged people to not have excessive party spirit or to focus on geographic distinctions.

-We can turn to President Abraham Lincoln who built the Republican Party into a strong national organization and rallied most of the Northern Democrats to the Union cause. Political parties were firmly established and entrenched, but the emancipation of slaves and the Civil

War were issues so important that people crossed party lines to stand up for what was right in the North. The South was of course another story entirely.

-In modern times, we can turn to President George H.W. Bush and President Bill Clinton. A supportive letter written from Bush to Clinton upon Clinton taking over the office of the President has made its rounds on the internet of late because it shows the generosity of spirit and civility that it seems we have lost in our political process of late.

-George H.W. Bush wrote: "Dear Bill, When I walked into this office just now I felt the same sense of wonder and respect that I felt four years ago. I know you will feel that, too. I wish you great happiness here. I never felt the loneliness some Presidents have described. There will be very tough times, made even more difficult by criticism you may not think is fair. I'm not a very good one to give advice; but just don't let the critics discourage you or push you off course. You will be our President when you read this note. I wish you well. I wish your family well. Your success is now our country's success. I am rooting for you. Good luck, George." [2]

-We can remember some of these saints who came before us in our nation to sustain us in the days ahead. We know that divisions have unfortunately been part of our history (Washington wouldn't have sounded warnings in his Farewell Address if those divisions weren't already present.)

-But that doesn't mean we can't discover what will unite us and work toward healing and reconciliation.

[1] Information on U.S. Presidents taken from The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/Presidents>

[2] Dan Evon, "A Peaceful Transfer of Paper," Snopes, October 20, 2016, <http://www.snopes.com/bush-clinton-note/>