

Sunday 2nd November 2025

All Saints with All Souls

As I have said on previous occasions, we all live by stories throughout our lives. Stories help shape our way of life, the rules we live by and our ability to understand the world, its purpose and our meaning within the cosmos of all that exists. The stories we learn as we grow from child to adulthood are of many different types. One of my favourite stories is Winnie the Pooh. I have no doubt that the stories most of us have grown up with may not be the same as for the present generations of X's and Y's. The Arthur Ransom books were loved by my children and the eldest visited the place where they were written when studying overseas.

The author and commentators Tim Winton writes and speaks about our need as a nation and global

community for new story tellers to tell us all about the impacts of climate change, brought home again by the devastating Storms in the Bahamas and Cuba this week. He called for new story tellers other than the big corporates, ideological thinktanks who cannot think outside their box and politicians who are unwilling to address the issue or seek to corrupt the issue for political purposes and the broad spectrum of 50 million influencers present on social media.

As we gather on this All-Saints Day with All Souls let me ask you the following questions. What story or stories are given prominence in your life? What consequences have they had on your sense of identity, purpose, and relationships? How do you assess truth from false truth and opinion? Have they from time to time caused you doubt or troubled you in what you have witnessed throughout your life. I am aware that many people lost their Christian faith following both

World War 1 and 2. They abandoned their faith story on account of their war experience. I find myself troubled by my faith when I witness particularly the abuse of women and children and lose confidence in how a good God could allow such incidents, and of course there are many other examples I could give. I sometimes, in reflecting on events and incidents that defy explanation search for an answer that reflects the unconditional love of God and find it wanting. It has meant for me that when I cannot help or find a solution, I hand the matter to God. I also understand that when suffering occurs, many times on account of humanity's inhumanity to itself or due to natural phenomena and other unexplainables, God stands in the midst.

Throughout Christian history there have been countless men and women who have understood God in many

different ways and whose earlier stories have changed throughout their lives, from the hermits and mystics, poets, religious, musicians, actors, to the religious leaders of various generations. Each, as I have read their stories, are different in their expression and lifestyles. Some live silently in prayer, others go out to the mission fields, others write music to express their understanding of God, some teach, heal and serve communities in different ways. Some have fought in wars and overpowered native people exploiting their natural resources and destroying their beliefs and way of life all in the name of the Christian God believing they were acting in God's name. Others ruffle the feathers of those who seek to protect the faith from corruption and distortion. Some we know as a result have been excommunicated.

I began my faith journey, the story that frames my life today out of curiosity and found to my surprise that I even liked Church, the colour, the music, the smoke, and the fellowship. My senses were stimulated and the mystery that surrounds the experience has stayed with me. In this parish where I grew up in, on some occasions on great feast days one could not see the sanctuary due to the level and intensity of incense. From this date my story of faith and its impact on my life have remained although much different and sometimes I suspect challenging to some.

At the centre of the celebration of All Saints with All Souls is community, a common story and our connectedness to each other. The story of All Saints embraces the life stories of countless unknown saints of God who I have no doubt were of many shapes,

sizes, and outlooks and theologies. Some may have acted in ways that we would think today a little odd or even outrageous, even heretical in the minds of some, but they all were committed to the faithfulness of God as they experienced the divine presence in their lives or around them. All Souls is an occasion to recall those special in our own faith journey. It is a great occasion to remember the faithful people of God, not just those who have celebrity status such as Peter, Paul, George, Mary or John but rather the unknown and the often neglected. They remind us of our connectedness to a great company of God's people throughout generations and their stories and life witness provide a context and mission imperative for our own journey of faith.

Today's celebration of All Saints with All Souls in such a consumer and present-day orientated society, eager so

often to forget the past, one that does not any longer study history, relegates faith to the status of myth, yet is now busy promoting Halloween. And they also do not understand the source and true meaning of Halloween corrupting for their own purposes. If you do not believe me, you have not shopped in the supermarkets for the past few weeks. Now do not miss understand I am not a "party Pooper," but I wonder why we need Halloween when in fact its origins and purpose are not understood.

The theme of community, the Feast of All Saints, embraces the past, present and future and provides a focus for us here at this time, as we ponder and reflect upon our own individual and parish journey. We are reminded that as a fellowship of believers we are not a "Johnny come lately" event but a movement a radical movement that began at the time of God breathing life as we know it today into the creation. We are reminded

that from love we come and to love we return. It is a time for Shalom, peace and hope, ultimately fulfilled when God gathers the righteous to a high mountain where all suffering is banished. For the Christian Jesus is the fulfillment of this hope, heaven on earth and beyond, when we return to the love that created us. Surely this feast day has more substance and meaning for the future, for our children than Halloween?

Most of us throughout our life will have times of struggle, hurt, failure and disappointment. Very few of us will escape such experiences. The saints we recall today experienced such times. They stood alongside those who were voiceless and powerless and likewise we are called to do the same at this time of anxiety and confusion in many aspects of our common life.

Although not clear or spoken about saints are not perfect. Like you and me they have their Achilles heels and are not without sin, yet they remain faithful and committed to God, recognizing their own brokenness, yet confident in God's ongoing presence and love in their own lives.

There is much for all of us to ponder and reflect upon today as we all struggle with the issues of the day that affect who we are as people and our relationship to God.

May our story of Christian faith sustain and guide us all at this time.

Amen