

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH SERVING WATERLOO, BELGIUM

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A message for All Saints 2008

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What saints will you remember this year on their feast? It's an occasion to remember all the faithful, whether we know their names or not. The Good Shepherd knows them by name, even if we don't. This year I'd invite you to celebrate the ones whose names you know and the ones whose names you haven't yet learned.

In your neighborhood, who is the saint who picks up trash? Who looks out for school children on their way to and from school? Who looks after an elderly or frail neighbor, running errands or checking to be sure that person has what is needed?

In your community, what saints labor on behalf of the voiceless? I recently read about a prison law program in Michigan, about to be shut down for lack of funds, where one lawyer has worked for decades on behalf of those who have no other helper*. Sandra Girard's work has helped to free many who were wrongly convicted, and to ease the circumstances of those who will spend most of the rest of their lives in jail. She points out that, "Most of the people I've helped in prison have also been victims. Long before they committed a crime themselves, they were victims of violence, poverty or something else." I met a member of the clergy in Missouri recently who also told of seeing many victims in prisons, but also that the penal system there is the most highly regarded in the U.S., for its focus on reparative and reconstructive justice. What saints are visiting the prisoners in your area? That is one of the ways Jesus urges us to bring good news and care for the least and forgotten among us (Matthew 25:37-40).

The saints are followers of Jesus, and fellow travelers on the journey toward the City of God. They come in all shapes, ages, colors, and theological stripes. Some of them, like Jerome and Jeremiah, can be difficult to live with. The children of the churches of the Convocation in Europe recently compiled a book of saints, complete with short accounts of their lives and illustrations by the children. Their list had some familiar names, like Joan of Arc and Hildegard, and some unexpected ones, like Anne Frank and Edith Cavell. Some, like Miss Edith, would not be known beyond the local congregation, but have had even more influence on their young charges' lives than any saint of an earlier age.

As you gather to celebrate on the feast of All Saints, take with you the name of a saint whose example you have seen in action, and one whose name you don't know, and give thanks. The appropriate companion prayer to one of thanks for the witness of other saints is that we, too, might be holy examples to those whom we meet.

* Detroit Free Press

Prisoners lose another tool of justice

October 21, 2008

<http://www.freep.com/article/20081021/OPINION01/810210310/1069>