

**Don Brown
All Souls' Sunday
All The Faithful Departed
St. Mary the Virgin
October 30, 2016**

We live in a culture where a great multitude of people are connected to one another electronically, yet are totally unconnected in any meaningful, relational, way to one another.

I have a priest friend who used to volunteer as a ride along chaplain with the sheriff's department in Eldorado County east of Sacramento. Time after time when he went with an officer to tell a family member about the death of a loved one in a traffic accident or they would go to a home where there had been a suicide, and my priest friend would ask if there were anyone that he could call to come and be with the survivor, more often than not, the answer was "No, there is no one."

Look around you this morning. Do you realize how fortunate we are to be blessed by our connection to this diverse and unique family of people here at St. Mary's?

You may not know all, or most, of the names of the folks here, even as you recognize a familiar face; but when things get tough in your life, there are folks here who would answer your call for assistance. Even if you are a newcomer here for the first time, or maybe you are shy and don't know anyone's name, you can always reach out to one of the clergy. It is our vocation to help people make connections.

At its heart, Christianity is about relationship, relationship to God, to Jesus, to the Spirit. It is about relationship to our brothers and sisters inside the faith and outside of it...just as God loves all, we are called, as Jesus was, to love and care.

We are blessed by the knowledge that we need one another and there is no shame in admitting that need.

On this day, we remember friends and relatives who are known to us personally. Their names may not be in some church book but they are people who are remembered in our own hearts and minds. Some of these people have knowingly or unknowingly touched us with God's saving grace of forgiveness, healing, love and joy.

These souls were real people, flawed but real. At their best they helped us see life's larger purposes and they blessed us, by who they were with a vision of what life, lived in the light of God's love, can be for us and for all people. In their time of living on this earthly pilgrimage we call life, they blessed us with their example of being giving people, loving people, honest people, alive people, people who shared a real relationship with God and their fellow human beings.

On this day, we give thanks for these special people who blessed us, and it is precisely because of this blessing that we are empowered to be a blessing in the lives of others.

You see All Souls' Sunday is a wonderful reminder that we are a community of people composed of both the living and dead who are linked by the God who created us and loves us no matter what or who we are right now at this very moment.

It is God's generous heart that has invited each of us to join in a gigantic procession; a procession made up of people, living and dead. We are all participants in this mysterious and sometimes puzzling pilgrimage toward God.... and in the eyes of God's love, all of us in this great parade are clothed in dazzling white. That means the things which so often divide us are not nearly as significant as we tend to make them. We are all children of God.

It matters not whether we are red, black, yellow, brown, white, or any other color, God embraces all of us as His children. We are members of one family. Young and old, gay and straight, rich and poor, able-bodied and differently abled, addicts and those in recovery, the faith-filled and the doubt-full, all of us are part of the one great earthly and heavenly procession.

So this morning as many of us make our financial pledges for next year, thankful for the saving grace of God we've experienced in our significant relationships here and elsewhere, recall those souls who have touched your soul, hear the music, hear the call of your heart to be real, make a generous offering of yourself, as you are, flaws and all, offer your whole being to joyfully living the magnificent, life giving song of God and those souls who have blessed us to be a blessing to others. Amen