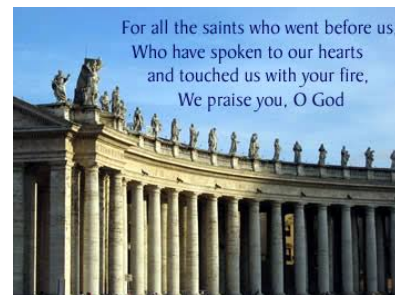


Dorset South & West Circuit.
Sunday November 1st 2026
Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.

Written Service.
All Saints Sunday



Call to Worship. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. Death has no dominion over them.
Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

STF 745.

For all the saints who from their labours rest,
who thee by faith before the world confessed,
thy name, O Jesus, be for ever blest:
Alleluia, alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their fortress and their might;
thou, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;
thou in the darkness still their one true light:
Alleluia, alleluia!

O may thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
and win, with them, the victor's crown of gold!
Alleluia, alleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
yet all are one in thee, for all are thine:
Alleluia, alleluia!

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
and hearts are brave again, and arms are strong:
Alleluia, alleluia!

The golden evening brightens in the west;
soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest;
sweet is the calm of paradise the blest:
Alleluia, alleluia!

But lo, there breaks a yet more glorious day:
the saints triumphant rise in bright array;
the King of Glory passes on his way!
Alleluia, alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:
Alleluia, alleluia!

Prayers of adoration and confession.

Almighty God, your people of all the ages live and praise you without ceasing.
In our meeting with you, we have communion with generations past and generations yet unborn.
Before your throne we are one with a great multitude which no one could number, and in praising you we join with people from every nation. Grant to us, members of your church on earth that as we celebrate the triumph of your saints in glory we may profit by their example and enter with them into the inexpressible joys you have prepared for those who love you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**
Lord God you have created us in your image and called us to be your body here on earth, united with your church in doing your will. We confess that in so many ways we fall short of this. Instead of seeking unity, we seek conflict. Instead of seeking community, we choose to isolate. Instead of seeking peace, we tolerate dysfunction. You do not call us to a life of relying on our own selfish pride and independence; you call us to be your body: joined together, working together, seeking you together. Forgive us when our own actions have a negative impact on your world and your creation. May we strive to bring you honour and glory and praise by the way we live our lives. Teach us how to be like saints who live out our beliefs, to bring honour and praise to your name. So that we and all your people are united with each other and all the world may join in singing an unending hymn of praise to you, our Creator, Redeemer, and Lord. **Amen.**

Bible reading. Revelation 7:9-17

Introduction: On this All Saints' Day we gather to remember those who have gone before us in faith, the named and the unnamed, the famous and the ordinary, the ones whose stories we know and the ones whose stories only God fully knows. We give thanks for their witness. We grieve their absence. And, through the vision given to John on Patmos, we are shown a glimpse of heaven.

Saint John writes:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.' All the angels were standing round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying: 'Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!' Then one of the elders asked me, 'These in white robes, who are they, and where did they come from?' I answered, 'Sir, you know.' And he said, 'These are they who have come out of the

great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore 'they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple, and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them," nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; "he will lead them to springs of living water." "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Reflection

I have been asked to write this circuit service in place of our dear Circuit Superintendent who at my time of preparing this, is on compassionate leave following the death of a family member. Our thoughts and prayers are with John and Cora and their families.

On All Saints Sunday we especially remember all our dear departed loved ones. None of us can say we have not known the sadness of loss and grief at the passing of a family member or dear friend. There are those in public life who also touch our hearts as we hear of their passing. The death of a member of the Royal household touches a whole nation. We have our favourite television or sports people, whose passing shocks us, no matter how long they have lived. If we think too long we can see a great multitude who have touched our hearts and passed on. We use such words to express what is a hard to name certainty in life, that death is a reality for us all and we never know when or how it will happen. When it comes to those who are part of our lives it still comes as a shock and an unwelcome event.

However here is the deepest comfort for us on All Saints' Day. Those we love who have died in the Lord are not lost in some vague afterlife. They are sheltered by God's presence. They hunger and thirst no more. The Lamb Himself, Jesus is their Shepherd, guiding them to living water. And God Himself wipes away every tear. That promise is not only for them. It is the future that awaits every believer. The tears we still cry, the hunger of the soul, the heat of trial, these will not have the last word. The Lamb who was slain is also the Lamb who shepherds. The One who suffered is the One who comforts.

So what does this vision mean for us who are still on the way? First, it gives us hope. When we stand at a graveside, when the ache of missing someone is sharp, when the tribulation of this life feels heavy, we are allowed to look up. Our loved ones who trusted Christ are safe. They are singing. They are home.

Second, it shapes how we live now. The white robes are already given to us in baptism.

I dread wearing white, because I know the inevitable will happen, I will accidentally stain it and some stains just refuse to come out no matter how hard I try to wash them away. The worst is blood, cut my finger or scuff my skin somewhere and if I am wearing white, the garment is virtually ruined. So it's an odd saying that these robes of heaven have been made white by....blood? The blood of the lamb. Jesus by his death and resurrection has done the impossible and made our filthy robes pure and clean. As we confess our sins and believe in Him we are made pure. We have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. We already belong to that multitude. Therefore we live as people who make mistakes but as we repent, we know where we are headed. We endure. We keep the faith. We bear witness. We love. We forgive. We serve not in order to earn a place before the throne, but because we already have one through Christ.

Third, it expands our vision of the Church. Who comes to mind when you think of the word 'Saint'? I used it the other day when someone helped me out of a minor predicament. "Oh! You are a saint", and I meant it. I have a couple of books on my shelf that are the stories of people who have been marked out as saints by the church. Here's some quirky ones: *Saint Wilgefortis*: A medieval legend of a teenage young woman who prayed for a beard to dodge an unwanted marriage, leading to her crucifixion by an angry father. There is a statue of her in Westminster Abbey. She was a Christian princess or noble woman, born in Portugal in the fourteenth century. Her Father arranged a forced marriage to a pagan or Moorish King. She prayed to be made unattractive to the suitor. The King found her repulsive and the marriage was thwarted. Her strength to stand up in prayer for her beliefs gave hope particularly to women who were in abusive marriage's and they would pray to her. She became an unofficial saint who people prayed to if they found difficulties in relationships. She was never officially canonised and in 1969 her name was removed by the Pope from those deemed by the church to be Patron Saints. The beard with much of her story is perhaps folklore but the fact that she held onto her faith and belief despite the abuse of her father and what might have happened had she married a man opposed to her Christian faith is an inspiration. What would challenge our holding onto our faith? I like to think of her among those mentioned in the vast multitude that Saint John envisions.

Saint Drogo who is the patron Saint of unattractive people. He was the son of Flemish nobility. Unfortunately, his mother died giving birth to him, for which he always felt responsible and his father died while he was a teenager. At the age of 18 he disposed of all of his property, lived a life of extreme penance and became a permanent pilgrim. Saint Drogo is the patron Saint of unattractive people because during one pilgrimage he contracted a disease which caused him to develop severe bodily deformities. The people of the village built a small cell attached to the local church to provide him with a place to live and to also protect them from seeing his deformities. That really makes me question whether the saints were inside or outside the church? St. Drogo stayed in his cell for the next forty years, having no contact with anyone, except to receive his simple sustenance: barley, water and the Eucharist. His feast day is April 16th

Lastly quite a modern Patron Saint....*Isidore of Seville*, the patron saint of the Internet. Canonised by Pope John Paul II. He is actually known for being a major scholar of the Middle Ages and wrote a massive twenty volume encyclopaedia. Quite an impressive achievement given the time period he lived in.

Of course the saints are not only those we can name from our own past, or some catalogue of those who have been canonised as Patron saints. They include the global, multi ethnic, multi lingual people of God and across the centuries. When we engage in Christian worship, we join with that great company. Where Heaven and earth meet. The Church Militant, i.e. those who fight against the sin and the temptations of the world and the Church Triumphant, those who are in heaven; worship together. Did you notice that it's a multitude no one can number? Notice first the size and the makeup of this crowd. It is not a small, exclusive club. It is a vast company drawn from every corner of the earth, every nation, tribe, people, and language. The Church Triumphant is bigger and more diverse than any of us can imagine. This vision corrects two common mistakes. First, it reminds us that sainthood is not limited to the spectacularly holy or the officially canonised. The white robed multitude includes the quiet faithful: the grandmother who prayed for her grandchildren, the neighbour who showed kindness, the child who simply trusted Jesus, the believer who endured illness or loneliness or quiet suffering without losing faith. Second, it shows that the people of God are not confined to one ethnicity, culture, or language. Heaven is not a homogeneous place. The song of the redeemed is a multi-lingual anthem.

On All Saints' Day we remember that we belong to this same multitude. The saints in glory are not a different species from us. They are our family those who have finished the race and now stand before the throne. They wear white robes and hold palm branches. The white robes are not a symbol of their own moral perfection. The elder explains the source of their purity: "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." That is the heart of the Christian gospel. We do not stand before God on the basis of our own achievements or spiritual prowess. We stand because Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, has washed us clean. His blood has made us white. Every saint in that great company, whether apostle or ordinary believer, owes everything to the same Saviour.

The palm branches maybe make us recall the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, prior to his arrest , trial and crucifixion . They are signs of victory and of joyful celebration. These people have come through "the great tribulation." They have known suffering, pressure, loss, and the weariness of this age. But the tribulation is over. The struggle has given way to praise. The Church Militant has become the Church Triumphant.

The vision does not end with the crowd's song. It ends with a tender description of God's care for them: On this All Saints' Day, we celebrate the great multitude. We hear their song: "Salvation belongs to our God... and to the Lamb." Remember those who have gone before you. Give thanks for their faith. And take heart: the same Lamb who washed their robes has washed yours. The same Shepherd who guides them will guide you. The same God who wipes every tear from their eyes will one day wipe every tear from yours.

Until that day, we walk by faith. We endure. We love. We hope. And we join our voices, however imperfectly, with the song of the saints: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

STF 244

Blest are the pure in heart,
for they shall see our God:
the secret of the Lord is theirs;
their soul is Christ's abode.

Still to the lowly soul
he does himself impart,
and for his dwelling and his throne
chooses the pure in heart.

The Lord, who left the heavens
our life and peace to bring,
to dwell on earth in lowliness,
our pattern and our King.

Lord, we your presence seek,
a vision of your face;
give us a pure and lowly heart,
a temple of your grace.

Prayers of Intercession

Using Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount, let us pray through the Beatitudes in our petitions for ourselves and for the needs of others:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

We pray for the poor: for those globally and within our communities who lack basic necessities like healthy and nutritious food, clean water, shelter, and clothing. We pray also for the poor in spirit, for those whose spirits are broken by the circumstances of life that they are facing and for those who do not have the comfort of knowing you. May their spirits be lifted, and they might find faith and hope in you alone.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

We pray for those who mourn the loss of loved ones, good health, regular employment, mental faculties, and more. There are many among us who grieve, some more publicly and some in the quiet ache in their own hearts. Be close to those who mourn.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

We pray for those who willingly serve God in whatever place or task to which they are called. We pray for their efforts to be obedient in building Christ's kingdom. We pray those who serve as missionaries, seeking to bring news of the Christian faith to the world. We pray for the many ways members of our churches and members of staff in our circuit are seeking to serve God and the church in their vocations, bringing the good news of your kingdom to us and the world.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

We pray for those who ardently desire and pursue righteousness and goodness in the world. We pray for those who give their lives and service in pursuit of justice.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

We remember those who are daily dealing with human misery and suffering. We pray for health care professionals, globally and at home . We pray for those who work for disaster aid agencies.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8).

We pray that you will help us all to be pure in heart, to see God and do everything for God’s glory. We pray that our love for you will be unadulterated and unswayed. Give us pure hearts to seek after you, to serve you, and to love you with all our heart, mind, and strength.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

We pray for those who strive for peace in their own lives and in the lives of others. In a world where there seems to be little peace between countries, between people and their governments, between brothers and sisters, neighbours and friends, we pray for peace. We pray for mutual respect, for a recognition of each other’s worth, for a willingness to seek peace.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10).

We pray for the millions of Christians in the world who are persecuted for their belief in you. Give them strength in the face of trial and courage in the face of danger.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11–12).

We pray for those building the kingdom of God by living with countercultural values, for those who choose your way instead of the easy way. For those who choose to stand up for their beliefs when conforming to popular opinion is the more attractive option.

We with them rejoice, for we are blessed. Lord, you are holy, you are worthy of all our praise. Hear our prayers and hear our praises. **Amen. We say the Lord’s Prayer.**

STF 341

All for Jesus - all for Jesus,
this our song shall ever be;
for we have no hope, nor Saviour,
if we have not hope in thee.

All for Jesus - thou hast loved us;
all for Jesus - thou hast died;
all for Jesus - thou art with us;
all for Jesus crucified.

All for Jesus - thou wilt give us
strength to serve thee, hour by hour;
none can move us from thy presence,
while we trust thy love and power.

All for Jesus - all for Jesus -
this the Church's song must be;
till, at last, we all are gathered
one in love and one in thee.

The Blessing Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. And the blessing of God the Father , the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us now and always.

Amen.

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