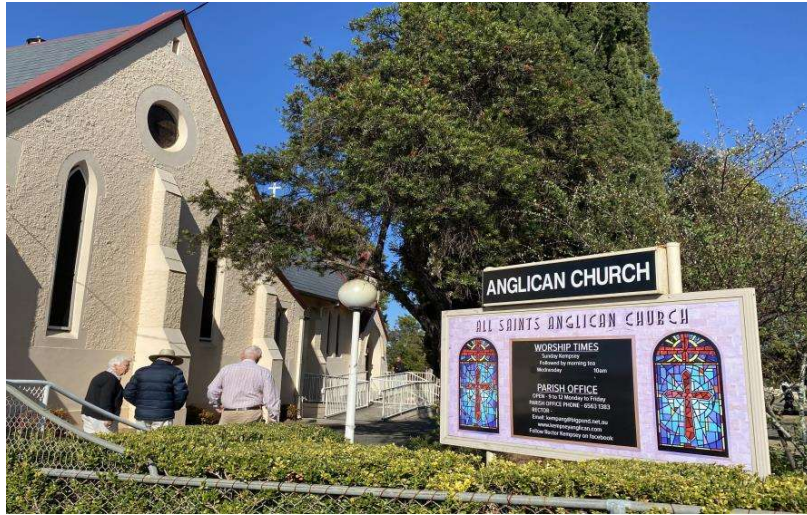


Called to be Saints Today



Each year the Church celebrates All Saints Day on November 1st. It is a time when we remember and give thanks for the Saints. People such as St Peter, St Paul, St Mary Magdalene and the many other saintly people known and unknown who have demonstrated lives of holiness and love in the past. All Saints Day also reminds us that as baptised Christians, we are all called to be saints.

Understanding what 'called to be saints' means can be somewhat difficult. I suggest it can be explained simply as calling people to follow Jesus by living lives through which God's love is revealed to others in words and actions. To explain this by using practical examples I will draw on some recent events I have experienced.

When I fell over in IGA car park on October 13th, the two people who came to my aid were complete strangers to me. First a woman, who rightly identified that I had broken my hip and advised me to stay where I was on the ground. Then an off duty policeman appeared who quickly summed up my situation, phoned for an ambulance and stood, using his body, to protect me from any cars entering the car park. Both stayed with me and did what they could for me until the ambulance arrived. They acted as saints by showing love and care for me.

While in hospital, my car was stolen from our carport at 4am in the morning. As a member of Christ's body I was challenged to obey Jesus' command to forgive those involved and to pray for their well being. This was not easy for me and required some effort on my part. However, in Matthew 18: 21-22, Peter asked Jesus how many times should he forgive someone who sinned against him. Jesus replied seventy times seven, that is, an unlimited number of times.

During the last few weeks, there have been and still are bushfires in southern Queensland and northern NSW. As often happens people responded to these disasters by helping each other. Some by putting out the fires, and others by feeding and housing those who had moved to evacuation centres.

The need for loving actions toward others also arise in ordinary daily situations. To smile at someone we are walking past in the street, can demonstrate our respect and love for that person, a fellow human being. It may be someone who lives alone and has little close contact with others and can feel uplifted by such a brief friendly connection.

In Matthew 22: 37-39 we are commanded by Jesus to love God and our neighbours. In Matthew 5:44 this is extended to also love our enemies. These 'enemies' include people who are not like us and whom we might prefer to avoid. When we do express our love for our neighbours and enemies we are not to do it by putting ourselves in a superior position to them, such as feeling we are being kind to the unfortunate, but rather seeing ourselves alongside of them, sharing where they are, listening to them and feeling their pain. In this position we may find we are helped by those we help.

Still in hospital, I recently tested positive to Covid. I now pray for others suffering from Covid as one of them. Not that I am suggesting we should ask to suffer, but it did make a difference!

In our world today with so much violence especially with the war in Gaza causing many deaths and much suffering among Israeli, Palestinians and Hamas militants, we can begin to be involved in their pain when we pray for them. None of those involved in the conflict seem to be prepared to compromise and bring peace. We can pray to God for them in our own words and sometimes we might read the words of others who have put a relevant prayer on Facebook. These words may help us to see the situation from a slightly different perspective and enable us to find a place for God's love in it.

The Revd. Greg Jenks has recently shared on Facebook the following direction from St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem in 1990 as to how we might pray for the Middle East conflict.

'Pray not for Arab or Jew, for Palestinian or Israeli
but pray rather for ourselves
that we might not divide them in our prayers
but keep them both together in our hearts.'

Instead of praying for one group or another, we are encouraged to love all others as God does. It is not always easy but surely God's love for others is the aim of all who are called to be saints.

*Sister Helen CSC
Sister Linda Mary CSC
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Photo with thanks: Naomi Simick