

Saints and Troublemakers, All Souls Day, Sun., Nov. 2nd, 2014

Saints video clip – 6:43. Audio level per conversation with operator.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu: “Despite all appearances to the contrary, it IS a moral universe that in the end good prevails.” (Various images of news footage from South Africa during the apartheid years flash across the screen). “Imagine if we had chosen the path of retribution and revenge. Our country would have been dust and ashes now.” When you nurse a grudge, your blood pressure shoots up and you feel it in your tum tum. Whereas when you forgive, your blood pressure does down and you have a physical well being which reflects your spiritual well being. So, you see forgiving is good for your health. Ha ha.”

Maya Angelou: (Grace)

“There’s an African American song 19th century which is so great. It says,(singing) ‘When it looks like the sun wasn’t gonna shine anymore, God put a rainbow in the clouds.’ (end of singing) Imagine! And I’ve had so many rainbows in my clouds. I had a lot of clouds but I have had so many rainbows. And one of the things I do when I step up on the stage, when I stand up to translate, when I go to teach my classes, when I go to direct a movie, I bring everyone who has ever been kind to me with me. Black, white, Asian, Spanish speaking, Native Americans, gay, straight - everybody! I say, ‘Come with me. I’m going on stage. Come with me. I need you now.’ Long-dead, you see. So I don’t ever feel I have no help. I’ve had rainbows in my clouds. The thing to do, it seems to me, is to prepare yourself so that you can be a rainbow in somebody else’s cloud. Someone who may not look like you, may not call God the same name you call God, if they call God at all. May not eat the same dishes prepared the way you do, may not dance your dance or speak your language. But be a blessing to somebody. That’s what I think.”

Dorothy Day: (Compassion)

A Catholic priest speaks while images of Dorothy Day cross the screen.

“A few years ago I was helping to direct a retreat. One of the mothers at the retreat stood up and gave her understanding of Dorothy Day’s life and she said something very beautiful, “Imagine all the wonderful things that would not have happened if Dorothy Day had said, ‘I had an abortion what could I do?’ Which was very beautiful for me because Dorothy Day through that shows us that none of us no matter what we do in life and no matter what actions we have taken that we might think are bad or unforgiveable nothing like that should

ever prevent us from getting closer to God and trying to be the saints we were meant to be. Because if Dorothy Day had just shrugged her shoulders and said, “I’m just too damaged to do anything think of all the wonderful things that wouldn’t have happened and all the wonderful people she wouldn’t have met and would never have helped.”

Dorothy Day (from a television interview) “I would say that sitting down and breaking bread with people; the disciples at Emmaus knew him in the breaking of bread. It’s far easier to see Christ in your brother when you’re sitting down and sharing the soup with him. You don’t any longer see the destitute, or the drunk or the disorderly or the unworthy poor.”

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: (Courage)

“Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn’t matter with me now because I’ve been to the mountain top. I don’t mind. Like anybody I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will and He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. I have looked over and I have seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But, I want you to know tonight that WE, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. So, I’m happy tonight. I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.”

The film highlights a few secular saints for their contributions to bringing about the biblical ‘kingdom’ here on earth. While they embody many of the qualities of a saint, we recognize they were also fallible human beings with life stories of their own. A journalist once told Dorothy Day it was the first time he had interviewed a saint. Her response was, *“Don’t call me a saint — I don’t want to be dismissed that easily!”*

Together let’s brainstorm the qualities of a saint? [Answers will likely include: *virtuous, holy, godly, pious, religious, spiritual, prayerful, devout, righteous, good, moral, innocent, sinless, guiltless, irreproachable, spotless, uncorrupted, pure, angelic, worthy, divine, blameless, upstanding*].

Certainly, no one would fault us for thinking that the life of a saint would be rather boring! Sainthood tends to sterilize the very human life behind the saint. Truth be told most saints were driven, obsessed and downright difficult to live with! Life is the greatest of all teachers

and every experience and hard knock helps shape, and transform men and women into the saints they will eventually become.

The film clip captures some of their more saintly behaviour but, collectively, these secular saints have had their passports revoked and have been arrested and jailed. Some were called loose cannons, scandalous men and women, and one was denounced as being anti-Semitic. Others were the victims of physical or sexual abuse as children. They have earned a living as a priest, fry cook, night club dancer, a miner, sex trade worker, journalist and teacher. They have been married, divorced, sometimes more than once. They lived common law, had children out of wedlock. One had an abortion, another tried to commit suicide. They were passionate, focussed, stubborn and quick tempered. One refused to pay taxes, salute the flag and never voted. All have been critics of the church for not following their own teachings. One even described clergy as blowfish and sharks! Saints and troublemakers every one!

So what happened to blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the meek, blessed are the pure of heart? When we read scripture in our churches today, we read it from a non-threatening place, from the perspective of knowing how the story ends and how we want to portray the teachings of Jesus. We read it with a vision of holiness, religious piety, if you will. We read the stories of the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth from a similar perspective. We don't read the passage about Jesus turning over the moneychangers tables with anger, we read it softly. We don't read the passage with coarseness when Jesus speaks condescendingly to the Canaanite woman saying, *"It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."* It would appear that even Jesus had some off days when he was tired of teaching, tired of answering questions, tired of raising others consciousness. In frustration, he threw over tables, spoke sharply to people and withdrew from the crowds and even his disciples. We all can relate to this very human, Jesus.

We are all the perfectly imperfect creations of God. Story after story in the bible recounts the tales of fallen individuals called by God to be leaders. Moses murdered an Egyptian; King David impregnated Uriah's wife and then conspired to have Uriah killed during battle. Jacob was a thief who stole his brother's inheritance. Most were sinners who became saints, a few were saints who later became sinners.

Dorothy Day believed, "we are all called to be saints." She didn't believe saints had different DNA than anyone else. Sanctity is merely loving God and your neighbor. Sanctity is something ordinary. We can all choose to be a saint.

Perceiving saintliness as being all good and sweetness sets the bar so high that it leaves you and I feeling like we just can't measure up so why bother even trying! If the saints were present here today, many would fail to recognize themselves in what's been written about them. We are called to be saints, to live out the beatitudes. Some saints are called to do so in grace and humility like Mother Teresa, others do it by turning over tables and being troublemakers. Thanks be to God for all the saints!

Today, we remember and honour three souls who passed away this year.

Arlene Darby (Terry Shaw)

“In Silence”

In silence she slept into the night
darkness enfolded her, dreams led to bright light.
A light so radiant that its warmth caressed her soul.
Her time had come; she had never felt more whole.

How could it be, this death so unexpected?
We don't have control; life is not to be neglected.
Like each flower that blooms, whether time is short or long,
we are blessed by its presence, let beauty keep us strong.

Each blossom, each person, unique in one's unfolding
Appreciate the moments, the time in hand we are holding.
God's creation, ever changing, we can nurture one and all.
As our lives bloom, times of darkness always yield to Sonlight's call.

(Written by Trudy Davies Nov.-25-13 In memory of Arlene Darby).

Doris Ferry (Linda Chamberlain)

One thing I have learned;
distance has nothing to do with miles,
it has nothing to do with the veil that divides this world from the next.
It has everything to do with opening your heart to the ones you've loved
And will always love.

Let's live our lives the way she did as Jesus taught us to do.
To love and respect one another and to greet every phase in life with grace and joy.

Mom has a way of looking into your eyes, right into your soul,
And letting you know the good stuff she sees.

Ken Pinch provided food and drink to those in need, he welcomed the stranger, visited the sick and comforted those less fortunate. As husband, father and grandfather, Ken made life fun and interesting. He gave life and love everything he had and then some. We were blessed and challenged by your presence in our lives. In the years ahead, we will cherish the memories of time spent together. Laughter will ring out and tears will flow and, all the while, we will know that we were loved by you.

Blue stones:

With your bulletins this morning, you were given two blue stones. During the offering, I invite you to place one stone into the glass container for someone you consider to be a saint. Perhaps your saint is quiet and gentle; perhaps your saint is bold and in your face. Your saint is someone who has helped shape you into who you are today. Keep the other blue stone to take home with you as a reminder of how that person's life has been a blessing to you. Amen.

Now, let's sing When the Saint Come Marching In...