All Saints’ Day 2021 11am

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Day by day, week by week we celebrate here on earth what the saints enjoy in heaven. We gather around a holy table, and we feed from the heavenly banquet, that great feast which is both now and forever but also not yet.

The feast is ‘now’ because every day is a day of the new Creation, the Creation ushered in at the dawn of Easter Day. As St Augustine wrote, 1600 years ago, ‘we are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song’, every time we break bread and share a cup, we proclaim not only the Lord’s death until he comes again but the resurrection life, the Easter life, in which all the baptised in every age and place share through baptism.

The feast is ‘forever’, because Christ’s victory of death and darkness and sin and decay is once-and-for-all, just as his death on Calvary is once-and-for-all. A single complete sacrifice echoing backwards and forwards throughout time and space for all eternity.

The feast is also ‘not yet’ because, whilst we live in the light and the joy of the resurrection, as citizens of the New Jerusalem, we still await the end of all things: the time when time itself will come...
to an end and all things will return to the origin of their very being, to the God who is in all and through all; the God who is perfect eternal uncreated love and light; the One whom we are bold enough to call Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So, as Christian men and women in St Marylebone in 2021, we are a people of ‘now’, of ‘forever’, but also the ‘not yet’.

Today, the Church calls us to celebrate, to look to, the saints, those men and women who, like us, have lived and died in a particular place at a particular time; men and women who, like us, have ‘died to death’ in the waters of baptisms; men and women who, like us, have been nourished by the body and blood Christ in the Eucharist, and who, like us, have lived lives as parents and as children, as friends and colleagues in good times and in bad times, and who knows, someone here today, like them, might, in time to come, be recognised as a saint too – because we are all, each and every one of us, called to be a saint: to live a life through which Christ is made known to others; a life which draws others to Christ; a life which encourages and upholds others in the faith once taught to the apostles and handed-on, down through the centuries.

Pope Benedict XVI, once wrote that that, *The Saints are not a small caste of chosen souls but an innumerable crowd to which the liturgy urges us to raise our eyes.*

This multitude not only includes the officially recognized Saints, but the baptized of every time and place who sought to discern and carry out God’s will faithfully and lovingly.
They are so numerous that we do not even know many of their names. We have no idea of what they looked like, but with the eyes of faith we see them shining in God's firmament like glorious stars.

This multitude, as the Book of the Revelation to St John tells us, is greater than anyone can number and they come from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues.

The saints join us around the altar, be it a table in a school hall in Marylebone, under a great stone baldachino in a Basilica in Rome, or in a cleared corner of a bombed-out home in Aleppo.

Together, we gather, the seen and the unseen, joined by a single common desire: the desire to be Christ’s body and blood so that we in our day, like them in theirs, can incarnate (turn into flesh and blood) the Good News, the Gospel, of Jesus Christ in our lives; lives lived in the power of the life-giving Holy Spirit of God.

One people then, throughout time and place; one people united in a common purpose not only on earth but in heaven; we, still a journeying pilgrim people; they having completed their pilgrimage, rejoicing in the nearer presence of the Lamb who sits on the throne. They, inspiring us by their example and aiding us by their prayers, and we, glorying in their victory over sin and death and trying to live the Gospel now.

On this All Saints’ Day, we see the reflected light and glory of the crucified, risen and exalted Christ Jesus in the saints; if we can open our eyes wide enough and look closely enough, we might even see it in the face of the person sitting next to us!
May the all the saints reawaken within us the great longing to be like them; happy to live God’s life and light in the here and now of our everyday existence – not waiting ‘to eat pie in the sky when we die’!

May we feast now on the body and blood of Christ in and through the great gift of this Eucharistic Feast, so that we will always be ready to share with the saints in the Heavenly Banquet of Heaven.

The closer we stay to Jesus, the more we are able to enter into the mystery of his divine love. The closer we stay to Jesus, the more we are able to discover that he loves us infinitely, a lesson, once learned, will prompt us, in turn, to love our brothers and sisters – even our enemies and those who hate us, which is the hardest thing of all.

In a few moments, we shall take bread and wine, bless them, break them it and share them and, by so doing, we shall not only find ourselves in the company of Christians here and throughout the world today, but surrounded by that great cloud of witnesses no one can number, the saints in glory from every age and place. Amen.