

All Saints' Sunday

Living Generously

November 5, 2017

Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's

Revelation 7:9-17

Those robed in white have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

1 John 3:1-3

We are God's children now.

Matthew 5:1-12

The Beatitudes

I would like to introduce you to a few saints who haven't made it into the Book: As a young boy I loved Boy Scouts, and decided that I would work toward getting enough merit badges to earn Eagle rank. One merit badge I chose was Radio. I went to the local junk yard and paid about \$1 for the starter coil out of an old car. I used the wire for an antenna, and wound more of it around a paper towel roll to make a coil. I mail-ordered a crystal, cat whisker, and capacitor. I mounted them on a block of wood, hooked up the wire that I had strung between the two trees in our front yard, and... I heard the radio station in Watertown, 13 miles away. Yayy !! I was hooked.

My uncle Dick came to visit us, and I showed him my AMAZING crystal radio. He came back a few weeks later with this book as a gift to me. It is a radio amateur handbook. He said that I might want to read parts of it, to learn WHY my radio worked, and how I could build a radio that would let me hear and talk with people around the world. For a kid in a farm town of 1800 people, my uncle was offering me the vision of a life beyond anything I had ever thought possible. Who has helped you reach beyond what you thought was possible in your life?

Then Bob Smith, the owner of the auto parts store in town, offered to drive me to Watertown every week for a few months, while he and I studied theory and Morse code to become licensed amateur radio operators. I got the call WN2ISY.

Then Frank Gordon, my high school science teacher, offered to contact some friends of his at Syracuse University, to see if he could help me get accepted into electrical engineering school. I was accepted.

Then on another track in my life, there was Fr Ayers, at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, who asked me at about age 10 to become an acolyte. I loved it.

In my late 20s Fr. Ron Molrine at St Stephen's in Erie, Pa found out that I never got confirmed. He talked the Bishop into a private confirmation service, and committed me to take catechism classes later.

Fr. Walter Giles in my 30's asked me to join a new theology training course called Education for Ministry: EFM. It is much of the theological training for seminary, structured for the laity. I was hooked.

The technical track and the theological track converged in San Jose. Fr. Bob Landreth from St. Francis talked with me about ordination, and presented me to Bishop Shimpfky.

This group of people I just introduced you to have been my great cloud of witnesses that are mentioned in Hebrews 12:1. They kept me moving on a path that I didn't realize was a path until years later. And YOU are a part of my great cloud of witnesses. You help me improve on the mixture of technical skills, theological education, love for God, a heart for pastoral

care giving, and a drive to learn how to not just talk about our faith, but how we can live out our faith in the real world.

In the Revelation given to John, he was shown God's ultimate plan to create a new heaven and a new earth, where all the saints are gathered, praising God. Jesus taught in the Beatitudes that the People of God not only receiving divine blessings in the good things that happen: when we are merciful and pure in heart and peacemakers. There is divine blessing for us even in the hardships; being poor in spirit, when we mourn or hunger for righteousness. There is divine blessing for us when we learn to endure these circumstances with our eyes and heart and soul focused on God's presence and on His love for us.

I am sure that Bob Smith had no idea that his giving me a ride to classes for a ham radio license would somehow fit into God's plan for me to serve as an ordained minister for the past 15 years. His not knowing the role he played does not change the impact he had on me. There are others whose name I don't remember, and still others I will never know who impacted my life journey. But they are all in my 'great cloud of witnesses'. They are saints in my life. They each lived generously, giving of themselves.

Your life has been influenced by saints and souls (those who made the book and those who didn't); both knowingly and unknowingly. We are linked through baptism into the Family of God; saints and all souls from the past, those with us now, and those we haven't met yet. We have been led through the influence of these people into the place we are now in our faith journey; we share our faith with each other now; and we pass it forward in whatever way we demonstrate our faith to the world. We are interconnected through the barrier of time, to make one huge Family of God. This is God's generous gift to us. Our God is a generous God, and we are to be a generous people, living out gratitude.

Recall and celebrate the people who have helped shape your faith journey. Thank God for the influence they have had, and for the impact they continue to accomplish through you. May you especially think of them, thank them, and pray for them today.

Over the next week we will be putting together this Fall's stewardship campaign: Grateful and Generous Living. I hope this is an opportunity to prayerfully consider the value and importance of the faith connection we share as a part of the Body of Christ called St Luke's. I have described the generosity of all saints and all souls, a reflection of the generosity of God. Our financial support of this wonderful, special place is an expression of our gratitude. God's generosity; our gratitude. Consider this week the great cloud of witnesses in your life – the saints and all souls - who have helped shape your faith journey. Consider the energy that resides in the expressions of Generosity and Gratitude. Amen