

Journey with the Saints
All Saints 2014

The Rev. Thomas W. Simmons IV

You can tell by the smell it's a big day in the Church.

It's All Saints, one our high holy feasts.

We are celebrating our part in the Biggest Thing on Earth.

That's right. The Church is the biggest thing in the world.
Bigger than Google and Facebook. Its bigger than the internet.

Today there are 2.3 billion Christians gathering for worship in communities from Paducah Mississippi to Peshawar Pakistan to Pyongyang North Korea.

And the church doesn't just encircle the globe, it extends through history all the way back 2000 years of unbroken history to Jesus' first followers.

The incense we use, represents the prayers of all these saints rising with a sweet aroma to God.

As Christians we are connected to all these people.

This is "the communion of the saints" we affirm in the Creed.

And we experience it every time we worship, when we gather at this altar and lift up our hearts we join with angels, archangels and..."***all the company of heaven.***"

They've gone before us in life's journey. They MADE it!

That sounds great doesn't it?

Wouldn't you like to look back some day and say, "I made it"?

Let's talk about that journey.

Where are we headed? How do we get there?

Where are we headed?

Jesus described it. "The meek will inherit the earth."

Notice it's not a cloud they are inheriting, but ***the earth***.

God made the world good.

He intended it to be his dwelling place, the arena where he would play out his love affair with us, and every creature under heaven.

Every society in history nurtures hope for this kind of future and every single person wants to be part of it.

Even hardnosed, "scientific" secular folk in the last century dreamed up utopian ideologies promising a future of universal peace and harmony.

They promised a worker's paradise of egalitarian sharing, free love,

racial harmony, perfect liberty, environmental purity, boundless resources, disease cured and hunger ended.

Jesus said, "The meek shall inherit the earth."

He's describing the world he's making.

In which we will be comforted and filled, we will receive mercy and see God.

We will live finally and fully under God's loving rule, our deepest desires fulfilled.

Revelation depicts that vividly: human beings in the presence of God, rejoicing and resting and feasting

All that's sad has been undone.

You like that? You want that?

How do we get there?

We've got to start at the beginning.

The journey begins right here, today, for (names) and their families in the waters of Baptism.

Like Moses led Israel out of bondage in Egypt, through the water of the Red Sea,

so Jesus leads us in a journey of liberation through the waters of baptism.

We are delivered through the water from our bondage to our cruel masters.

Turn to page 302 and let's take a look at them.

We renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God.

We renounce the evil powers of this world, which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God.

We renounce all sinful desires that draw us from the love of God.

These things describe the default mode of human existence, into which we are born and to which we are all by nature captive and active participants.

God saves us from these things by bringing us to his Son Jesus.

We trade one lord for another, one way of live for another.

We turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as our Savior.

We put our whole trust in his grace and love.

We promise to follow and obey him as our Lord.

We join the new humanity, gathered to Jesus, to inherit the earth.

This new life is described on page 304-305 in the Baptismal Covenant which we'll renew together in mere minutes.

All this begins with baptism... but how? How does it work?

It's simple. We meet Jesus in the water of baptism.

We are PLUNGED ***into a relationship with Jesus*** of Nazareth, the man God sent to restore the world.

Here's how Jesus did it. Just think of all the bad stuff in the world and in your life.

Jesus took these things to himself and bore the burden of them FOR us.

He took the worst that the evil and stupidity of this world can deal out.

He suffered horribly at their hands, and died humiliated and alone.

And then he walked out of the grave!

He rose victorious over it all.

Like the Doors song, "Break on through to the other side."

He made it THROUGH to the other side and emerged whole, restored, alive, beautiful and full of joy.

When we are baptized in water it's like Jesus grabs us to himself and plunges in and brings us safely out the other side ***with*** him.

Everything else in life is downstream from that “watershed event.”

Success in our journey is all about learning to LIVE out the implications of this day-to-day.

That’s how we “make it.”

Everyday remembering that WE ARE JESUS’ PEOPLE.

Every day receiving his love and power, being changed by it, and giving it away to others.

Every day putting one foot of faith in front of the other, getting on down the road.

Little-by-little love, obedience, confidence, service to others are woven habitually into the fabric of our lives.

So that some day when we “make it” we’ll look back and see that everything I ever needed to know I learned in baptism!