



St Marylebone
Parish Church

All Saints 2018

St Marylebone 11 am

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

In his letter to the Romans St Paul tells his readers that that they are “called to be saints”ⁱ and, what is more, that saints are ‘made’ in the stuff of the real world, in-and-through-and-by their everyday lived lives.

On 14th October this year, Pope Francis declared six men and women to be ‘saints’ⁱⁱ – but each of them became a saint not in a grand ceremony conducted in St Peter’s Square, but in the ‘stuff’ of the real world.

The calling to be a ‘saint’, the calling to holiness of life, is not an *option* for anyone who has been baptised: it is our ‘calling’.

Some people will live out that ‘calling’, that ‘vocation’, as priests or deacons or bishops or monks or nuns, but the vast majority of those who are ‘called to be saints’ have to do it in other, much less public ways: as wives or husbands, or doctors or teachers or street cleaners or architects or in a countless number of other ways.

Each and every Christian man, woman or child lives out their life in a different context. Each and every Christian has a

different character: a different set of given circumstances – but whatever the context, the ‘calling’, the ‘vocation’, is the same – to allow oneself to be recreated ever more fully into the image of God – to become a ‘saint’, to reach that point in life, or death, where Christ’s light is reflected as perfectly as it can be in the life of a human being as it can be this side of heaven.

In the very dark and troubled days of the First World War, Rufus Jones, one of the most influential Quakers of the 20th century, wrote, that the saints are those whose lives have shone out with Christ’s reflected light in such a way, that their light “reaches deep into other men’s darkness, revealing their condition to them, making them aware of evil, checking them in the pursuit of it, giving a vision of righteousness, attracting towards goodness, pointing infallibly toward the Christ from whom the Light shines”.

“Giving a vision of righteousness . . . attracting towards goodness . . . pointing infallibly towards Christ” – that’s a pretty good ‘job description’ of what being a saint is, what being a Christian is!

Everyone who has been baptised is called to shine with Christ’s reflected light; not to illuminate them but to light up a path that will lead others to Christ.

This is our task and this is how we become ‘saints’.

The saints we honour today are given to us by the Church not only as examples for us to emulate, but as companions on our journey. They were men and women – like us – who had been baptised, men and women like us who had responded positively to God’s invitation to become more and more like

Jesus through their daily living and, sometimes, through their dying.

Every time we gather to share the bread and wine of Christ's Body and Blood we are joined with the saints in every age and place: those who, with us, are called to be saints now; those who have lived and died as saints before we were conceived, and those who will come after us "giving a vision of righteousness . . . attracting towards goodness . . . pointing [others] infallibly towards Christ".

The God who is Love has fashioned us in his image to be *Love*, *Love with a capital "L"*; God has made us to *love* as he loves us and to share that Love with those whom we encounter every day; to live *Life* with a capital "L" in all its fullness, to shine brightly with the reflected light of the Christ who is the world only true Light.

This is what it is to be a 'saint'; to take our baptism seriously; to follow Jesus each and every day in each and every action in which we engage, to live out our Christian calling to be the agents of God's Love, and Life and the bringers of God's Light.

Cheslyn Jones, an Anglican theologian and educator of last century, described the path to becoming a saint through the words of a prayer to the Holy Spiritⁱⁱⁱ:

Holy Spirit, giver of life,
work silently within my heart
to form within me
the fullness of Christ's redeemed, and redeeming, humanity.
Give me a share in his loving heart
to burn with love for God and love for men.

Give me a share in his joy and his sorrow:
his weakness and his strength,
his labour for the world's salvation,
that Christ may be formed in me.

My God the Holy Spirit work silently within all our hearts so
that we might burn brightly with love for God and love for our
neighbour; day by day may we learn to live in union of our
hearts and wills with Jesus Christ our Saviour and, in so doing,
become the saints we are *all* called to be.

ⁱ Romans 1:7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

ⁱⁱ Paul VI (Giovanni Battista Montini), Supreme Pontiff; Oscar Arnulfo Romero Galdámez, archbishop of San Salvador, martyr; Francesco Spinelli, diocesan priest, founder of the Institute of the Sisters Adorers of the Most Holy Sacrament; Vincenzo Romano, diocesan priest; Maria Katharina Kasper, virgin, founder of the Institute of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ; Nazaria Ignacia de Santa Teresa de Jesús (née: Nazaria Ignacia March Mesa), founder of the Congregation of the Missionary Crusaders of the Church.

ⁱⁱⁱ Holy Spirit, giver of life,
who didst overshadow Mary
that she might become the mother of Jesus our Saviour
do thou likewise work silently within my heart
to form within me
the fullness of his redeemed, and redeeming, humanity.
Give me a share in his loving heart
to burn with love for God and love for men.
Give me a share in his joy and his sorrow:
his weakness and his strength,
his labour for the world's salvation.
May Mary, blessed among women,
Mother of our Saviour,
pray for me,
that Christ may be formed in me,
that I may live in union of heart and will
with Jesus Christ, her Son, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.