
I Believe in the Communion of Saints

A sermon by the Very Reverend Sam Candler
Atlanta, Georgia
All Saints Sunday

I believe in the communion of saints. In a few minutes, we will say it together: I believe in the communion of saints.

I sat in this sacred space last Tuesday, when we spoke the names of one hundred people. It was All Saints Day, and we were praying at mid-day. We were praying for sacred people: our mother who died a few months ago, our father who died last year. Their names cling to our lips, and our memory holds them fast. I believe in the communion of saints.

Later that night, I sat in this sacred space and we spoke fifty-two more names, names of the homeless who died in Atlanta. This room was full of saints that night. They were dirty and hungry saints, waiting -like me"" for a heavenly banquet. I believe in the communion of saints.

I walked through these sacred hallways on Wednesday morning, winding my way through hundreds of young children, our students at the Cathedral Preschool, young saints, holy with curiosity and blessed with delight. I believe in the communion of saints.

At Wednesday lunch, I ate with a man, a friend, who no longer attends this church. We talked about anguishing and challenging issues. We disagreed. But we had a communion together. We ate together. I believe in the communion of saints.

On Wednesday night, this vast Cathedral complex was buzzing with salvation again. A non-stop line of folks waited for flu shots. While some saints waited for that saving medicine, many more ate braised lamb shanks and hamburgers on the kitchen side of the room. Upstairs, a baptism class formed with John Mark Wiggers. Downstairs, our youth confirmation class met with Boog Candler, and Felicia Huger, and Brandon Peete. Over in the Lanier House, a steady Education for Ministry group met with Patrick Edwards. In our Cathedral Bookstore, Todd Smelser led a class about saints and souls. I believe in the communion of saints - all at the same time.

Friday night, I spoke with the devoted members of our Outreach Committee as they began their retreat. We talked about seeing the presence of God in other people, the presence of God in the poor, the presence of God in folks different from us, the presence of God in the communion of saints.

On Saturday, yesterday, this sacred space witnessed wedding vows. Two couples walked before God and this community to be blessed in their commitment. My God! They gave their lives to each other! Is there anything more holy than that? Is there anything more saintly than that?

Today, we baptize new saints, we bless expecting parents, we welcome new members into this church. I believe in the communion of saintly people, the communion of saints.

Churches are for this communion. Do not come to this church, do not join this church, if you are not ready for

communion. Communion with God. Communion with Jesus Christ. Communion with the Holy Spirit. All that, yes. But, today.

Today, I believe in the communion of saints, the communion of God's Holy Ones. We are young, and we are old. We are conservative, and we are liberal. We are clean, and we are dirty. Some are dead, and some are living. Some are religious, and some are not.

There are places I'll remember (so the song goes)
All my life, though some have changed,
Some forever, not for better,
Some have gone and some remain.

All these places have their moments
With lovers and friends I still can recall,
Some are dead, and some are living.
In my life, I've loved them all.

God remembers us, too, on this day. God remembers us, too, as we believe in the communion of saints. God blesses us, in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

AMEN.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip