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“For All the Saints”: A Feast for All People and All Time

by

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A Paper Submitted to the Faculty of School of Theology of Saint John’s University, Collegeville, Minnesota, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Theology.

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
Saint John’s University  
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This Paper was written under the direction of

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R. Kevin Seasoltz

## “For All the Saints”: A Feast for All People and All Time

This paper examines the feast of All Saints, encompassing the beloved dead, both known and unacclaimed, as expressive of the paschal mystery in their partaking of the promise of life in the resurrection; it also poses the challenge for the living faithful to see themselves as saints in a recovery of the Pauline understanding of the term. The Feast of All Saints strengthens our full understanding of the communion of saints less solely as perfect individuals, remote in time and place from the present, and more as the faithful community of all times and places sharing in the life of the church. The saints have dual roles as both examples and intercessors, and this paper argues for a balance between heteronomy and companionship, critiquing Elizabeth Johnson’s unilateral endorsement of an egalitarian community of friends with the strong liturgical witness of intercession. An overview of the early history and development of the feast from the Eucharistic commemoration of the deaths of martyrs and its Eastern association with Pentecost reflects the paschal mystery, the working of the Spirit, and its expression of God’s kingdom now and to come. Its Western placement between the secular celebration of Halloween and the Commemoration of All Souls both poses challenges and offers opportunities for a renewed understanding and appreciation of holiness of the beloved dead and living faithful in Christian life.

This paper may be duplicated.

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June 13, 2007

The Christian understanding and attainment of holiness have taken various forms through the life of the Church: sharing in the holiness of God, a notion inherited from Jewish communities; a Pauline sense of saints as members of a community in Eucharistic fellowship as Body of Christ; the example of martyrs following Christ unto death, the love for whom provided a natural basis for their veneration and invocation within a local community; the imitation of Christ in life and faith by confessors, ascetics, virgins, and bishops included among the saints after the era of Christian persecution; heroic virtue and perfection in a gradually narrowing understanding of holiness; finally, a return to a more localized identification and celebration of sainthood. This overall growth in recognizing people of holiness created a full sanctoral calendar for universal acclaim and worship, and ultimately prompted the pruning of that calendar in the twentieth century and a restoration of local recognition and participation in the canonization process.<sup>1</sup> While the number of individual saints may certainly have proliferated beyond what any one local community could reasonably recognize and their individual celebrations obscured the larger sweep of the Christian calendar, all of these understandings and examples of human holiness, both of local and universal significance, can be encompassed within the festival of All Saints. Although we are able to recognize God's grace working specifically through individual lives, the solemnity of All Saints allows us to celebrate the very opportunity for holiness, made possible by the gift of the Spirit, its continuous working and inspiration throughout all ages, and the resulting fellowship and solidarity within the larger communion of God's holy people, both the living and the blessed dead. These saints, taken as a whole, are models of the life of Christ, some literally following Christ to their deaths, others following a Christian life, and all partaking

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete tracing of the historical development of the cult of the saints, see Kevin Donovan, "The Sanctoral" in *The Study of Liturgy*, ed. Cheslyn Jones, et al. (London: Oxford University Press, 1992), 472-84; Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 49-79; Kenneth L. Woodward, *Making Saints* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 50-86.

in the life of the resurrection, the promise made by Christ's own paschal sacrifice. They are proof positive of Christ's victory over death, offering glimpses of a paradisaal future to which the living are aspiring:

Raised up to perfection by the manifold grace of God and already in possession of eternal salvation, they sing God's perfect praise in heaven and offer prayers for us. By celebrating their passage from earth to heaven the Church proclaims the paschal mystery achieved in the saints, who have suffered and been glorified with Christ; she proposes them to the faithful as examples drawing all to the Father through Christ, and through their merits she pleads for God's favors.<sup>2</sup>

The feast of All Saints in its foundation for both emulation and intercession in theology, history, and liturgical celebration, encompassing all holy people, both known and unknown, who have followed the life of Christ, finds its significance in this paschal element.

### **I. Why a Feast of All the Saints?**

In the age of Christian persecution, martyred saints had their own feast days, the day of their death, also known as their "birthday," *dies natalis*, which marked their birth into new life. Early Christian communities, not just the immediate family of a martyr, gathered to remember and celebrate the life, courage, and mortal confession of individuals who went to their death with confidence in the resurrection. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258) notes the custom of celebrating the Eucharist in keeping martyrs' anniversaries, a practice attesting already to the link between martyrs and their new life in the resurrection.<sup>3</sup> This commemoration of both death and life, beginning, as it does, from a cult of the dead, was later extended to confessors, who were

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<sup>2</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 104.

<sup>3</sup> "We never fail to offer sacrifices on their behalf every time we celebrate in commemoration the anniversary dates of the sufferings of these martyrs." Qtd. in Philippe Rouillard, "The Cult of the Saints in the East and West" in Anscar J. Chupungco, *Handbook for Liturgical Studies: Liturgical Time and Space* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 301.

celebrated for their witness to faith, and later to others of holiness and virtue following times of persecution, again on individual days.

Why, then, a feast of all the saints amid these individual celebrations? Heinrich Kellner maintains that such a universal feast was first a commemoration of all martyrs and that, following the persecution during the reign of Diocletian, the number of martyrs became so great that separate dates were unable to be assigned for each one.<sup>4</sup> In a more contemporary context Karl Rahner notes that we rightly celebrate All Saints *sub una veneratione*, recognizing both the canonized and the unknown saints at the same time, “those who lived quietly in the land, the poor and the little ones who were great only in God’s eyes, those who go unacclaimed in any of the rolls of honour belonging to the Church or to world history.”<sup>5</sup> Following Rahner, Elizabeth Johnson considers All Saints the “feast of splendid nobodies,” a celebration of anonymous good people and, in particular, women, who have no commemoration of their own and otherwise go unremarked by the church.<sup>6</sup> The festival of All Saints may in fact be an “idea feast” inasmuch as it gives the fullest and most complete expression, in the words of Paul VI on the reforms to the sanctoral calendar, that “holiness in the church belongs to all parts of the world and to all periods of history and that all peoples and all faithful of every social rank are called to attain holiness.”<sup>7</sup> That the faithful are not only called but do attain holiness is conveyed in the sanctoral calendar throughout the year. The sanctoral calendar gives individual expression to this calling, as individual communities recognize, celebrate, and strive to emulate those saints of particular local significance. The feast of All Saints, however, can offer a very concrete celebration of holiness

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<sup>4</sup> K. A. Heinrich Kellner, *Heortology* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Traber and Co., Ltd., 1908), 323.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Rahner, “All Saints,” *Theological Investigations* 8, trans. David Bourke (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1971), 28.

<sup>6</sup> “It is not facetious but merely brings the present state of affairs to its logical conclusion to point out that since the official roster of saints names mostly men, simple arithmetic indicates that the majority of those celebrated on All Saints Day are women” (Johnson, 251).

<sup>7</sup> Qtd. in United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979: Conciliar, Papal and Curial Texts* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982), 13.

within the entire Body of Christ, including its living and deceased and the canonized blessed, its entire communion of saints.

## II. The Communion of Saints

The feast of All Saints strengthens our understanding and acknowledgement of the unity of *communio sanctorum*. It recognizes less an idealized individual life of “squeaky clean” perfection but rather can serve as a mirror and reflection of the present community: it celebrates persons known and unknown, whose individual accomplishment may not so much get lost as be found within a greater context of the universal bestowal of God’s grace. Unfortunately, there is much truth in Johnson’s statement that “the symbol of the communion of saints is largely passed over both in theological work and in everyday experience.”<sup>8</sup> This communion can seem remote in time or place from the present and simply constitute an unknown and anonymous crowd, distant from the lives of ordinary human beings. However, as Johnson’s statement implies, much possibility lies in its fuller development and understanding.

The phrase “communion of saints,” *communio sanctorum*, is a fifth-century addition to the Apostles’ Creed, following a statement of belief in the Holy Spirit and the holy catholic Church.<sup>9</sup> The saints as people are real and present witnesses to both the Spirit and the universal Church, and our celebration of this assemblage of real and present witnesses living a life in the Church is clear evidence of the Spirit’s working throughout time. The earliest, generally eastern understanding of this communion, however, conveyed a more sacramental sense of the holy, a sharing and participating in holy things, particularly Eucharistic elements (*sanctorum* read as a neuter substantive noun, i.e. *sanctarum rerum*).<sup>10</sup> In the west, by contrast, the *communio*

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, 94.

<sup>10</sup> Berard L. Marthaler, “Interpreting the Communion of Saints,” *Liturgy: Journal of the Liturgical Conference* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1985), 89-90. See also Johnson, 94-96.



*sanctorum* generally has been interpreted as a relationship among peoples of all times and places, a congregation in this life and communion in the life to come, and a hope in eternal salvation. A certain Nicetas, bishop of Remesiana (c. 400) expresses the breadth of this assembly in one commentary on the Apostles' Creed, the first to attest to *communio sanctorum* in the profession of faith:

What is the church but the congregation of all saints? From the beginning of the world patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, and all other righteous people who have lived, or who are now alive, or who shall live in time to come, comprise the church, since they have been sanctified by one faith and manner of life, and sealed by one Spirit, and so made of one body, of which Christ is declared to be the head, as the Scripture says. ... So you believe that in this church you will attain to the communion of saints.<sup>11</sup>

The western and eastern readings of *communio sanctorum* are not irreconcilable, for they are yoked together in liturgical experience where a Spirit-filled communion of God's holy people is grounded in a sharing of holy things.<sup>12</sup> As noted in *Lumen Gentium*, "for just as Christian communion among wayfarers brings us closer to Christ, so our companionship with the saints joins us to Christ."<sup>13</sup> And we are nowhere more united to Christ and the Church in heaven than in the celebration of the Eucharist, the commemoration of the paschal mystery, when the angels and saints are invoked and remembered in the Eucharistic prayers.

Johnson understands two paradigms for the communion of saints: the first, the more ancient of the two, is what she calls a companionship model, in which saints and the living are companions of equals, joined not by proximity of place or time but by a "lively sense of the presence of the Spirit."<sup>14</sup> Their relationship is based not upon the subordination of the living to the blessed dead but rather on the sense of mutuality in the shared call and struggle to

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<sup>11</sup> Qtd. in Marthaler, 90.

<sup>12</sup> Johnson, 96.

<sup>13</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 50.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, 79.

discipleship. The second model is hierarchical, a post-Constantinian derivative of the Roman system of patronage, whereby petitioners ask patrons, who are one step higher or in this case closer to God, for help and favor. The connection of the living with these patron saints is not one of remembrance or example, according to Johnson, but effects an asymmetrical exchange between the needy and the powerful.<sup>15</sup> Johnson argues that various forces, including the imperial establishment of the Church and the localization of holiness in persons and places, contributed to overwhelm the companionship model and indeed the Pauline notion of sainthood from the fifth century onward. Her thesis is that a recovery of this earlier model based on friendship, example, and witness—in Augustine’s phrase, “lessons of encouragement”<sup>16</sup>—and a strong undergirding presence of the Spirit, can counteract the exclusivity of hierarchy and subordination in the *communio sanctorum* that has particularly excluded women from a living sense of holiness. In revitalizing an understanding of holiness, she maintains, this model can in fact recast the nature of what it means to be Church:

The communion of saints in the companionship model forges intergenerational bonds across time that sustain faith in strange new times and places. Surrounded by the cloud of witnesses, we cherish in very different circumstances what they cared enough to live and die for.<sup>17</sup>

While Johnson’s argument against the idealization of holiness, imposing juridical structures, and the role of patriarchy in the patronage model have much to commend it, not least her emphasis on the example of the saints within the companionship model, her unilateral

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Brown traces the fourth century development of the cult of the saints into a structure of patronage but argues for a more sympathetic understanding of this transformation, one that recasts the ancient notion of a personal genius, protecting spirit or *daimon*. This change puts a personal face onto the patron-client relationship which helps navigate through the difficult challenges of holiness on earth toward eternal reward in heaven. While Johnson acknowledges this historical development, she laments its emphasis on imperial hierarchy of dominion-dependency and the loss of the reciprocity inherent in a discipleship of equals. See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 56-60, and Johnson, 89-92.

<sup>16</sup> Qtd. in Johnson, 82.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson, 85.

endorsement of an egalitarian community of friends needs to be tempered, particularly in regard to intercession. Johnson argues that the sanctoral models she discerns—one of mutuality and reciprocity based on an egalitarian framework, the other of hierarchy and need in a patriarchal system—are mutually exclusive. Citing the example of a Mafia boss who calls an underling, “my friend,” Johnson argues that one cannot be both friend and subordinate, for the conflict in roles renders the relationship dishonest: the superior is here engaged in a mind-bending power play with the expectation of service and the implicit threat of power and dominance.<sup>18</sup> But perhaps in her analogy Johnson is examining this hierarchical relationship from the wrong perspective: from a supposed position of subservience we can and already do honor our friends and place them in high esteem, on a pedestal even; we cherish their memory, follow their example, even invoke their help. This honor, esteem, and prayer do not of necessity presume distant hierarchy and dominant patriarchy. Indeed, Kilian McDonnell has argued for the importance of praxis in understanding the balance between heteronomy and companionship with Mary and the saints: “... the poor pray on their knees before the image of Mary, but she is also companion.”<sup>19</sup>

Mediation and intercession comprise a large part of the Church’s experience of the saints, particularly in corporate liturgy, as Johnson acknowledges, but the companionship model presents inherent difficulties here. While Johnson maintains that intercession within the company of equals is simply a request for prayer as to a living friend and not to one closer to God, the importance and necessity of intercession in this context are decidedly lessened, except perhaps as an expression of the corporate body of Christ. As McDonnell contends, “One can still pray to Mary and the saints in the companionship model, but the need of an intercessor is greatly

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<sup>18</sup> Johnson, 92.

<sup>19</sup> Kilian McDonnell, “Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology,” *Theological Studies* 66 (2005), 527-567. While McDonnell’s discussion focuses primarily on Johnson’s Mariology, his argument applies equally well to her view of the saints, which he also addresses in the article.

reduced when Mary and the saints walk at one's side, a real friend with whom one has 'interaction.'"<sup>20</sup> Indeed, even when Johnson writes positively on intercession, she downplays its emphasis in the communion of saints, instead basing such prayer upon the Christian practice of praying for one another.<sup>21</sup> As we will see below, however, the language of liturgical prayer throughout the sanctoral tradition, in both celebrations of individual saints and that of All Saints, gives voice to a necessarily mediatorial role of both prayer and supplication in addition to acknowledging the entirety of church at prayer and the offering of friendly example and support.

The Litany of Saints is perhaps a good example, not least because it is the one Johnson uses in maintaining the companionship model in prayers of invocation. With obscure origins in Asia Minor in the third or fourth century and its emergence at various point in the West in the late fifth century,<sup>22</sup> the litany has come now to be used at "the great consecratory actions of liturgy," according to Martimort: baptism, notably at the Easter Vigil and by extension at other times; ordination; consecration of virgins; dedication of churches; commendation of the dying, where it is optional.<sup>23</sup> The litany is expressive of the paschal mystery and triumph and at the same time is constitutive of the entire Church at prayer:

The litany of the Saints reminds us of the baptismal moorings of grace and holiness, of others in whose concrete lives the grace of God in Christ and Christ in God has triumphed, and of the hope to which we are called. In the prayer of this litany the saints on earth join the saints in heaven and together they "surround the elect with prayer" as they move toward the font so that "the entire Church will accompany and lead them to encounter Christ" (cf. Rite of Election, no. 121).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 563.

<sup>21</sup> See Johnson, 131-135.

<sup>22</sup> Michael D. Whelan, "The Litany of Saints—Its Place in the Grammar of Liturgy" in *Worship* 65: 3 (1991), 216-223.

<sup>23</sup> A. G. Martimort, ed. *The Church at Prayer: Principles of the Liturgy*, vol. 1, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 155.

<sup>24</sup> Whelan, 223.

This corporate element is particularly important at these moments of consecration and beginning, yet the mediatorial dimension involved in the response *Te rogamus, audi nos* is apparent as well.

Johnson's unequivocal endorsement of the companionship model stems from her sensitive reading of sanctoral history which admirably seeks to guard against forms of patriarchy and oppression. Her writing is particularly helpful in the ongoing attempt to encourage the recognition of holiness among the communion's living members and the local celebration of sainthood in a vitalization of the Pauline understanding of holiness. However, the balance of this companionship model of the saints as well as the significance of their intercession are still expressive of the paschal mystery and constitutive of the Eucharistic celebration: companionship and intercession affirm our unity in Christ and in prayer in heaven and on earth, as we follow the discipleship of Christ, forerunner and paragon of a life of mutual sharing, friendship, mediation, and sacrifice.

A historical overview of the development of the festival of All Saints provides a further basis for understanding the day's reflection of the paschal mystery, the working of the Spirit, and its expression of God's kingdom now and to come in the company and intercession of the saints.

### **III. All Saints: A Historical Overview**

#### **A. Development in the East**

A commemoration for all martyrs first appears in the East, celebrated on the Friday after Easter, as mentioned in a late fourth-century Syriac breviary.<sup>25</sup> This placement demonstrates the close affinity between Christ's paschal sacrifice and the sacrifice of martyrs. Martyrdom showed forth an ideal discipleship of Christ, in following him even unto death, Christ being the "faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead" (Rev 1:5 and 3:14). The proximity of a celebration of all martyrs to the celebration of Easter provided an obvious correlation to true discipleship and

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<sup>25</sup> *in ipso die parasceves post hebdomadam azymorum*, qtd. in Herman A. P. Schmidt, *Introductio in Liturgiam Occidentalem* (Rome, 1965), 653.

literal participation in the paschal mystery: martyrs exposed their own bodies to the sufferings of the body of Christ and submitted to death, demonstrating their faith in the resurrection.<sup>26</sup> Thomas Talley also notes the potential appropriateness of this date coming during the time of post-baptismal mystagogical catechesis: remembering all the martyrs during this time shows the examples and the costs of true discipleship to newly made Christians.<sup>27</sup>

This early, fourth century dating of a celebration of all martyrs coincides with reports of the transference of martyrs' bodies and relics of martyrs from local cemeteries to churches for preservation. Ambrose, for one, encourages the practice in Milan, while Rome was more conservative in adopting this trend until prompted by the threats of invaders in the sixth and eighth centuries.<sup>28</sup> While it was individual, and not generally all martyrs who were recognized when it became customary for relics to be placed beneath the altar of a church, the connection between relics and the Eucharist was apparent: as Martimort reports, Ambrose was happy to have placed beneath the altar bodies of those who shared most closely in the paschal mystery of Christ.<sup>29</sup>

St. John Chrysostom in at least one of his homilies, likely in the church of Antioch in the second half of the fourth century, is next to mention a celebration of "all the saints in the world who have been martyred," according to the sermon's title.<sup>30</sup> As he mentions in his first sentence, this celebration took place on the Sunday following Pentecost: "Not yet have seven days elapsed

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Ellsberg, *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Talley, "The Evolution of a Feast," *Liturgy: Journal of the Liturgical Conference* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1985), 44.

<sup>28</sup> A. G. Martimort et al. *The Church at Prayer: The Liturgy and Time*, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1985), 114.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 129. 13. "Let these triumphant victims be brought to the place where Christ is the victim. But He upon the altar, Who suffered for all; they beneath the altar, who were redeemed by His Passion. ... Let us, then, deposit the sacred relics, and lay them up in a worthy resting-place, and let us celebrate the whole day with faithful devotion." Ambrose *Ep.* 22, 13 (Patr. Lat. 16:1022).

<sup>30</sup> Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους πάντας ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ μαρτυρήσαντες. Patr. Gr. 1. 706-712.

since we celebrated the sacred solemnity of Pentecost.”<sup>31</sup> While the celebration described by John Chrysostom may have had a somewhat narrow scope, over time it encompasses a commemoration of all the saints, not only the martyrs, in a feast which the Orthodox Church continues to celebrate on this day.<sup>32</sup>

Celebrating All Saints with its overt connection to new life in the resurrection on the Sunday after Pentecost draws connections with both the paschal mystery and the work of the Holy Spirit. In a sense it extends (and, like Ascension, disrupts the unity of) the 50-day paschal season to include memory of those who follow Christ unto death in the hope of new life. Talley speculates that the instruction in *Apostolic Constitutions* V.20.14 to resume fasting after the celebration of Easter in the second week after Pentecost shows a certain paschal continuity through the feast of All Saints.<sup>33</sup> Later Byzantine liturgical books for the Easter season, the *Pentacosterion*, include chants and hymns similarly through the Sunday of All Saints, as if it too were incorporated into the one paschal celebration.<sup>34</sup>

The proximity of All Saints to Pentecost also locates it within the context of the Holy Spirit, whose coming has enabled the faithful to attain sainthood and true discipleship in imitation of Christ: they fulfill God’s command to be “holy, for I the Lord God am holy” (Lev 19:2). In the Jewish tradition Pentecost marked the date of the Law given to Moses at Mount Sinai but also concluded the festival of the grain harvest during which the first fruits of the year

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<sup>31</sup> Wendy Mayer, trans., ed., *St. John Chrysostom: The Cult of the Saints* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006), 218.

<sup>32</sup> There is some sense that this homily and celebration focuses on a specific, though large group of martyrs, those who had died, stretched out on an iron ladder or rack of some sort, which John then uses as a metaphor for the ascension of the martyrs, a reversal of Jacob’s ladder with its descending angels (Mayer, 217). The title of another homily of John Chrysostom, “On all the martyrs,” is similarly misleading, as Mayer notes. While martyrs in general are discussed, it is clear that John is speaking at the shrine of a particular Egyptian martyr and on his feast day, and thus likely is not celebrating a corporate communion of saints (Mayer, 239).

<sup>33</sup> Talley, 44.

<sup>34</sup> John Baldovin, “Saints in the Byzantine Tradition,” *Liturgy: Journal of the Liturgical Conference* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1985), 72.

were offered at the temple. In its association with Pentecost, the celebration of All Saints marks the reaping of the Holy Spirit in the persons of the saints: their holiness is made possible by the descent of the Spirit, and they themselves are the first fruits of the redemption Christ paid in his crucifixion. The Book of Revelation indeed describes the 144,000 saints in white garb as “redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and for the Lamb” (Rev 14:4), a harvest both of the Spirit and of Christ’s paschal sacrifice. The sixth-century Byzantine hymn-writer Romanos Melodos describes the feast, at the time only of all martyrs, with imagery of the harvest: “To Thee, O Lord, the Gardener of creation, the civilized world / Offers as the first fruits of nature the God-inspired martyrs.”<sup>35</sup> Romanos’ hymn also acknowledges the companionship of the living and the blessed martyrs among their Spirit-filled community: “They have assembled from every city, and they have become our compatriots. / They have come home from the whole world, and they join with us in inviting the world as participants of a high festival.” The explicit connection of the eastern celebration of All Saints with the paschal season and Pentecost thus commemorates confidence in the resurrection and the working-out of the Spirit embodied in the deeds, lives, confessions, and deaths of holy men and women.

## **B. Development in the West**

At least two strands of a history and understanding of All Saints appear to have developed in the West. The first is closely linked with the dating of the eastern celebration. Talley alone offers evidence for a Roman witness to the celebration of All Saints on the Sunday after Pentecost.<sup>36</sup> An eighth century manuscript, the *Comes* of Wurzburg, listing the daily epistles for the Church of Rome of the late sixth or early seventh century, marks the Sunday after Pentecost as *Dominica in natale sanctorum*. Fasting is set to resume the following day, following

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<sup>35</sup> *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist*, Vol. 2, *On Christian Life*, trans. by Marjorie Carpenter (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press), 291-6.

<sup>36</sup> Talley, 45.



the schedule outlined in *Apostolic Constitutions*, as Talley also describes. The *Comes* thus provides western witness to the dating of All Saints within an extended paschal season: the Feast of All Saints serves as the octave day of Pentecost before it is later subsumed by the feast of the Holy Trinity as early as the eighth or ninth century.<sup>37</sup>

The more lasting western development of the feast of All Saints offers a different background and theological understanding. Its initial appearance celebrated on May 13 the anniversary of the handover of the Pantheon in 609 or 610 from the emperor Phocas to Pope Boniface IV (608-615) and its transformation to a Christian church. The Pantheon had been built as a pagan temple by the emperor Hadrian, a reconstruction of a previous building from the first century B.C.E. destroyed by fire. The manifold statues in each of the high niches of the Pantheon displayed the great number and various names of gods worshipped within the Roman empire, perhaps a gesture from Hadrian acknowledging such diversity. After cleansing the temple of its pagan trappings, Boniface dedicated the building as a church “of the Blessed Ever-virgin Mary and all the martyrs,” denoting Mary at the head of the saints, not a martyr but clearly in the role of intercessor.<sup>38</sup> Boniface adapted the pagan frame of reference of the Pantheon to create not his own pantheon of gods but a place to commemorate the full manifestation of the martyrs of the Church, perhaps including confessors and other saints.

Pope Gregory III (731-41) followed this commemoration with a decidedly more encompassing remembrance, dedicating an oratory in St. Peter’s Basilica “for celebrating the solemnities of vigils and Masses of Christ the Lord God and his holy Mother, holy apostles, and

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<sup>37</sup> Adolph Adam, *The Liturgical Year* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 167.

<sup>38</sup> *Fecit ecclesiam Beatae Mariae semper Virginis et omnium martyrum* (*Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, 317).

all holy martyrs and confessors, all the perfect and just at rest in the whole world.”<sup>39</sup> No date is available here other than Duchesne’s suggestion of sometime in the first eight months of 732,<sup>40</sup> but this devotion clearly includes more than just martyrs but also other holy departed. Moreover, Martimort argues that here the cult of the saints is perhaps for the first time not principally supported by material relics.<sup>41</sup> Still, the connection of both this celebration and that of the newly consecrated Pantheon with the establishment and dedication of a church is significant: it posits a communion between the living and the deceased by establishing a gathering place for the living and for commemorating the holy dead. As such, the antiphon for the old rite for the dedication of the church, as suggested by Adolph Adam, perhaps retains this connection between saints and a church building: “Rise up, saints of God, from your dwellings; sanctify this place and bless the people.”<sup>42</sup> This reference thus suggests an early link between the deceased saints and the continuance of their spirit in the living church.

The ultimate determination of dating the Western feast is probably of Gallican origin and places the date of All Saints on November 1 where it has remained in the western Church to this day. Correspondence of Alcuin of York and Arno, archbishop of Salzburg, refers to this commemoration in the late eighth century in transalpine communities,<sup>43</sup> and this date was later adopted at Rome. A medieval writer Johann Beletth attributes this move from the May observance at the Pantheon to November to food and harvest concerns, due to the number of pilgrims to Rome for the feast and the lack of adequate supply of food and provisions for all.<sup>44</sup>

Pope Gregory IV (827-44) transferred the two feasts, one of martyrs and the other of apostles, to

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<sup>39</sup> ... *pro celebranda sollemnia vigiliarum atque missarum Christi Domini Dei nostri sancteque (sic) eius Genetricis, sanctorum apostolorum vel omnium sanctorum martyrum ac confessorum, perfectorum iustorum, toto orbe terrarum requiescentium* (qtd. in Schmidt, 653).

<sup>40</sup> Duchesne, *Liber Pontificalis*, I. 423.

<sup>41</sup> Martimort, *The Liturgy and Time*, 115.

<sup>42</sup> Qtd. in Adam, 229.

<sup>43</sup> Schmidt, 653.

<sup>44</sup> Kellner, 324.

November 1 to coincide with the harvest season, a possible though easily predictable reason.<sup>45</sup>

The feast celebrated not only apostles and martyrs but also included the Trinity, and all angels and archangels, and patriarchs and other holy men and women. At the request of Gregory IV, the Frankish emperor Louis I (814-840) proclaimed this celebration for the entirety of the French realms in the early ninth century. Thus the November 1 dating took hold, it seems, for more practical than ideological reasons, but perhaps keeping the time of the harvest can be understood, as in the East, as harvesting the bounty of the Spirit and the fruit of Christ's paschal sacrifice.

The dating of All Saints to November 1 may also represent the reworking of a pagan practice within a Christian framework. November 1 corresponds to the ancient Celtic festival called Samhain, an ancestor to today's Halloween, originally celebrating both the new year and the first day of winter.<sup>46</sup> This festival, too, traditionally is associated with the harvest, a recognition of the lengthening of days and the onset of winter, a time by which crops were to be gathered and animals brought in from the fields for slaughter. More important, it was also a time in which souls of those who had died the previous year were said to gain access to the next world. The barriers between the world of the living and of the dead were opened, and spirits of the dead were wandering en route to their new world. Bonfires were lit to guide the spirits or ward them away from homes, according to different accounts, and offering special foods and dressing as these spirits became customary ways of communing and interacting with the spirits.<sup>47</sup> With the dating of November 1 for All Saints (or "All Hallows"), the Church perhaps offered an alternate way of celebrating this day: in distinction to the notion that spirits were sent to harass

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<sup>45</sup> *Sed quia in illo mense non est tanta copia uitalium ut in aliis — solet enim tunc annona deficere et populus, qui affluebat ad illa sollemnia, propter raritatem ciborum non poterat bene quandoque celebratione uacare —, ideo Gregorius minor, qui quartus fuit eorum, qui eodem nomine uocati fuerunt, hec duo festa transtulit et ea in kalendis Novembris, quando maior copia rerum que necessarie sunt humano uictui ...* (Beleth, cap. 127).

<sup>46</sup> Jack Santino, *Halloween and Other Festivals of Death and Life* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), xv.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

mortals, the celebration of All Saints offered the memory of those holy men and women who had passed to the next world in the mercy of the God of life and resurrection<sup>48</sup>: in the companionship model, they form a cloud of friendly, compassionate witnesses, known and unknown, who testify to a life of faith and heroic virtue, and in the hierarchical model they are able to offer intercessory help. All Saints in superceding a possible pagan model recognizes not the torment or problematic visitation of death but rather Christ's dominion over death and the reality of new life in the resurrection.

In time, however, with the narrowing and elevation of sainthood to heroic virtue as well the diminishment of the understanding of "saint" in the Pauline or companionship sense, there emerged a growing desire to remember the number of ordinary Christians departed from this life who did not reach such heights of holiness and were not understood to be admitted immediately into the company of the blessed. The feast of All Souls was first set in 998 by Abbot Ordilo of Cluny (994-1048) as November 2 in a direction to his monastic congregations to commemorate all the faithful departed and to elicit prayers for their purgation from sin and suffering and for their ultimate entrance into the presence of God. This memorial gradually was adopted by other communities and dioceses throughout the middle ages.<sup>49</sup> Martimort suggests a close correlation between the feasts of All Saints and All Souls: "The cult of the saints had originally developed out of the cult of the dead; now it had led back to it again, since there is but a single City of the living."<sup>50</sup> However, the placement of such a general commemoration immediately following that of All Saints could also suggest a clear delineation between the saints celebrated one day and the ordinary faithful departed remembered the next.

#### **IV. The Feast of All Saints Today**

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<sup>48</sup> Johnson, 99.

<sup>49</sup> Kellner, 325-7.

<sup>50</sup> Martimort, *The Liturgy and Time*, 117.

Today the solemnity of All Saints, a holy day of obligation in the U.S., is nestled between the pre-Christian and non-Christian celebration of Halloween on October 31 and All Souls, a commemoration of the faithful departed on November 2. All Souls perhaps has a more natural affinity with Samhain and, by long extension, Halloween than All Saints, as both commemorate the dead of the previous year. All Saints in the western North American Church thus struggles to find its place amid two celebrations of the dead, one a popular, and now media-crazed, playful version of death in its fantastic scariness, the other in its new rite a refound celebration of the paschal mystery in death as the foundational hope for new life. Each in a way is understood more simply than All Saints, for the question, “Who is a saint?” still creates difficulty for this holy day. How can All Saints shake its associations with each celebration or at least present a clear alternative to each? At least in the Eastern tradition the association of All Saints with Pentecost provides a clear path for inspiration to holiness: harnessing and harvesting the inspiration of the Spirit in our lives and witnessing it in those of others. The celebration of this feast immediately after the Easter season, as Baldovin argues, perhaps also provides a more intimate connection among the paschal mystery, the faithful departed, and the path of discipleship to which we are called.<sup>51</sup> Other traditions, particularly Catholic cultures in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, consider the first days of November an extended remembrance of the dead, of which All Saints is simply one part. These cultures are more seamlessly able to blend the easy, playful mockery of death with solemn remembrance of the dead, as families take time to decorate graves, commemorate the holy saints and faithful departed, as well as gather for traditional meals and play with festive skeleton figures.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Baldovin, 75.

<sup>52</sup> Santino, xviii. November 1 and 2 are Days of the Dead, and in some regions October 31 is the Day of the Dead Children, followed on November 1 by the Day of the Dead Adults. November 2 is known variously as Day of the Departed or of the Blessed Souls.

Both death and holiness, however, are remote concepts in North American culture. For as much as Halloween engages cultural consciousness, it is essentially an uneasy parody of death, a strange distancing from its reality. Halloween in a sense is an “idea feast,” a celebration that “frames death as a concept, as an existential entity, featur[ing] stylized images of death as among its primary symbols.”<sup>53</sup> On other days of remembrance, whether personal or national, we remember the lives of specific people who had personal significance in our own lives. Halloween, however, helps us keep death at a mockingly comfortable distance, which paradoxically perhaps suggests our own discomfort, as we participate in a festivity which has been stubbornly unresponsive to Christian influence<sup>54</sup> and does not engage in the celebration of the reality of the spirit, the hope of the resurrection. Halloween has thus become a secular, fully communal event which, at least in one writer’s eyes, should challenge us to redefine our understanding of religion and spiritual communion: “For if Halloween is indeed a folk holiday, generated by everyday people, it is with parodistic images of death, harvest, evil, and the grotesque, paraded around in public and adorning private homes, that people engage in holy communion with one another.”<sup>55</sup>

At a time when people may be satisfied in finding communion or community in secular or non-Christian holidays, what place is there for a feast like All Saints, a remembrance of the blessed dead and the holy living? How can or should it be differentiated from All Souls? Are members of a Christian community able to understand themselves as saints in the Pauline sense, surrounded by holy men and women in a companionship model, with recourse to their help and

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<sup>53</sup> Santino, xiv.

<sup>54</sup> Christian communities have been known to continue to co-opt even the modern day hoopla of Halloween. Some parishes have been known to celebrate All Saints by encouraging congregations, adults and children alike, to dress up in their Halloween costumes. Less recognizing themselves as saints, this community turned to play-dressing and play-acting in the world of make-believe in a strange and indecipherable clashing of Christian liturgy and secular celebration.

<sup>55</sup> Santino, xiii.

guidance in the hierarchical model? Is the desire for both of these models wanting, impossibly perhaps, to have the commemoration of saints both ways? Is there a way to maintain in an understanding of the *communio sanctorum* the tensive balance between the supportive community of friends, living and deceased, and the intercession of the saints in prayer? At this point it may be best to turn from a historical and theological conception of the feast to the rites as they are celebrated today, in order to determine how liturgy is forming the faithful in its understanding and experience of holiness in this life and beyond.

#### **V. The Liturgy of All Saints: Example, Communion, and Intercession**

The phrase “communion of saints” is declared every time the Apostles’ or Nicene Creed is recited, and the saints are remembered in each Eucharistic Prayer as those “who have done your will throughout the ages” and our departed brothers and sisters “who have left this world in your friendship.”<sup>56</sup> The specific liturgy of All Saints, however, most highlights their works and their memory. The texts and prayers of this liturgy reflect the saints in their eschatological role, their examples for us; the liturgy also presents the duality of the hierarchical and companionship models for understanding saints and, at times, the real tensions or balance between the two, all of which contribute to the difficulty of allowing the living to see themselves as saints.

The options for the opening collects for All Saints are particularly illustrative. The first opening prayer succinctly commemorates the festival day and the intercessory powers of the saints:

Father, all powerful and ever-living God,  
 Today we rejoice in the holy men and women  
 of every time and place.  
 May their prayers bring us your forgiveness and peace.

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<sup>56</sup> Johnson, 8.

The trajectory of hierarchy, or at least a differentiation, is clear: our rejoicing, the saints' prayers, God's forgiveness and peace. Saints as depicted here are from all parts of the world and all periods of history, and, perhaps implicitly because of their existence always and everywhere, are able to provide specific examples of holiness. Their role, however, is only as intercessors, in closer keeping with the pre-Vatican II prayer:

*Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, qui nos omnium Sanctorum tuorum merita sub una tribuisti celebritate venerari: quaesumus; ut desideratum nobis tuae propitiationis abundantiam, multiplicatis intercessoribus, largiaris.*

Almighty ever-living God, who has allowed us to honor the merits of all your saints in one celebration: we ask that you, with many praying for us, may bestow the abundance of your grace upon us.

The pre-Vatican II prayer explicitly recognizes all saints in one celebration but with a similar descending line of requisite sanctoral intercessions. The displacement between saints and the living faithful is even greater here, as there is no connection between the living and the blessed dead apart from our recognition of the deeds of the saints.

The alternative prayer in the new rite for this day, however, offers a richer theology and a forward-looking rhetorical framework that encompass far more the breadth of God's work in our lives and the lives of the saints:

God our Father,  
Source of all holiness,  
the work of your hands is manifest in your saints,  
the beauty of your truth is reflected in their faith.  
May we who aspire to have part in their joy  
be filled with the Spirit that blessed their lives,  
so that having shared their faith on earth  
we may also know their peace in your kingdom.

The logical structure of this prayer begins by recognizing God as creator of all things holy (*sanctarum rerum*); saints are then an expression of the goodness and beauty of creation in their



lives and their faith. From this example of their earthly lives as evidence of God's fruitful creative work, the prayer hinges on the faith that both the blessed saints and we the living share in confidence of the resurrection, and then looks forward to a time when we may become even more like them, both on earth and in the kingdom to come, sharing their Spirit of holiness and peace. Our peace in the kingdom then comes not simply from their intercessions, as in the first prayer, but from aspiring presently to a Spirit-filled life and faith parallel to their own lives on earth and their joy in heaven. Our sharing in the same Spirit, faith, peace, and truth casts the saints more as the companions we will join rather than simply as our hierarchical intercessors. Unfortunately, the exclusivity of these prayers, the first invoking the prayers of the saints, the second noting their example and our aspiration, realizes a dichotomy between Johnson's two models of hierarchy and companionship. Might we be able to construct prayers that reflect the multiple facets of the exemplary lives and intercessions of the saints? Or can we otherwise through the other prayers of the liturgy maintain this balance between companion and intercessor?

The Liturgy of the Word for the celebration of All Saints provides an eschatological view of the saints' place in the eternal kingdom. A vision in the first reading (Rev 7:2-4, 9-14) places the saints, again from all times and places, in the throne room before the Lamb: they are "a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue" (Rev 7:9). Their cry of praise and thanksgiving to God and the Lamb along with their white robes and palm branches testify to their cleansing from sin and their victorious redemption through the paschal sacrifice.<sup>57</sup> The final two verses of the reading, a post-Vatican II addition, explaining who these people are and the reason for their white robes, make clear the paschal element and the present liturgical connection with baptism, at Easter: "They are the ones who have survived times of

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<sup>57</sup> Adam, 229-230.

great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14). Here they are not even specified as martyrs but are simply a numberless throng, potentially our companions, all of whom have run their course in life and understand their victory is not of their own merits but through the redemption of Christ’s saving mystery.<sup>58</sup> Their white garments are a reminder of the fulfilled promise of new life at baptism.

The psalm, second reading (another post-Vatican II addition), and the gospel offer ways and criteria for attaining such holiness. While implications for Christ’s paschal mystery are perhaps less explicitly emphasized here than in the first reading, it is in imitation of Christ, our living out the divine sonship, his teaching and suffering through which we may receive new life. Psalm 24 considers people of holiness within the breadth of all God’s creation, as in the alternate opening prayer: “The Lord’s are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it, For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers” (Ps 24:1-2). The psalm sets forth as a sign of holiness the moral qualifications for one who is permitted to accompany the ark into the sanctuary<sup>59</sup>: “one whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is in vain” (Ps 24:4). The second reading (1 Jn 3:1-3) takes a more eschatological view, calling us to be the children of God we are because of the Father’s love and in the promise for what we shall be at the end of time, when “we shall be like him. . . . Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure.” This last statement fulfills the Hebrew injunction to be holy because the Lord God is holy and calls us to the fullness of our imitation of God. With its emphasis on purity and hope in the life of resurrection, however, this explanation can seem a mere abstraction.

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<sup>58</sup> Reginald H. Fuller, *Preaching the Lectionary: The Word of God for the Church Today* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1984), 566.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

Finally, the Beatitudes of Matthew's gospel (Mt: 5-1-12a) are the culmination of these three lessons as guidelines for holiness. Although the Beatitudes provide the eternal consolation of a kingdom to come, where one may see God, be called children of God, and may receive the kingdom of heaven, we perhaps do not give enough weight to the immediate present, in which the poor in spirit, the meek, those seeking righteousness, the merciful, pure of heart, the peacemakers, and those persecuted for Christ's and righteousness' sake are all blessed and living lives of blessed holiness. Granted, these qualities of life are not immediately attractive, yet they do depict the Christian life in the paschal mystery, the passage from righteous suffering through death to joy in the resurrection. In this experience, the saints are our witnesses and testimony. Too often we read this and the second reading as portraying holiness as attainable only after death, the end result of Christ's redemption for us all, or else we do not see ourselves—or perhaps do not want to see ourselves—as exemplifying the difficult qualities of the Beatitudes. It is easy perhaps to consider them too much of an abstraction to be real or applicable to us. As a result, these readings are a challenge and may not help us to come fully to understanding ordinary living people, such as we are, as saints.

The remaining proper prayer texts and blessings for All Saints continue the themes already expressed in the readings. The Eucharistic preface for All Saints recalls the imagery from the vision in Revelation but now depicts the saints as our extended family:

Today we keep the festival of your holy city  
 The heavenly Jerusalem, our mother.  
 Around your throne  
 the saints, our brothers and sisters,  
 sing your praise for ever.  
 Their glory fills us with joy,  
 and their communion with us in your Church  
 gives us inspiration and strength  
 as we hasten on our pilgrimage of faith,  
 eager to meet them.

They are our supportive cloud of witnesses, inspiring and encouraging companions, ones who have already made it to the heavenly Jerusalem. The prayers over the gifts and after communion convey our awareness of the intercessions of the saints and our preparation to share with them the joy of the kingdom, again suggesting the dual nature of the hierarchical and companionship models.

The solemn blessing for All Saints duly enfolds many of the components of the above texts into a concluding prayer: God as the focus of the joyful lives of the saints; the saints as both intercessors and patterns for imitation in this life; the ultimate hope for all of us to attain the joy and peace of “our Father’s house” in the life to come.

God is the glory and joy of all his saints, whose memory we celebrate today.  
May his blessings be with you always.

May the prayers of the saints deliver you from present evil.  
May their example of holy living turn your thoughts to service of God and neighbor.

God’s holy Church rejoices that her saints have reached their heavenly goal,  
and are in lasting peace.  
May you come to share all the joys our Father’s house.

All of these are good things, but even the second blessing, which challenges us to serve God and neighbor in the example of the saints and holds that tensive balance between intercession and example in parallel, fails to recognize us all as saints in what we do now. Because of the inherent abstraction of encompassing all saints, the example and companionship expressed through the liturgy for All Saints are mostly predicated on the heavenly destination; the particulars of the lives of saints as they might be examples to us are not as important at this celebration. Perhaps this is yet another reason why it is important for the Church to recognize also individual lives of holiness, lives of diverse experience, holiness in all walks of life, endowed by baptism and living a Christian faith. While the proper texts and prayers have made steps toward vitalizing the spirit

of companionship of the saints, as Connell notes, we still have a way to go for the members of the Christian community to realize fully their own living holiness.<sup>60</sup>

## VI. “For All the Saints”: The Feast in Song

A saving grace, however, might come from an obvious but perhaps unexpected source, the traditional processional hymn for All Saints’ day, “For all the saints,” written in the late nineteenth century by William W. How. While some more recent hymnody, such as “I sing a song of the saints of God,” might offer a more explicit testimony to a broader understanding of holiness,<sup>61</sup> this hymn depicts a traditional portrait of saints.<sup>62</sup> Filled with martial language of Christ’s pilgrim church, it casts the saints specifically as apostles, evangelists, martyrs and, implicitly in the first stanza, all confessors of Christ, those early saints recognized by How’s Anglican Church. Far from depicting saints as intercessors, an item of contention for Anglican reformers, it shows saints as blessed examples of those who lived the Christian life and on whose behalf we the living continue to sing—we bless, adore, and glorify the name of Jesus, in the third through fifth stanzas, as in the *Gloria* or *Te Deum*. The focus of the saints and our praise is unequivocally on the Lord: for the saints, “Thou wast their Rock ... Thou, Lord, their captain ... Thou ... their one true light,” and for us, too, God is the sole object of veneration in each of the following three stanzas: “we sing to Thee. ... Thy Name adored. ... Thee we glorify.”

The saints, however, are differentiated from us singers, and there is no explicit mention of our present inclusion in their number—“we feebly struggle, they in glory shine”—but both groups are together in blessed communion and fellowship with God. Our role is as footsoldiers in the martial strife of Christian living; our togetherness with the saints in God is in their life and

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<sup>60</sup> Martin Connell, *Eternity Today: On the Liturgical Year: Sunday, Lent, the Three Days, the Easter Season, Ordinary Time* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 236.

<sup>61</sup> See Connell, 238-9.

<sup>62</sup> See appendix for text.

their martial victory, as we are to follow the footsteps of martyrs who achieve the “bright crown descending from the sky.” With these saints, we, too, are to win a crown of gold in victory, over death, the culmination of the strife of living the paschal mystery reflected in Christian life. Our consolation “when strife is fierce [and] warfare long” is that other blessed soldiers have come before us: “hearts are brave, *again*, and arms are strong” (added emphasis). We faithful soldiers come to the end of our lives at evening rest, only to be greeted by a new dawn of resurrection in Christ, the King of glory, and by the saints who are already there. A two-fold “Alleluia!” is the cry at the end of each stanza, the Easter cry of victory over the grave, over suffering and death, the Christian paschal sacrifice come to fruition for Christ’s faithful. The countless host of warriors from the bounds of the earth and far coasts of the sea who have fought the good fight continue their song of praise and enter with the saints into glory, fitting proof of Christ’s redemption.

This traditional hymn, sung almost by necessity each All Saints’ day, neither honors the saints completely in the hierarchical model, for these saints are examples more than intercessors, nor does it cast them as equal companions, for these saints are explicitly the great martyrs, confessors, apostles, and evangelists. The hymn avoids intercession, as noted above, and does little to acknowledge the ordinariness of everyday holiness, except insofar as it depicts the Christian life, and even this is done with martial imagery that today does more to discomfort in time of war and our awareness of religious violence. However, this might be a situation where practice, the current use of How’s hymn, is reflective of slightly different belief than the text may explicitly indicate—a correlation from *lex orandi* to *lex credendi*. This hymn, with the third through fifth stanzas omitted, both loses its narrowed definition of sainthood and has found frequent use at services of Christian burials and other memorials of the dead, including All

Souls' celebrations. In this context, the opening phrase, "all the saints who from their labors rest," must include the recently departed, for its reference to one of the seven funeral sentences from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer: "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, from henceforth blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Even so says the Spirit, For they rest from their labors" (Rev 14: 13). As Don Saliers is fond of saying, we sing and bless the name of Jesus for all the saints, for all the departed, and particularly for the recently deceased, who are no longer here and able to sing for themselves.

We sing this song with the consolation that it will continue to be sung, even when we can no longer sing it ourselves, after our own death or when we are overcome by our own tears for others. While How's text may not explicitly recognize our own ordinary individual, living sainthood within the multitude of the blessed, our singing on behalf of the dead and the confidence and consolation that others will sing for us enfolds both our own beloved dead and our very selves into the midst of the living communion of saints whose number cannot be counted. Does this practice suggest something of a conflation of All Saints' and All Souls' days?<sup>63</sup> Yes, and perhaps with good reason: by virtue of Christ's paschal sacrifice, all the souls are encompassed within the number of all the saints, and singing the same hymn at both feasts and at funeral liturgies can show that we, now and in our final destination, and both the saints and the "ordinary" faithful departed, are one in God's communion. Ralph Vaughan Williams called his tune for this text *Sine nomine*, "without a name," because, according to one tradition, he could think of no suitable name himself. Perhaps it is not too much of a stretch to co-opt the name of the tune, continually associated with How's hymn, as recognizing the countless numbers of nameless saints now and throughout the ages—a fortuitous theological interpretation, indeed.

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<sup>63</sup> See Rahner, 24ff. for further discussion on the coincidence and distinction among the celebrations of All Saints and All Souls.

## Appendix: Text of “For all the saints”

For all the saints, who from their labors rest,  
 Who Thee by faith before the world confessed,  
 Thy Name, O Jesus, be forever blessed.  
 Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou wast their Rock, their Fortress and their Might;  
 Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well fought fight;  
 Thou, in the darkness drear, their one true Light.  
 Alleluia, Alleluia!

For the Apostles’ glorious company,  
 Who bearing forth the Cross o’er land and sea,  
 Shook all the mighty world, we sing to Thee:  
 Alleluia, Alleluia!

For the Evangelists, by whose blest word,  
 Like fourfold streams, the garden of the Lord,  
 Is fair and fruitful, be Thy Name adored.  
 Alleluia, Alleluia!

For Martyrs, who with rapture kindled eye,  
 Saw the bright crown descending from the sky,  
 And seeing, grasped it, Thee we glorify.  
 Alleluia, Alleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship divine!  
 We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;  
 All are one in Thee, for all are Thine.  
 Alleluia, Alleluia!

*Words: William W. How, in Hymns for Saints’ Days, and Other Hymns, by Earl Nelson, 1864.*

O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,  
 Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,  
 And win with them the victor’s crown of gold.  
 Alleluia, Alleluia!

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,  
 Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,  
 And hearts are brave, again, and arms are strong.  
 Alleluia, Alleluia!

The golden evening brightens in the west;  
 Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest;  
 Sweet is the calm of paradise the blessed.  
 Alleluia, Alleluia!

But lo! there breaks a yet more glorious day;  
 The saints triumphant rise in bright array;  
 The King of glory passes on His way.  
 Alleluia, Alleluia!

From earth’s wide bounds, from ocean’s farthest coast,  
 Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,  
 And singing to Father, Son and Holy Ghost:  
 Alleluia, Alleluia!



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