



All Saints and All Souls

November 4, 2014

I have never been able to make a neat distinction between the celebration of All Saints and the celebration of All Souls. My question has always been something like this: If the Feast of All Saints honours all the saints known and unknown, living and departed, in a single festival, and the Feast of All Souls commemorates the souls of the departed, why do we need a Feast of All Souls at all? Aren't the souls of all the departed included with all the saints?

For all sorts of personal reasons I came to understand the two festivals differently on Sunday as I celebrated All Saints and All Souls in two of our parishes.

That morning I shared with the Parish of All Saints in CBS as they celebrated the feast of their title, All Saints. It was a magnificent and joyful service with over 350 people in attendance, a true celebration in every sense. I reminded the parish of the name they bear and invited them to be saints in service to God and others. Sunday evening, I shared in a Celebration of the Holy Eucharist with a Memoriam and Remembrance of the Dead at the Parish of the Ascension in Mount Pearl. The parish invited everyone who had lost a loved one over the past three years and their names were read aloud as family members lit candles in their memory.

In my sermon that night I talked of the "Souls of the Faithful Departed" and how our faith teaches that they are safe with God. It was one of those sermons where I suddenly realized I was also preaching to myself when I spoke of my mother and received a flood of memories. Her funeral had taken place at the Parish of the Ascension 13 years ago and that parish is one of the places where I always feel close to her. Before the service I even found myself running my finger over her name in the parish memorial book in the hall. Sunday night I gave thanks for her enduring presence in my life. The Feast of All Souls took on a fresh meaning for me that night. The unexpected grace of that day's journey for me was feeling close to my mother once more.

My Sunday began with a celebration of All Saints as all the "holy ones" of our church were remembered and celebrated. My Sunday ended with a remembrance of the Souls of the Faithful Departed.

There really can be a difference between the two celebrations.

Especially when the saint you remember is someone you know and love.

Blessings,
+Geoff