

Sermon – 30th October 2011
Feast: All Saints' Sunday at St Edward's

May I speak in the presence, in the power and in the peace of God; Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

We think of saints from generations past, captured in stained glass windows, yet... we are all called to be saints. We are individually called and chosen by God, to be holy: and this is a process as I said last week, a life-long journey. Each and every one of us is called to a life of commitment and dedication and together we make up the Communion of Saints: those triumphant in heaven, the BVM and St Edward the Confessor, and those militant here on earth, you and me, those sitting next to you, behind and in front of you.

And our task as the Church is to be the Body of Jesus Christ here on earth. 4 brief things about being saints:

1. Saints are not perfect, not one of us; we can and do sin; and yet all sinners can be saints!
2. Saints are loaned to life and we live our lives in this knowledge and in this light. And it changes our focus and direction as individuals, for we live our lives with energy, with passion, with enthusiasm for we know that life does not own us, but that we have been loaned to life.
3. Consequently we sit lightly to life: our end-goal is God's presence in heaven with all those saints who have gone before us. And as we live out our life with enthusiasm, energy and passion so this helps to bring us closer to God and consequently makes us channels of His grace.
4. All saints have a spark about them for we should be aglow with the breath of God's Spirit.

Now, let us ground some of this in reality. The protesters outside St. Paul's Cathedral highlight some of the perceived tensions between the Church and the world in which it lives in. Our financial crisis is a very

real crisis with causalities' and the supposed resolutions of this past week may not solve the crisis. To me it appears that we are papering over the cracks; but I'm willing and prepared to be wrong!

If we are not grounded in reality we are in danger of papering over financial cracks here at St. Edward's. When you read through the Gospels you quickly discover that there is a lot of teaching about money and very little about sex. I say this not to be controversial but simply that the emphasis appears to be the wrong way round within the Anglican Communion. Our use of the financial resources we are given demonstrates something of our discipleship. The decisions you and I make about the monies we give to support God's mission and ministry will reflect something of our moral and ethical position – just as it did in the days of Jesus. This helps us to ground the reality of being saints in everyday living and the lifestyle we choose to live out in light of being called by God, as one of His saints.

Our stewardship Sunday is in three weeks' time, Christ the King. Yes, it is right to look at our time and how we use it; yes, it is right that we look at our gifts and talents and how we use them; and equally it is right that we look at how we commit our finances to God's work in light of the fact that our focus is upon God's kingdom, here and beyond.

Part 2 next week.

Amen.

Sermon – 6th November 2011
Feast: 3rd before Advent at St Edward's

May I speak in the presence, in the power and in the peace of God;
Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Last week I spoke about our living as saints in today's world and that our decisions about the use of our finances, as individuals, demonstrates the lifestyle we choose to live by.

Events of the past three weeks outside St Paul's has sharpened up the discussion over the origins of the current financial crisis. Is the system broke? Have those charged with looking after our monies forgotten: 1. to continue to look at the big picture economically? & 2. Forgotten whose money it is they are looking after and that it is held 'in trust'?

The events at St Paul's display this gap between the quiet/silent majority on one hand, and the wealth creators and the wealthy on the other. Sadly it appears that the Church has forgotten that it needs to be in the market place and not just inside its own building(s).

Our own financial crisis here at St Edward's also sharpens up what we are here for and what is our mission.

In our budgets at home we look to paying our mortgage or rent 1st, followed by such essentials as council tax, utilities, budgeting for food, transport costs, insurances. All are classed as essentials. Here at St Edward's our essentials are similar:
paying staff costs: admin, music, clergy; utilities, insurances. Then there are the everyday running costs of providing a seven-day mission and ministry.

This is not cheap. Last year, 2010, we spent £222,000; our income was £172,000, a shortfall of £50,000. The previous year we spent £263,000

and our income was very similar to last year, leaving us with a shortfall of £90,000.

Putting it a little more crudely, we can pay our equivalent of the mortgage but we do not have the income to pay for the running costs; we survive because we are using up our savings, our reserves.

The PCC is taking this situation very seriously indeed. We have set up a Finance Committee to set a budget for next year, but we need to know what our projected income is likely to be so as to set a realistic budget. This is where our part comes in.

I am asking everyone to look at what your own needs are and to look realistically at what your luxuries are: the sort of thing you buy on impulse rather than budgeted for. In that mix, where does your vision of God's kingdom now and in the future come in? Are you and I living as saints of God's kingdom now and investing in His kingdom now and into the future? Only you can answer that but... please do look realistically at your finances and plan your giving according to God's vision, calling us to be His saints in our day and age.

But also, let the PCC members know what you see as the priorities in our mission; where we should be using **your** money in the mission of God here in Romford. For it is not the PCC's monies but yours; and we as the PCC have a responsibility to handle your money righteously and with justice.

Do we need to spend time listening to one another and identifying or clarifying what our mission is in our parish in the 21st century; and how this is to be funded? If that is something we need to do then be aware that this is a process; it will take time; and there will be disagreements along the way in the midst of healthy discussions. But maybe this is part of what God is saying to His Church at this time through the protests.

Is it God's time – *kairos* time - that we rediscover a prophetic element and edge to our church life. Is it *kairos* to re-appraise our priorities in light of God's priorities? Is it *kairos* to understand afresh His base of morals and ethics and inject our decision-making with His values?

Amen.