



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year A - Proper 26 – November 5, 2017

Our readings this morning tell us that the saints hold palm branches in their hands and are robed in white, the color of virtue, the color of purity; that they're merciful, righteous, humble, peacemakers, meek, and pure in heart.

And the iconic hymn, I Sing a Song of the Saints of God, says that the saints of God are just folk like me, and that I mean to be one too. So even though today we honor the saints who have gone to glory, we don't have to die to become saints, we don't have to die to become holy people. We can do that while we're alive, like many of the people whose photos we behold this morning did when they were alive.

Since my ordination twelve years ago, I've lost two uncles, four aunties, and more than one good friend. And this year I lost Lucille Tamura Caldwell, a diocesan matriarch and family friend. And Bishop Chang; more than the bishop who ordained me, but also a father figure who supported me, who affirmed me, and who nurtured me over the years.

And then there's my father who died in 1993. And the grandfather who raised me and who died during my middle year of seminary in 2004.

And of course, there's Emma and Kamehameha IV and Lili'uokalani, saints of the church and soon-to-be saint of the church.

All of them, in their unique ways holy people — who at points in their lives were merciful, righteous, humble, peacemakers, meek, and pure in heart.

They say that those who go before us continue to live in us, and I believe that's true. I see my father's smile in my smile. I carry the message of my grandfather's integrity and work ethic into my work ethic. And I feel Bishop Chang upholding me every time I'm behind the Cathedral's altar and raising my arms to start our Eucharistic Prayer.

Merciful, righteous, humble, peacemakers, meek, and pure in heart. I want to be merciful. I want to be righteous. I want to be humble. I want to be a peacemaker. I want to be meek. I want to be blessed. I want to be pure in heart. I want to be holy. And I suspect you do too.

The thing is, that's not something we necessarily have to strive for, because maybe it's something we already have, given to us by God through the waters of our baptism. And maybe the trick is to tap into it and let bubble up from the waters of our baptism and from the best part of ourselves, the best part of ourselves that is formed and stirred by those who have gone before us, the lives they led, the lessons they taught us, and the memories they leave with us. Maybe the saints help us to see our God-given goodness and the beauty of who we are as children of God.

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Not a day goes by this life of mine when I don't think of my father, or my grandfather, or my aunts, or my uncles, or my friends, or Lucille, or Bishop Chang. The saints are, after all, in us and make us who we are. And for that, we give thanks to them today as we give thanks to God for all those gone before to do whatever they did to make you and me holy.

I close this morning from some lines from the iconic hymn, the iconic hymn where we sing:

I sing a song of the saints of God patient and brave and true, who toiled and fought and live and died for the Lord they loved and knew.

They lived not only in ages past; there are hundreds of thousands still. The world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus' will.

And perhaps the last line is the most important line of all:

And I mean to be one too.

Amen.