

# ALL SAINTS DAY, 1 NOVEMBER



Painting by Fra Angelico

This day begins the [Christian Liturgical Year](#), the [Day of All Hallowed](#)s or [All Saints](#). Hallowed is from Old English *hAlig* meaning Holy and Saints is from Latin *sanctus* meaning Holy.

That is holy which is taken into the Divine Presence, into the Holy Presence of God. The opposite of holiness is profanity. That is profane which “stands before the door to the holy” (Latin *pro fanum*, standing outside a condition of holiness such as the Church). That is profane which is estranged from God, namely, all of existence. Holiness and profanity are existential conditions with an ontological root in the ground and abyss of being, in God.

All Hallowed's Day is the day following the Eve of All Hallowed's Day, the evening when is recognized the universal threat of non-being in the destructive power of the structures of evil.

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Sanctity or holiness has nothing to do with morality or perfection, nor does its opposite condition, profanity. Religion is not about morals and especially moralism. In fact, religion and moralism fundamentally reject one another because, fundamentally, every man, including Saints, is estranged from himself, from his world and from God and has no power to overcome his estrangement, to bring himself into the Divine Presence. Man cannot make himself moral, which is the goal of moralism. Religion condemns moralism.

Nor can man make himself holy. He cannot enter the Presence of God under his own power. No man can save himself, no matter by what means or with what vigor he tries. Only the holy makes man moral, by accounting, not by actuality, and the profane is immoral from start to finish and throughout.

The holy is not the moral. Were it, nothing could be holy. Man remains immoral even inside the holy but is counted moral by the holy when inside the holy. God transcends morality altogether. Morality, like religion and culture, is a function of the dimension of spirit, which is the dimension of finitude unique to man. The dimension of spirit is the realm of power and meaning only man inhabits.

Morality has no categorical ontological status (*pace* Kant). Man can make himself moral to an extent but never enough to fulfill his obligation because he is unable to overcome his own estrangement from himself, from God and from his world.

This is why law has no power to save or to make moral. Law tells man what he really is, but it does not tell him what he should be and it cannot make him be that. Very truly, "Morality cannot be legislated."

The precondition of morality is the victory of God over the powers of evil or self-destruction recognized in Christian liturgical practice as the commencement, the prius, of the Christian Liturgical Year on All Saints Day, the First Day of November.

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Saints must be compared with kittens who are lifted here and there by their mother, who is God. The mouth of God is the only way Saints can be at all, much less get about in "this breathing world," this nest God makes for his kitty friends to play in.

"Be, therefore, like children." means "Be aware, therefore, that you are like kittens utterly reliant on your Mother." Those words are spoken to competent adults, men of learning and accomplishment, men of respect, position and renown, including Saints.

The victory of Saints over the structures of evil is given to them as the sun appears to dispel the darkness of All Hallowed's Eve. No merits have they to deserve it. Who among us causes the sun to appear or the rains to fall?

Yet, were Saints not preparing for the dawn themselves, in faith of its epiphany, they should not see it but should be abandoned to self-destruction. That faith, itself, is a gift of God, the promise of holiness, beyond the capacity of man "to throw into existence." The principle of salvation must be present before a response to it can be practiced. The self-manifestation of God is the condition of response to God.

Saints do not offer evil powers sweets in hope of suppressing or deflecting their nature and activities. Appeasement is a forlorn hope indeed. The appropriate response to structures of evil is to laugh at them, and if they keep coming, protect those in their path, destroy them, root out their supports and distribute their properties and the properties of their supports among those who will cultivate them, making them fruitful. The lands upon which structures of evil once grew must themselves be cleansed, restored and rededicated to their nature and purpose, which is the abundant support of abundant life.

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In recent years, churches selected Advent as the start of the Christian Liturgical Year. More anciently, churches recognized All Saints Day in that honor. Advent is a time of contrition. All Saints is a time of victory by virtue of being brought into the condition of holiness, the Holy Presence of God.

Contrition cannot be comprehensive, sincere or efficacious enough outside the condition of holiness. Only in the condition of holiness does one know and can one engage the depth, breadth and duration of contrition required. Indeed, outside the condition of holiness, the terror aroused by an awareness of the actuality of the contrition required by any one of us would be instantly fatal to the physical frame. No one of us really wants to know, nor on our own could withstand, the horror of our reality.

The principle of salvation must be present before a response to it, such as contrition, can be practiced. Gratitude (All Saints) in the holy, victorious Presence of God is the prius of contrition (Advent and Lent), of adoration (Christmas and Transfiguration), of supplication (Easter and Ascension) and of intercession (Trinity and Epiphany).

Heaving Advent into the start of the Christian Liturgical Year is moralism. It in effect urges people to wash themselves before they enter the sanctuary. But that is precisely what they cannot do unless they are already inside the sanctuary, and even then they cannot get clean, only be accounted clean by the greatest of all mysteries, the love of God. The concept of getting oneself ready for the Presence of God is absurd. Moralism is always absurd because it demands that which one cannot perform. Moralism is a form of self-salvation and religion rejects self-salvation because it presumes upon the actuality of life, that God is the Prius of existence and its only answer, cure and goal. Not even the least movement Godward – for example, contrition – can commence unless He inspire it.

If All Saints Day does not start the Christian Liturgical Year, the other feasts answer unasked questions (Christmas, Easter, Trinity) or are absurd (Advent and Lent). The heaving of Advent into service as the start of the Christian Liturgical Year is moralistic and vitiates the power and membership of the churches. All Saints Day is the prius of Advent and all other feasts of the Christian Liturgical Year in the same way that Grace as the power, life and victory of God is the prius of the drama of existence.

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The Christian Liturgical Year begins with a victory and ends with a potential disaster. In between these polar focal points, the Christian Liturgical Year recognizes the center of history itself, the saving Presence of God in Jesus as the Christ, the one in whom the nature, love and will of God are fully revealed as the Divine Spirit establishing a New Reality, a New Being, a paradoxical Holiness in Him (Greek *para doxa*, against the common opinion and expectation), and

reestablishing the foundations of the world as Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-Violence.

This is my favorite day of the year, and really speaking, the focal points of our so-called “secular year” remain, though euphemized and dissembled, those of the Christian Liturgical Year. In such realities are seen the interdependence and inseparability of the three functions of the dimension of spirit that man uniquely inhabits, namely, religion, culture and morality.

Happy All Saints’ Day and fullest blessings from me and from all the monastics at Adwaita Hermitage!

The Rev. David R. Graham

Adwaita Hermitage

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A.M.D.G.