

An all-age talk at the Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Given by Rev Geoff Read on All Saints Sunday 2018

Colossians 1:1-5a, Luke 6:20-23

When you hear the word Saint I wonder what you think of?

Maybe you look up at the **pictures around the wall** of our Church

- What do they say a Saint is?

Now try looking a little lower. Look at the faces around you.

- What do they say a Saint is?

Our two **Bible readings** both tell us about Saints

They are both about ordinary followers of Jesus

The first uses the word “saint” and the second the word “blessed”

In the original language they were written in Saint meant “Holy” and Blessed meant “Happy”

That’s what a Saint is – someone who is holy and happy in a special way

Did you notice in our first reading Paul described the Saints like this:

“We have heard of ...

- your faith in Jesus Christ
- your love for all
- your hope in heaven ...” (Col 1:3-5a)

Saints are those who have faith in Jesus, love others and hope in heaven

When Jesus was talking about his ordinary followers or disciples he said they are people who are Blessed or made happy by God – **not people who try extra hard, but those made happy by God** (Lk 6:20)

That’s **why if you want to see Saints today don’t look up but look around** the chapel

Let’s hear another story about what Saints look like that took place in a Chapel too

There once was a monastery where the monks loved to serve God in lots of different ways. They prayed and gave weary travellers a bed for the night. They looked after sick people and sang praises to God in their services.

But the years passed and the monks grew old. Although their hearts were truer to God than ever, their voices grew cracked and hoarse. Their once-beautiful singing sounded like a farmyard of animals honking and squawking and wheezing.

The Abbot was very troubled. 'This singing sounds terrible!', he said to the brothers. 'Brother Andrew sounds like a strangled turkey! Brother Francis sounds like a dying pig! Brother Mark sounds like a squashed frog! How can this awful noise be pleasing to God?' The monks agreed to pray about it.

That night a stranger arrived at the monastery door. He was a traveller who had lost his way and needed a bed for the night. The monks welcomed him in and gave him hot soup and fresh bread.

'Where are you going?' they asked him. 'To the National Opera House,' the young man replied proudly. 'I am an opera singer and I have a big part to sing in the gala next week.'

'A singer?' said the Abbot. 'What a godsend! Could you possibly sing instead of us in the service tonight? Your voice would do far greater honour to God than the sounds we make.'

The opera singer was delighted to show off in front of the old men. 'I'll show them how to sing!' he thought.

That night, the chapel was filled with his glorious voice, echoing through the chapel like the voice of an angel. The monks were so thrilled that they forgot to pray. They thanked the young man and went to bed, marvelling at what they had heard.

That night, the Abbot had a dream.

In his dream, God spoke to him and said, 'What was the matter with my dear servants? Why did no one sing for me in the chapel tonight?'

'Lord,' said the Abbot. 'At last we could give you real praise tonight. Didn't you hear the wonderful singing?'

'I heard nothing from the chapel tonight,' said God sadly. 'Usually it is your love for me that I hear, not the quality of your voices. But that young man only loved himself, so I could hear nothing at all.'

The Abbot woke up and told the other monks his dream. They were all deeply ashamed that they had forgotten to pray to God the night before. They asked God's forgiveness and then they were filled with such joy that they thought their hearts would burst. God loved them! He had missed them when they didn't sing!

They rushed to the chapel and lifted up their voices in praise once more. In heaven God smiled.

He didn't hear the wheezing, gasping and croaking. It was their love that he heard once again.

What do Saints look like in that story?

- Holy and Happy starts on the inside
- Its about offering all we are and all we have to Jesus

When I was thinking about applying to be the Chaplain here I tried to find out as much as I could about you.

One thing I searched high and low for is the Church's name

All the other churches I have been Vicar at have had a name – St Clare' & St Francis, St Nicholas and St John's

But I think we are just The Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Now don't get me wrong. That's a fine name. It says clearly what we are and what we do

But it doesn't feel the same as a personal name like my other churches

When you get to know and love someone you want to know more than their title or even their family name – I call my wife Marie-Louise, not Mrs Read,

Jesus sometimes gave his followers new names, nicknames.

And names in his day said something about what the person was like

He called the brothers James and John *Boagenes* – Sons of Thunder

And he gave Simon a new name too – do you remember: Petrus, Rocky, because he would be reliable like a rock... in the end

As I look around today I think I am going to give us a nickname – any idea what it might be?

All Saints

Why?

Because we are and are becoming a people made holy and happy by Jesus

So when I pray for you, I will pray for All Saints

When people ask me what I do, I can say I am Vicar of All Saints, helping all the anglican saints in Luxembourg become all saints in Luxembourg

Holy and happy in Jesus

As you came in you were given a white sticky label

There are also lots of pens around

I'd like to invite you to find someone else and find out their first name

Then write that on the label but with the word “Saint” in front of it

And then stick it on them and as you do so take a moment to pray quietly for them

Conclude by all saying:

“We are the Saints of God. All Saints in Luxembourg. Jesus is at work in us.”