

NAZARENE BIBLE COLLEGE
ALL SAINTS DAY SERVICE
Wednesday, October 31, 2007 (PM Service)

{Umbel} **SCRIPTURE**

Let us hear the word of the Lord:

Psalm 34 (selected): “I trust in you, O Lord; I say, You are my God. My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love. How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you. In the shelter of your presence you hide them. Praise be to the Lord, for He showed His wonderful love to me. Love the Lord, all His saints! The Lord preserves the faithful. Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.

Ephesians 1:15-23: “I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church (the saints), which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

{Lyke} **HYMN**: “How Firm a Foundation” (vss. 1, 2, 4, 6) *Sing to the Lord* #689

{Umbel} **Opening Prayer**:

We give you thanks Almighty God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – for the gift of the Church, its people, and its work. We praise you for the mothers and the fathers of the faith, and all the faithful of time past, for your holy prophets and apostles, and all the martyrs and saints in every age and in every land; for all who serve You as servants of the kingdom; for those who have taught us Your story and shown us your ways. Give us grace to follow the example of their faithfulness. Help us to have in our lives their courage in danger; their steadfastness in trial; their

love that nothing can change; their joy that nothing can take away. Enable us by Your grace and Spirit to persevere in the course that is set before us, to be living signs of the gospel and at last, with all the saints, to share in your eternal joy, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

{Umbel} **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

In the early church it became customary to remember in worship the martyrs of the church. When the list of martyrs became too great, a special day was set aside to remember their commitment to and sacrifice for Christ, a measure of giving that often led to their suffering and death for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Initially, different areas of the church celebrated the memory of these saints on different days, but by 835 AD it became the custom to celebrate these martyrs on November 1st, or the Sunday closest to that date.

So, on this October 31st, 2007 we take a few moments to lift up followers of the Lord Jesus – those who have passed on **AND** those who yet remain. Sometimes we forget that the Church of Jesus Christ includes both – the dead and the living. Death doesn't remove us from the Communion of the Saints. In fact, the death and resurrection of our Lord defeated this last great enemy of the faith, making us victors (yea, more than conquerors) in this life **AND** in the life to come. When Christians depart this life, they remain a vital part of the Church, the Body of Christ. As the writer of Hebrews put it, *they are* that “great cloud of witnesses” which surrounds us, and we seek to imitate them in “running the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

So, *All Saint's Day* is kind of like the Church's *Memorial Day*. We give thanks for those who have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith. They have heard their Lord say, “well done thou good and faithful servant, enter into thy eternal reward.” *All Saints Day* is also a great time to honor the “*hagioi*,” the holy ones yet among us. They continue to be examples of wholehearted devotion to the Lord, of faithful service, and of commitment to

building the kingdom of God on earth. In Philippians 2, St. Paul wrote this about Epaphroditus: “welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and HONOR MEN LIKE HIM, because he almost died for the work of Christ” (Phil. 2:29-30). Honor this saint, Paul was saying, as an example of servanthood and sacrifice.

God’s people are by nature a remembering people. When significant people impact our lives, we want to remember them and regard them in special ways – when they are alive and when they have gone to be with the Lord. Are these people super-Christians who move mountains by speaking a single word, or perform miracles on a regular basis, or somehow live above the trials, temptations, and hardships of this earthly existence? Not at all. For the most part, these saints are ordinary believers who make mistakes, get cranky from time to time, and have bad days. And yet by God’s grace these saints live their faith and build God’s kingdom in remarkable ways. And so we remember them and honor them. Our story connects with their story and we become even more determined to tell **THE** story, the gospel story, to others.

{Transition: the Bible describes what a saint looks like Let’s join together in the responsive reading on the handout sheet. }

{Umbel} **BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF A SAINT** (Responsive Reading) {Umbel}

Leader: Saints have faith and salvation (Jude 1:3) -

People: "Beloved, while eagerly preparing to write to you about the salvation we share, I find it necessary to write and appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints."

L: Saints love the Lord (Psalm 31:23) -

P: "Love the LORD, all you his saints."

L: Saints are from everywhere (Revelation 5:9) -

P: "They sing a new HYMN: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation."

L: Saints are members of God’s household (Ephesians 2:19-20) -

P: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members

of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone."

L: Saints are inheritors (Colossians 1:11-12) -

P: "May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light."

L: Saints are called (Romans 1:7) -

P: "To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 1:7)

L: Saints are made holy (I Corinthians 1:2) -

P: "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours."

L: Saints endure in obedience and faith (Revelation 14:12) -

P: "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints, those who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus."

L: Saints have high ethical standards (Ephesians 5:3) -

P: "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper among the saints."

L: Saints have a ministry (Ephesians 4:12) -

P: "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

The scriptures give us a clear "job description" of what a saint looks like. A saint IS a Christian; a Christian IS a saint. We are called to embody this job description; to be holy as the saints of then and now are holy - FOR OTHERS and FOR THIS WORLD to the glory of God and the building of His Kingdom. May God bless us abundantly with His grace and power to be what we are – a saint in the making.

{Lyke} **SONG** - "Find Us Faithful" – *Sing to the Lord* - #726 - (Eb)

O may all who come behind us
Find us faithful,
May the fire of our devotion
Light their way.
May the footprints that we leave,
Lead them to believe,
And the lives we live
Inspire them to obey.
O may all who come behind us
Find us faithful.

{Umbel} **REMEMBERING & GIVING THANKS FOR SAINTS
IN HEAVEN & ON EARTH**

REMEMBERING SAINTS NOW PRESENT WITH THE LORD

We remember those saints who have gone before us. Our faith stands on their shoulders. They are among the great cloud of witnesses cheering us on. Our memory of them encourages, strengthens, and spurs us on to faithful service. Though they are absent from us, they are present with the Lord awaiting our arrival. I invite you to stand where you are and voice the name of a saint who is no longer living.

HONORING SAINTS STILL PRESENT WITH US

Our faith also stands on the shoulders of those persons with whom we continue to serve our Lord and His kingdom. Their lives exemplify the biblical “job description” for all saints. They may be very ordinary people. But their lives channeled the grace of God in remarkable ways. They prayed for us, they witnessed to us, they mentored us, they persevered with us, they supported us in countless ways, they modeled the Christlike life in our presence. We honor these saints this evening. I invite you to stand where you are and voice the name of a saint who is still serving faithfully and fruitfully in kingdom work.

{Umbel} **PRACTICAL APPLICATION** (Giving Thanks)

Note: here is your homework for this coming week!

For those saints who have gone to be with the Lord. In your daily devotions, think about their impact on your life. Write about their unique qualities and contribution to your life. Give thanks to God for how they gave direction to your spiritual journey.

For those saints still living, do something tangible - make a phone call, send an e-mail or a card. Express your appreciation for how they have shaped you more and more into the image of Christ.

{Umbel} **PRAYER OF REMEMBRANCE AND THANKSGIVING**

(Lyke) **HYMN** – “Take My Life and Let It Be” All Verses (*Sing to the Lord* #455)

(Umbel) **BLESSING/BENEDICTION**

Now unto him who is able to keep all you saints from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)