

All Saints is a funny day. It is a day ignited by loss but fuelled by faith.

Each year as I have gotten older, I have realised life is a process of learning to live with loss. You lose your innocence, your naivety, your wonder. You lose your hair, your physical capacity, your looks. You lose your hearing, your sight, your ability to move as you did. You lose your career, your health, your partner. Eventually, you lose your life.

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It is the day when the church remembers all who have died in the faith, both known and unknown saints, the whole church pays tribute to them today. For most congregations the duty of the day is remembering those from that particular parish or hall or assembly who have died in the past year. It is a good thing to do. It gives us a time to grieve those we have lost and a time to think about them and all they have meant to us.

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But we don't just remember. We don't just light a candle. We don't just think. We also pray, we also give thanks, we also hope and have faith, we also believe. For these people and for ourselves. We remember those whom we loved. We think of them, we miss them, our hearts may even ache for them ... but we also give thanks for them, for all we have shared, done, loved and been with them. We also hope for them, that all that the scriptures promise is true for them and for ourselves. That they are in the company of the Lord Jesus and the Angels, where there is no more suffering, no more pain, where there is no more struggle. We have faith for them ... and for ourselves that these things are true. And so, we believe...

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So, we gather to acknowledge loss, ... and if we are to do this fully, we need to acknowledge all loss. Because all loss deserves notice and demands comfort and loss comes from many sources, not only from death. It comes when we leave places or situations we love and care about. As we depart for new work, or home and leave friends, colleagues or neighbourhoods behind. It comes from unemployment, from the loss of a marriage or relationship, It comes from disappointment at school. It comes as we slowly lose a loved one to Alzheimer's or dementia or some other crippling condition. It comes from struggles with illness of body or mind. It comes from the exhaustion of caring in that difficult family situation, which while we don't hesitate at, is still not what we might have hoped for, it comes as a result of dreams deferred or hopes dashed. Loss comes at us from so many sources and so many places ... today is a day for acknowledging loss, of every kind.

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Faith that in spite of all loss, God is still with us. Jesus still loves us and the Holy Spirit still comforts us. Faith, That when we leave or lose our jobs, when we move homes, when our friends are along way away, God is still there. Faith, that When tragedies strike, marriages end, relationships falter, when it all turns grey, Jesus still loves us, all of us.

Faith, That when our dreams don't come to fruition, life doesn't work out the way we thought and hoped it would, no matter how hard we try or pray, the Holy Spirit still comforts us.

Faith, that Today of all days ... that what the scriptures say about all of this ... is true.

That all of this loss and even death, are not the end of the story ... 1 2 3 ...

John, on the island of Patmos has a vision and writes,

“After this, I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all the tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne ... “

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Thanks be to God.

Amen.