



3050 Rosemont Blvd.  
Montreal, QC H1Y 1M2  
(514) 721-1830

welcome@trinityuc.net  
www.trinityuc.net

**Anjou** UNITED CHURCH

7951 Place Dade  
Montreal, QC H1K 1R4  
(514) 352-7790

www.facebook.com/AnjouUC

*All Saint's Sunday - 01-Nov-2015*

## Saints for the Ages

**Let us pray: May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all our hearts, be a witness, O God, to your Way of love, justice and faithful walking with us. Amen.**

---

**Scriptures: Ruth 1:1-18; Ps. 146; Mark 12:38-34**

"A minister dies and is waiting in line at the Pearly Gates. Ahead of him is a guy who's dressed in sunglasses, a loud shirt, leather jacket, and jeans. Saint Peter addresses this guy, "Who are you, so that I may know whether or not to admit you to the Kingdom of Heaven?" The guy replies, "I'm Joe Cohen, taxi-driver, of Noo Yawk City." Saint Peter consults his list. He smiles and says to the taxi-driver, "Take this silken robe and golden staff and enter the Kingdom of Heaven." The taxi-driver goes into Heaven with his robe and staff, and it's the minister's turn. He stands erect and booms out, "I am Joseph Snow, pastor of Saint Mary's for the last forty-three years." Saint Peter consults his list. He says to the minister, "Take this cotton robe and wooden staff and enter the Kingdom of Heaven." "Just a minute," says the minister. "That man was a taxi-driver, and he gets a silken robe and golden staff. How can this be?" "Up here, we work by results," says Saint Peter. "While you preached, people slept; while he drove, people prayed."<sup>1</sup>

Well, O dear! I hope no one is asleep just now! I guess according to this joke, the preacher is in for some humble pie when he or she gets to the Pearly Gates. The good news perhaps is that he gets in at all, because believe me, folks, if a preacher man can get into heaven with all our flaws and imperfections, then heaven must be full of all of us – saints and sinners alike. And isn't that just amazing?! It means that

we can all come down off our high pedestals, thinking we have to be perfect or holy or pure, and relax. In and through Christ, we can come before God as we are, flaws and all, and expect to be welcomed into that place of eternal peace.

Today is a day to reflect on saints present and saints of the past. Our theme for today is All Saints, a traditional feast that arises out of the small catholic church between at least the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. All Saints was and is a time to remember the sainted dead, whether those beatified by what would become the Roman Catholic Church, or in our Protestant tradition, all of us who love the Lord by loving others. We'll be singing a hymn in just a few moments that lifts up the everyday, ordinary, yet extraordinary saints, who labored down the generations to tell the Good News, to build up a church that practices justice, mercy and peace.

Scripture offers us many keys to unlock our imaginations to this kind of everyday sainthood. In the story of Ruth and Naomi, the first part of which we just heard, Ruth does something extraordinary, doesn't she? After losing her husband, and therefore her status and security in that society, Ruth chooses to remain with her mother-in-law Naomi instead of returning to her family and gods. Naomi is clearly moved by her daughter-in-law's choice, for she can offer her no hope of another son to marry or for progeny who will then look after her in her old age – two things that women of that time needed lest they have any chance of a respectable life at all. Why did she do it, do you suppose? It would have been so much easier to go home, remarry, let the past be the past. Could it be that it was just her acceptance of Israel's God that sealed the deal? Like an everyday saint, she was confronted with a choice to go back to her old gods of Moab, local deities perhaps of fertility or agriculture, after marrying into a family that worshipped the One God of Israel. Something in her had been hooked on that God, and mothers-in-law in the room, please don't shoot me for what I'm about to say, but maybe it was due to the kindness Ruth had found in dear Naomi. (I know I love my own mother-in-law, so maybe the jokes about them being meddling or unkind just aren't true – what do you think?) Naomi must have been an extraordinarily strong woman of faith not to ask her daughters-in-law to cling to her, to provide service and comfort to her alone as something she either expected or deserved. No, she was willing to let them go, putting their well-being before her own. In doing so, doesn't Naomi deserve a place as a saint in our ancestors of faith? And in Ruth responding to such love, setting off for an unknown land and people, but somehow trusting God will be with her, doesn't she become for us a saint for the ages as well?

According to Mark's Jesus, all of us can be saints. It would have shocked Mark's original audience to see that a scribe – one of the supposed enemy camp who was part of the royal and political establishment – hear Jesus' message so clearly. If you love the lord with all your heart, and love your neighbor as much as, and in the same

way that you love yourself, you will find yourself not far from the kingdom of God, as Jesus said it. And that, my friends, is a place we can celebrate today as we remember the saints we have known. People who have somehow been transformational in your life – showing you love, that you are loved, deeply and forever. Perhaps it was a mother or father, grandmother or grandfather. Maybe it was a teacher, or aunt, or a best friend. Maybe it even was a preacher man, or woman, who not only talked the talk of God’s loving justice, but demonstrated it to the best of her or his ability.

We’re going to take time now to honour the saints we’ve known. We have tea lights for you to light, and a microphone if you’d like to say their name or a brief word about why they are a saint to you. Come let’s name our saints for the ages – he-roes and she-roes that embodied God’s love, leaving none of us lost and alone. Please come! (time of candle lighting and story telling)

O God, we give thanks with shouts of Hallelujah for the roles the women and men we have remembered this morning played in our lives, and the life of your church. May each light, and the memories and stories of love that these saints offered to us once, and offer to us still in our hearts, bless and guide us always. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~chuck/jokepg/joke\\_19980920\\_01.txt](http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~chuck/jokepg/joke_19980920_01.txt)