

# Sermon

All Saints' Episcopal Church

The Rev. Martha Sterne  
Proper 20C  
6 November, 2016



Grace to you and peace, Saints, in the name of Jesus Christ.

On All Saints' Sunday, November 2, 1997, with my bags packed for the mountains of East Tennessee and tears sliding down my face, I preached my last sermon as a priest of All Saints Church. At least I thought it was my last! But God is a surprise and here we are Saints, on this day of all days when down deep we sense that we **will** all meet again, including those we miss so much and see only with the eyes of our hearts. Today we declare we will in the deep heart of God meet again in communion, in reunion – for we are in the great cloud of witnesses in Christ in God. So here's that farewell homily in a new edition - as true for me today as it was nineteen years ago.

Back then, I think I tried to sing: Help me with a line or two - **I sing a song of the Saints of God. Patient and brave and true.**” And you **are** patient in so many ways – with kids and altars and needlepoints and gardens and finances and festivals and addiction recovery and faith studying and flower fixings and goofy priests' fixings and I think especially today of an every week amazing miracle of patience which I discovered last year before this interim rector role fell upon me like Moses at the burning bush. For last year on Wednesday nights I often sat in on choir practice. And believe it or not when they start learning a piece – they sound well, sort of bad! But patience and practice have rich rewards – and today once again Chenault and company remind us how magnificent and glorious is the Word sung by saints.

So I sing a song of the saints of God. Patient. Sometimes I fear we are too patient – maybe we need to make the time and use the energy to be impatient for justice so that we more fervently seek the common good. For that is the work of the saints- the practice of patience with some holy impatience thrown in. So I sing a song of you saints of God who are patient and may we grow in holy impatience.

And you are brave. You really are brave saints. I have been witness now 28 years. You get stunned by the diagnosis. Or your heart breaks when you hear the marriage crack. Or you panic when the job goes south. Or you worry and worry when your kids flounder. Or you lose to the grave someone you've loved so long and deep. You get slammed by something and you reel and fall. Then because you are saints, you say your prayers. You lift up your hearts. Then you move, slosh, slip and slide, muddle on through. Reaching out from time to time to some other saint who is muddling beside you. Believe me, I know this from the inside. Around here you never know who is being held up by whom.

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So we sing a song of the saints of God. Patient, mostly. Brave, a lot. Especially when you count terrified or brokenhearted and still praying and still muddling on as brave which I sure do. I so loved Barbara's sermon last week because she said the current TRUTH. We are traumatized by political anxiety. And so we have pulled together nonpartisan prayers for our country and for this election. Copies are in the narthex, outside of Ellis, and will be at our polling station. Get 'em and pray at home or come on back down here to this place of beauty and peace that has seen us survive so much. Start Election Day here with eucharist 8:30. Yes, we are sometimes anxious, but in Christ we are brave. Pray, Brave Crew. This is a patient crew of saints and a brave crew of saints. And true. We are patient and brave and true saints.

Really true. You can count on this, Saints. The truth is spoken here. Within limits. I said nineteen years ago, and I say today, by the grace of God the truth that is spoken here is broken and partial and incomplete and the best we can do, seeing through the glass darkly. And that we know and claim that we are incomplete truth seers and tellers – Huge – and why we need each other, isn't it? To fumble and mumble together toward the truth, the way, the life.

We sing a song of the saints of God. Patient and brave and true. Really. Most of the time – in spite of being crabby occasionally, and chickenhearted every once in a while, and telling some whoppers sometimes when our backs are pushed to the wall. We sing a song of the saints of God. We can really belt out a song of the saints around here because for generations God has raised us up, is raising us up, will keep raising us up. Remember ...

*They lived not only in ages past,  
There are hundreds of thousands still.  
The world is bright with the joyous saints  
Who love to do Jesus' will.*

*You can meet them in school, or in lanes, or at sea,  
In church, or in trains, or in shops, or at tea;  
For the saints of God are just folk like us,  
And you and I we mean to be some saints, too. amen*

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