

All Saints Day 2018

How do you get to Carnegie Hall?” (Do you know that old joke?)

A young man arrived in New York City from California, and he was entering the Manhattan subway system for the first time.

And was carrying a violin. He was excited, because he was going to an audition for the New York Philharmonic. He had directions but was nevertheless lost and running out of time.

So the desperate young man shouted out to the crowd, “Excuse me?! How do I get to Carnegie Hall?”

An old man, dressed in shabby clothes, sitting on the subway platform, holding a cardboard sign reading, “Will work for food,” shouted back, “I KNOW! I can tell you how to get there!!” The young man approached the old man and asked, “How do I get to Carnegie Hall?” “Practice,” the old man grinned. “Practice, practice, practice.”

The feast of All Saints' has its roots in Celtic celebrations of the beginning of winter and the new year. As the Celts gathered in their harvest during these “thin” days, as they called them, they believed the souls of the dead returned to their homes. It was a time for them to be grateful and to remember their own mortality.

In Mexico they celebrate Dia de los Muertos - the Day of the Dead - which has its origins in Aztec traditions honoring the dead...like in the movie Coco here together a few weeks ago about.

“There are three deaths. The first is when the body ceases to function. The second is when the body is consigned to the grave. The third is that moment, sometime in the future, when your name is spoken for the last time.

On All Saints' Sunday, we come together for worship and for fellowship and to honor those in our own lives and the lives of the church.

We have just sung a song about the saints of God, and God willing, we mean to be saints. We want to be, like the song says, “patient and brave and true.”

To be a saint is to practice our faith, more and more – practice, practice, practice –

Unlike the popular maxim” practice makes perfect,” when it comes to practicing our faith, practice never needs to “make perfect.”

Diana Butler Bass, a church historian, said : “Practice does not make perfect. It makes pilgrims”

“We are pilgrims on a journey, We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

We make our journey together as fellow companions on a pilgrimage, members of a team called the Church, who help each other we practice our journeys of faith.

Anne Lamott, author of very funny and practical and spiritual books wrote a book called Thanks! Help! and Wow! She said that those words are her three prayers, or three ways to practice faith.

Thanks - our eucharist is called the Great Thanksgiving. We hear about the importance of having an 'attitude of gratitude,' Songwriter Carrie Newcomer wrote a poem called

Three Grattudes .. Every night before I go to sleep  
I say out loud  
Three things that I'm grateful for..

A practice of 'thanks.'

"Help!"

For most of us, saying "Help!" is much harder than saying "Thanks!"

Help is the hardest prayer, because you have to let go and acknowledge your own powerlessness.

"Wow is the praise prayer.

The prayer where we're finally speechless —

Being overcome with wonder at the just sheer beauty of creation. It could be something simple, a bird landing on a branch with such grace and beauty, it could be seeing your new baby or grandchild for the first time

Anne Lamott said "It's sort of like blinking your eyes open. ... It's sort of like when the *Wizard of Oz* first — when Dorothy lands in Oz and the movie goes from black and white to color, and it's like having a new pair of glasses, and you say, 'Wow!' "

One way to help us practice our faith is to remember the stories about those who have been pilgrims before us -

Saints are not perfect people; far from it. They are like you and I with our faults and failures, and with perseverance to get up one more time after we have failed.

Saint Augustine prayed, "'Give me chastity and continence, but not now,'"

Saint Francis, as a young man, was renowned for his partying and drinking,

A new saint I learned about when preparing this sermon is Saint Simeon Stylites. He spent nearly 40 years living on top of a small platform on top of a sixty-foot pillar.

in order to get away from people who came to him for prayers and advice.

For sustenance boys from a nearby village would climb up the pillar and pass him parcels of flat bread and goats' milk. He may also have pulled up food in buckets via a pulley.

When we learn about saints, we learn that there's nobody God can't use as a means of grace, including even ourselves.

Let us practice our faith, as pilgrims, on this road together, to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.