

May the words of my mouth and the mediations of my heart be acceptable to you oh God, my strength and my joy... Amen

It was a hot and sunny summer day, and it felt like I had been riding in the car forever—as I was anxious and excited to get to our destination.

Longing for the smell of rocks, earth, and trees—where I could also hear the rush, flow, and falling waters. Making this, one of the most magnificent places I remember going to as a child.

A place so beautiful, that it seems impossible to take it all in... From the majestic cliffs, to the way the water charges down the falls, creating downstream, in the most precarious places, pools of bubbly foam that are an unpleasant yet intriguing off-white color.

And if my siter and I listened to our parents, we might be able to walk out, just a little way, on the not so scary part of the rocks of the Eau Claire Dells.

Or you might know it by its official name, the Dells of the Eau Claire Park—but regardless of the name I still enjoy going there to this day. I love the hiking trails, the bridges, the water, and especially the rocks.

As these are ancient volcanic rocks that were formed over 1.8 billion years ago... Since then, the rocks have undergone transformation by glaciers, swirling eddies, flowing water, and weather.

And to me, this seems like such an honor, to be able to witness something so incredibly beautiful that has been 1.8 billion years in the making.

In the making of course, because of water.

Water, like in our reading from Daniel today, that was equally as powerful. As we heard how the four winds stirred up the great sea and brought forth four terrifying and powerful beasts.

But these beasts, we discover, are no match for the holy ones, as it is only the holy ones who shall receive the kingdom forever and ever.

Now this should sound familiar to what you just heard in the gospel.

As this passage from Daniel is believed to be the template behind Jesus' words today, "for yours is the kingdom of God."

And in addition to that, both passages are uniquely apocalyptic in nature, because they refer to the end times, and unveil what will happen.

Which makes these passages all the more special to hear today, as today is All Saints Day.

A day when we honor all of the saints who have gone before us, all the saints who are with us, and all the saints who will come after us.

But typically, when people hear the word saint, they tend to think of people who are virtuous, superbly holy, and completely giving.

But all saints, are still human. And this passage from Daniel can also help us to understand what it means to be a saint.

For example, the word used for Holy Ones, which some might translate as saints, is the same word that is used in Exodus, when God tells Moses that he and his people will become a Holy Nation.

I think Pamela Cooper-White sums this up well. The passage in

"Daniel hearkens back to that moment when the Israelites were made a chosen people, a priesthood of believers, and he recalls God's promise to redeem them, even in the face of persecution, fear, and political turmoil. So, the holy ones in today's passage does not refer to the perfectly pious, the saintly among us, but to all of us as a holy people, through our baptisms named and called by God to faithful living.¹"

¹ Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 4, page 220

In baptism we are born into the community of Christ, and we are united with the priesthood of all believers.

And since we are baptized into a community, a community that spans time and space, we can tap into this concept of community to help us better understand God.

Because if community is important to God, then being in relationship is of utmost importance to God...

As it is only through relationship that we can create healthy communities.

And this idea of relationship, was also shared by Jesus today. As it is only in relationship with God where we find God's blessings...

For example, we all know that Jesus was in relationship with the poor, the hungry, with those who wept, and with those who were persecuted.

And not only did Jesus seek out them, but they also sought him out. They came from far and wide to be at Jesus' side. They depended on him and they trusted in him. They are the ones who are blessed...

But what Jesus says next in the text is hard for most of us to hear today.

That to be rich, to be full, to laugh, and to be spoken highly of, are ironically not a blessing, but are a woe.

Because these things, as wonderful as they may seem, are only temporary.

But the real issue for Jesus lies in how these things are often obtained.

For example, if we think we are the ones responsible for obtaining wealth, prosperity, and popularity, we forget that we are dependent upon God.

Which in turn, causes us to think that we can take care of ourselves. Which in turn jeopardizes our relationship with God, because we seek our own wants and needs first.

That is, until the hard day comes, when we lose a loved one... Because when mortality is staring us in the face, we remember just how dependent we are on God and on one another.

Which again, makes this passage all the more powerful on All Saints Day.

As All Saints Day celebrates community. And not just any community, but a community that was created in Christ.

A community that you were welcomed into since your baptism. A community that only grows through being in relationship with one another.

A relationship that was modeled by Christ—to do to others as you would have them do to you...

Which of course is going to be painstakingly difficult at times...

But you know what, you never need to go at this alone. As you have been united into the community of God through your baptismal waters.

Waters that span time and space...

Waters that birth saints.... And... waters that welcome saints home.

Home into God's very being.

A place filled with so much beauty that it will take an eternity to take it all in...

Because if we can witness places of such beauty on earth, like the Eau Claire Dells, where water has carved and opened up space for the last 1.8 billion years...

Just imagine what an Eternal God can do through the waters of baptism.

A place that is carved out of eternal blessings.

So, as you journey through this next week, remember who you belong to.

As it is through faithful living that we can unveil the love of God to others.

And it is in relationship with others that we can experience God...

So, when you need an extra boost throughout your day, lean into the community of saints, for they are always there cheering you on with God...

Amen.