What does it mean to live a 'good' life? How do we know if we are loving others well? Whose lives help us imagine what love looks like? And how do we become, for one another, the kind of people who make the world more compassionate, more just, more loving?

While All Saints' Day is a principal feast day belonging to the Christian calendar, the questions it asks belong to all of us.

Celebrated on November 1 in the Episcopal Church (on the Wednesday before for us at St. Michael's), All Saints' Day invites us to recall the "great cloud of witnesses" that accompany us– all the saints who have helped to shape us, who have loved us, who have taught us by word and deed how to live a life of gentleness, compassion, courage, mercy. Some are saints remembered in the pages of history and in the stained glass of cathedrals; others are known only to the people whose lives they touched, the familiar saints of our past (and yes, I count all the dogs I have loved and buried, my beloved cats I have outlived) that mysteriously companion our lives in the present.

Our community includes people of many faith traditions, as well as those who do not identify with a religious tradition at all. Still, we all know someone whose kindness changed the course of a difficult day, whose courage made another feel less alone, whose example helped us see the world differently. The saints we remember need not be perfect or religious or famous; goodness need not always announce itself. By any name—I really believe this—love is holy work.

As we approach All Saints' Day, I intend to share with my students, and with my own children, some stories of people—known and unknown—who have helped me understand what it means to love others well. I want to tell them about the saints of history and the saints of my own life whose example I carry. Mostly, I want to hear their stories of the people whose lives have inspired them. I want to hear what kind of goodness they hope to bring into the world. I want to remind them (as I hope we can remind one another) to let their light shine always. And, I want to give thanks—indeed, thanks be to God— that I am able to stand in the light they are already shining, here and now.

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