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St. Mary's, Goochland
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All Saints' Sunday
Luke 6:20-31

Today is an important day in the life of the Church and in the life of St. Mary's in particular. It's the day that we celebrate All Saints', which includes not just well-known saints like St. Mary and St. Luke, St. Francis and Mother Theresa, but all Christians who have died before us. It's what's known as a Principal Feast in the church year, because like other Principal Feasts such as Christmas and Easter, it celebrates a central tenet of our faith: that nothing in life or death can separate us or those we love from the love of God. We remember especially those who were a part of St. Mary's themselves or because they were loved by someone here who have died within the past year, as well as others whom we mourn still. In the hymns that we sing and the prayers that we say and especially as we read their names aloud, we celebrate their lives, and we take comfort in their presence with God. We do so in the context of our worship, both because the promise of redemption and eternal life is central to our faith, and because the loss of those we love is not something that any of us is meant to endure alone. The legacies of their lives knits us together, and the assurance that we will all be reunited in the kingdom of God strengthens all of us.

In the meantime, though, there's the question of how we will live together now. In today's gospel, Jesus is unequivocal: love our enemies; do good to those who hate us; bless those who curse us; pray for those who abuse us; and do to others as we would have them do to us. Forgive me if I state the obvious, but as we head toward one of the most divisive elections in our country's history, that does not seem to be the path that most of us have chosen. Do we think that Jesus meant it? Then what does that mean for us?

Those are some of the questions that those of us who have been reading Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's book *Crazy Christians* have been considering. Bishop Curry says:

Discipleship is about focusing on Jesus, following in the footsteps of Jesus, becoming his hands and feet in the world. Discipleship is about loving as Jesus loves, giving as Jesus gives, forgiving as Jesus forgives, welcoming and including as Jesus welcomes and includes, doing justice and having mercy and walking humbly with God, like Jesus.

How do we as followers of Jesus - as disciples, if you will - live into what we profess in our prayers and the Eucharist on Sunday the rest of the week? How do we love our enemies; do good to those who hate us; bless those who curse us; pray for those who

abuse us; and do to others as we would have them do to us? Those are questions that extend beyond the hour or so of common worship on Sunday and not ones that most of us can answer alone. They remind us that a vital aspect of our common life is considering together - comforting, challenging, and encouraging one another - what it means to follow Jesus. Whether it's the Sunday Adult Forum, the Tuesday Men's Spiritual Practice, the Wednesday Lectionary Bible Study, or one of our pop-up book studies...whether it's teaching Sunday school or exploring mission and outreach opportunities...or whether it's anything else in our common life that engages the hard questions in today's gospel, I invite you to join in the conversation.

Another reason that today is important in the life of the Church and of St. Mary's in particular is that in just a few minutes we will welcome three children into the Church through the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Their baptism is another reminder of our common heritage in the household of God, particularly as we repeat our own baptismal covenant to, among other things "proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ...seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving [our] neighbor as ourselves...strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being." As we head toward Tuesday's election, I invite you to pray with these children in mind, remembering that they are witnesses to the promises that we make to one another today, that all our lives framed by their lives and the lives of the saints whom we remember as well. Whatever the outcome on Tuesday, we are all in this together now and will be forever. Amen.