WEEKLY READING REFLECTION & PRAYERS, 1st November 2026
ALL SOULS & ALL SAINTS

FIRST READING: 1 John 3.1–3
See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 5.1–12
Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them saying,
"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

REFLECTION: by Rev Tara
I love this season of autumn. The evenings are drawing in, the leaves are falling, the clocks have gone back, and the shops have been full of pumpkins. And, of course, last night we bumped into a large number of small trick or treaters, knocking on doors, dressed as ghosts, vampires, witches and all sorts of other creatures. Some costumes are very impressive; others are perhaps a little less convincing! And I suspect that, behind some of the scarier outfits, there are children who are much more interested in the sweets than in frightening anybody. All were rather surprised by Rev T's offer of a juicy fresh local strawberry, but I note no one refused to taste one!
Why did the skeleton refuse to go trick or treating? Because he had no body to go with! What is a ghost's favourite pudding? I-scream! Why don't skeletons fight each other? They haven't got the guts! Why are ghosts such bad liars? Because you can see right through them!
As we all know, this season of All Souls and All Saints is about rather more than pumpkins, sweets and bad jokes. We are invited to think about some of the bigger questions of life: about death, about memory, about the people we have loved and lost, and about the hope that Christianity offers us. And that is particularly important because, if we are honest, there is plenty in the world around us that can make it difficult to be positive. For many the future must feel really uncertain. It is very easy to become gloomy, to concentrate on what is going wrong, and to lose sight of the good things that remain. Yet one of the things that Christianity should offer is a different perspective: not a denial of life's difficulties, but a reason to remain hopeful in the middle of them.
In our first reading we are reminded of the extraordinary love that God has for us. We are not simply individuals making our way through life, hoping that somehow things will turn out all right. We are God's children, loved and valued, with a relationship with God that is not limited to the years we spend on this earth. There is real reassurance in that. Our worth doesn't depend on how much money we have, how successful we are, or how useful other people think we might be. We are loved by God, and that love is something we can depend upon. John points us towards a future we cannot yet fully understand. There is more to God's purposes than we can now see. We are invited to live with that expectation, allowing the hope of what is to come to shape the way we live now.
This is where All Souls and All Saints come together. We remember those who have died ahead of us with thanks; folk who have been important in our lives; their kindness, humour, wisdom, patience, generosity, and sometimes their wonderfully irritating habits! We remember the things they taught us, often without even realising they were teaching us. Perhaps how to cope with difficulty, how to look after others, laugh at ourselves, or keep going when life was hard. Christian hope doesn't ask us to pretend death is not painful or we should simply get over our sadness.

It gives us a way of holding our sadness alongside our hope, as we entrust those we love to God's keeping, confident that the love which has held us in this life is not defeated by death. Saints are not simply a collection of remarkable people from the past, but people who have lived lives of faith, often quietly, without recognition, showing something of God's love in the world, including many ordinary people whom we have known. People who cared for neighbours, brought up families, served communities, supported their churches, visited the lonely, encouraged the discouraged. They may never have thought of themselves as saints, but they have helped to make the world a better place.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gives us the Beatitudes, a picture of the kind of people who are especially close to God's heart. He speaks of those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are gentle, those who hunger for what is right, those who show mercy, those who make peace, and those who remain faithful even when life is difficult. It is a very different picture of success from the one we are offered by the world which celebrates wealth, power, influence, achievement and popularity. Jesus points us towards compassion, humility, mercy, justice, peace-making and faithfulness. Surely this is something we need to hear and share? We need people who can bring hope rather than despair, kindness rather than hostility, and generosity rather than self-interest.

The Beatitudes are not simply a description of people who have somehow got everything right. They are an invitation to live differently, to be people who reflect God's goodness in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life; something the saints, both past and present, can teach us. We are not asked to wait passively for some distant heavenly reward. We are called to make a difference here and now. Those who have gone before us have left their mark. We honour them by remembering them, AND by carrying forward the best of what they gave us.

So, as we mark All Souls and All Saints, let's remember with gratitude those who have died ahead of us. Let's give thanks for their lives, for what they meant to us, and for all that they taught us. Let's give thanks for the community of saints, known and unknown, whose lives have helped to reveal God's love, remembering that we are part of that great fellowship, joined across generations by faith, hope and love. Let's live hopefully, not because life is always easy, or because there are no difficulties to face, but because God's love is greater than our fears, greater than our disappointments and even greater than death itself. Because we belong to God, to one another, and to a story of love that does not end at the grave. That should give us real cause for hope, as we look to God's future in our midst! Amen.

INTERCESSIONS: Cliff Webb

Heavenly Father. We thank You for your saints in every age. We thank You for those who have witnessed to Your love in this place for over a thousand years and for those whose witness has drawn us closer to You.

We pray for us as Your saints here on earth today. Give us wisdom and hope and love but most of all, help us to know that we are beloved and blessed by You. Lord, in Your mercy Hear our prayer.

Loving Jesus, we pray for the world that You love so much. We pray for all those who lead especially, we pray for our clergy team of Tara, Lucy and Sue. We pray that all may be people of the beatitudes. We pray for the prime minister, the cabinet and all members of parliament. May they try to find what consensus is possible rather than seek further conflict. Lord, in Your mercy Hear our prayer

Lifegiving Spirit, we pray for those who need to know that they are beloved and blessed today. The sick, the depressed, the handicapped and those shunned by society. We pray for those sick in our own parish or known to us, especially: Simon Marshall, Geraldine Wilkins, MJ Curtis, Megan Raw, Tim Sturt, Helen Davies, Anna Lloyd, Dan Gibson, Dick Wallis

We remember those who have made the journey to be at Your side and those who watched and waited with them. Especially we pray for: John Cope, Leonard Knightingale, Noreen Busby and Edward Kannemeyer. Lord, in your mercy Hear our prayer.

Blessed Trinity, in the midst of all that we don't understand and can't fully comprehend help us to know that we are beloved and blessed and surrounded by Your love and the company of all the saints.

Merciful God, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen