

“All Saints”

Revelation 7:9-17

Today, on All Saints Sunday, we celebrate the baptized people of God, living and dead, who are the body of Christ. We gather at the Lord’s Table with the faithful of every time and place, trusting that the promise of God will be fulfilled and that all tears will be wiped away in the New Jerusalem.

Our reading from Revelation brings together biblical imagery of the Kingdom of Heaven. “Every nation, throne, lamb, palm branches, angels, the four living creatures, washed blood, hunger, thirst, the sun’s heat, shepherd, springs of the water of life”.

Today we give thanks for our Divinity saints who have entered the Kingdom of Heaven since last All Saints Sunday . . .

Just a few hours before his death, on Thanksgiving Eve, **Jerry Crowe** was worshiping in this sanctuary, joining us in Holy Communion with Christ at this kneeling rail. Then he sat in the narthex, reading a murder-mystery book, where many of you greeted him.

With Parkinson’s coming on, Jerry was becoming an even quieter and peaceful man of faith. I don’t remember seeing him angry. Jerry knew how to go with the flow and follow Leslie’s lead, a smart thing to do, as they gave thanks for 35 years of marriage a few days earlier.

Therese Bamert found her “green pastures and still waters” at Younker’s Cottages in Marblehead. She would pack their boat full of supplies, load up her 3 children and whichever husband it was, and make the pilgrimage to Marblehead for 2 or 3 weeks every summer.

There Therese enjoyed fishing, water skiing, cookouts, and cocktails with the cottage neighbors, while the children had fun roaming around on their own.

When Therese was battling cancer with chemotherapy, she would find a peaceful place, envisioning herself on the pier at Younkers surrounded by soothing water lapping against the shore.

Don had two questions for **Jane Hartwick**. What's your religion and what's your nationality? When Jane answered with "Free Methodist" and "Dutch-Irish", Don must have been satisfied. Don and Jane were joined together in the covenant of marriage on April 7, 1957 in what is now our fellowship hall before this sanctuary was built. Pastor Don remembered it as his first Divinity wedding in the middle of an April snowstorm.

Juliana Bowen married Larry on August 30, 1985, was blessed and challenged with 4 sons. The youngest two are twins. When I visited with her in the hospital, she was grieving leaving her boys behind knowing her cancer would take her away for now.

LuAnn Simon, a financial analyst for Key Bank would come home to her oasis in the backyard with flowers, statues, fire pit, smoker, and grill. It was a little bit of heaven on earth. Lu loved to entertain and feed her relatives and friends, sharing her homemade nut-rolls that looked just like her mom's.

Al Marko was guided on the pathway home to his parents. He went to work for Cleveland Tom's Vending where he met a young woman named Sue who was a little bit gun shy at that point. After dating for 9 years, Al and Sue were joined together in the covenant of marriage on May 4, 1991 at Divinity.

Sue knew she was marrying a man who bowled in 7 bowling leagues, had bowled a 300, and was on a team called I.C. – the inner circle. Al would be pretty quiet during a game and then would assure his team to let him know they needed him to carry them. Al was also appreciated for his text message humor. Al also enjoyed attending March madness basketball games and Indians baseball.

Erik Schumaker found green pastures at Kent State where he earned his bachelor's degree in Math and his teaching certificate. Erik married Joedy on June 18, 1966 at Bethany Lutheran. They were blessed with 3 daughters, Diana, Tammy, and Heidi. Erik and his family joined Divinity Lutheran on December 24, 1978 where all 3 daughters were confirmed. Erik spent his career as a math teacher in the Parma school system and worked a second job at Handy Andy's in the lumber department.

Erik's daughters give thanks for a father who was “always a teacher” and “always a fixer”. Whether it was helping a daughter with Math homework, having a grandson help on a house project, baking with his grandsons, enjoying his favorite donuts, Snickers, or Musketeers bar, Erik was always a teacher.

After graduating from high school, Herman went to work for National Tool where he met a young lady named **Jeanne Dietz**. Their relationship was interrupted by WW II when Herman served in the Army Corp of Engineers in Belgium, France, and Germany. Because Herman worked in shipping, Jeanne would look forward to the packages he would send her with surprises in them.

When Herman was home on leave, he was joined with Jeanne in the covenant of marriage on January 27, 1944 in the church of Herman's childhood, Faith Lutheran in Lakewood.

Paul Gaiser was a WW II veteran serving in the Navy on a destroyer escort. He spent time in the Philippines, New Guinea, and China. He enjoyed riding his Indian and Harley motorcycles. He had a wood-carving workshop in his basement. When he would shoot groundhogs invading his garden, he would use their teeth as tusks in the elephant heads he carved.

William Wendell was a 1951 Mount Union graduate with a business degree. That same year, Bill joined the Army and began investigating soldier's backgrounds who were being assigned to intelligence. He then went to work for Equifax as an investigator for insurance companies. Bill and Mona were very active in our Divinity ministries in the 1960's and 70's. Bill served on the planning council when the sanctuary was being built in 1965. Then also served as sponsors for our youth group.

(Excerpts from Tina Heise's sermon for the funeral of John Smeets). Throughout his life **John Smeets** sacrificed much for the welfare of others. Working as a part of the Dutch Resistance in the Netherlands, John understood that loving the Lord with all you heart, mind and strength meant making personal sacrifices for the safety of others. When he was a young seminary student, John's parents housed a Jewish family in secret, placing their safety at risk for the sake of others.

The first time John listened to me preach, he came up to me after the service. He said, "Now you know I don't like women pastors. But you did okay. You can keep preaching". He said it with that twinkle of his in his eyes as he chuckled. This became a running joke between us. After every service, John would remind me that as a Catholic he didn't like women pastors but that I was okay and should keep on preaching.

By the end of my seminary education, John was one of my biggest supporters. He wrote me a very thoughtful card for my ordination, and even placed our shared joke inside. I think it would make John laugh to know I am leading the service celebrating his life, twinkle in his eye and all.

Helen Martin was a woman who valued the simple life. She understood that the life best lived was one surrounded with the people she held most dear. Helen had a hospitable heart, always eager to spend time with her children, making Italian rice on Sundays to share with extended family members, offering a smile and a laugh to someone needing a pick-me-up. There was always room in Helen's heart for the people she loved.

Throughout her life, Helen shared the essence of Christ with those around her, even if she might not have always described her actions that way. Helen was a living witness of grace and kindheartedness. When you were with Helen, you knew that you were with someone who genuinely enjoyed your company. She gave you her full attention and invested in developing a deeper connection with you. She honored all of her relationships, from the relationships with her children to the relationship with her hairdresser.

A sermon has yet to be written about **Paul Klemme** as his family is waiting for the church to open, the choir to sing, God's word to be read, and kneeling to receive our Lord's presence. Paul's deep voice will be missed in the choir and at the lectern where you knew he was a P.K., a pastor's kid, sharing his unique voice to enrich our worship together.

I had a great respect for Paul who was a father figure for many of us. I can see him going out of his way to face me, eye to eye, on that Sunday when he would tell me I preached a really good sermon which was not every Sunday like Pastor Don did.

Paul also went eye to eye with me when he disagreed with something going on in the church like whether or not to allow alcohol in the church. When Doug was president and now Paul, I could say, “you need to talk to your son!” Paul was old school and thought I should have more influence on the decision-making. I miss him.

Pastor Don Hesterman’s family wants to wait till next summer to have his service. Two paragraphs from his obituary . . . In January 1954, Pastor Don accepted a call to a small mission church in Parma Heights, Ohio called Divinity Lutheran. He was installed on February 7, 1954 and served as Divinity's Senior Pastor until he retired on December 31, 1987. Pastor Don's loving ministry turned that small church into a thriving congregation that served the community and beyond, remaining as his legacy to this day. He continued to serve as Pastor Emeritus at Divinity following his retirement.

Anyone who knew Don Hesterman also knew of his great love of sports. He played basketball in high school, played softball in Divinity's league, and took up golf at the young age of 50. He continued to play golf into his 90s, with his shining achievement being a hole-in-one on October 1, 1988! Don was also an avid fan of the Cleveland sports teams—rooting for the Indians, Browns and Cavs "religiously" every season.

Marjorie Braithwaite was a woman who valued the simple life. Perhaps it came from being raised in the family home in Danberry with no electricity, she rejoiced in the everyday pleasures. She understood that the life best lived was one surrounded with the people she held most dear. From picking peaches and apples from the family orchard to making clothes for her children to wear to school, Marjorie wasn't afraid of hard work.

Marjorie had a servant's heart, always eager to spend time with her children, volunteering at Southwest Hospital, helping out in the church office, or offering a laugh to someone needing a pick-me-up. There was always room in Marjorie's heart for the people she loved.

The members of Divinity, Parma Heights, recognized **Betty Wolkan** for her 25 years of service as church secretary. She began part time in 1961 working 12 hours a week. After a short leave of absence she returned and in 1970 became executive secretary.

Betty has worked with all the pastors of Divinity, except the founding pastor, Carl Hacker. She has been the important stabilizer behind all the others which include Boehm, Huffman, Bernlohr, Sassanella, Christian and today Heebink, Ruther and Hesterman.

Betty has worked with many people over the years, who have either been part-time secretaries or worked in the parish education office.

In addition to working with pastors, and co-workers, Betty has worked with presidents, board members and members of the congregation.

In the words expressed by the current pastors “she has done a tremendous job for us and she will be missed. We are glad to express our appreciation in this way and to show our gratitude for her many years of dedicated ministry. Well done, good and faithful servant.

When someone we love and care about enters the Church Triumphant and leaves us behind we pause and think about all the ways that person has touched our lives. This is one of those times. It is a time when our emotions are mixed and our hearts ache as we also celebrate the life of the one we loved.

Jeanne Mandilakis loved deeply and honestly. It was pretty much evident by the way Jeanne and Andy looked forward to celebrating another year of marriage

– 72 years on August 13th. It is quite an accomplishment 72 years of devotion – and 5 sons!

Life well-lived but still a life too short for those of us who loved her.

One cannot reflect upon the life of our beloved **Jim O'Rourke** and not think of the great love story he shared with his bride Mary. From that first meeting over a pitcher of beer at Oktoberfest; to Jim offering to sell his boat if that would help Mary commit to him; theirs is a story of wondrous love. Their marriage serves as evidence that love is indeed patient and kind, that love does not boast and it is not envious. Their devotion to one another models for us what it means to bear one another's burdens, to believe in one another no matter what the odds, and how true love, the love God has for us, never ends.

It is fitting that Jesus first shows us about the heavenly banquet at the celebration of two people's love story. Many of us have learned how to support our own families more deeply by witnessing the remarkable love between Jim and Mary. While we may not have feasted at Mary and Jim's wedding, God revealed for us images of heaven when we gathered with Jim at other lifechanging tables.

We saw a glimpse of heaven when we felt the laughter around Jim's homemade bar when he hosted dinner parties. We saw how God comes to us in friendship when Jim hosted us on his boat so we could be first in line at Cedar Point. We learned that the banquet of heaven is not necessarily a formal meal but witnessed as Jim became friends with a beloved waiter at a favorite restaurant.

I personally learned about God's gracious hospitality when Mary and Jim took my siblings and I to watch the Nutcracker when I was a small child, introducing me to a life of art and culture.

From Jim's life, we came to understand that God doesn't only shine grace upon us on Sunday morning, but shines grace upon us at every table, at every meal, in every moment we spend with the people that we love.

Al Severin and Arline joined Divinity in 2001, just before I arrived. They always sat in the same pew halfway down next to the middle aisle. I remember visiting with them when Arline was in her living room easy chair, oxygen tubes in her nose, and a big smile on her face as she greeted me

As Al looked back on his life, he said to me, "I've lived quite a life!" He was thankful for his 101 years. One last Al quote that he said he heard in a sermon, "What's the first thing I'll see when I open my eyes – Jesus!"

In 1973, **Helene Geiss** moved to Middleburg Heights where again Helene could keep her yard looking good, bake a nut roll every week for John, and enjoy her grandchildren. Her family gives thanks for good memories of Helene hosting family meals, especially lunch on Sundays. Her children, Elaine and John told me about her pork loins, crescent rolls, and chicken soup with chicken liver dumplings. Elaine has the recipe down when she makes a huge pot and shares it with family.

Dale Grand was born on January 24, 1958, the third of four children born to Dennis and Pat. Both Dale and Linda became children of God in the sacrament of holy baptism on December 20, 1959, the same day the Grand family became members of Divinity. Pastor Don did the baptizing.

The Grand children were never in want growing up and were creative in having fun together. There's the story of attaching skateboards to the bottom of a porch glider, enclosing

the glider, and Gary pushing the “Treadway Trolley” down the street with his younger siblings inside and tearing up neighbors’ lawns. When Dad got home, the wheels were taken off and it became a clubhouse in the backyard.

May the peace of God . . .

#427 – For All Your Saints, O Lord