

All Saints' Day (Sunday)
The Rev. Martha L. Hubbard

November 2, 2008
St. Paul's, Newburyport

One morning several years ago now, when we were living in Penn Yan, NY, I was sitting in my meditation room staring out the window when something caught my eye: a flash of blue and white at the window of the vacant house across the street. When I looked more closely, I saw the reflection of a blue jay in the window, but then I realized it was not a reflection, the bird was actually there at the window but not on the outside. It was inside the house.

I quickly hurried downstairs and outside to get a better look. I didn't remember the owners name and didn't know who else to call so I tried the front door and it was open. I quickly saw that the pane in one of the small first floor windows was out, and was undoubtedly the way the bird had entered. But now it was upstairs. All the walls had been knocked out and a total renovation was underway. I carefully made my way to the second floor room where the bird was. When it saw me it began fluttering furiously and let out a plaintive jay-warning cry. As I moved toward the windows, it swooped between the bare studs and into the next room. I managed to open one of the windows, and then the task was to get the jay back to it. For the next several minutes I followed the jay around the several rooms of the second floor, cringing all the while as it hurled itself against window after window until it finally returned to the room with the open window and soared out to freedom.

The saints we celebrate on this All Saints Sunday are a bit like that – they are those people who open the window to God for us. They are the ones who come to us when we are trapped, and hurling ourselves around in a panic, and speak or act in ways that lead to our freedom. They are God's

instruments in showing us a way where we might never have found one on our own.

In this morning's Gospel, Jesus comes telling us that we are blessed when we are poor in spirit, when we mourn, when we are meek – which by the way, here does not mean being a shrinking violet or a doormat, but rather being without access to power. And blessed are we when we are hungering and thirsting after God's righteousness. How are we blessed in those times and places, we may wonder? We are blessed in those times and places, by the saints of God – those whom God sends to throw a rope down into the pit of our poverty, those whom God sent to wrap their arms around our grief – those who can sit silently with us when words will not do, or sit and talk with us late into the night when words are what matter. Those who come to our aid when we don't have it in us to do for ourselves. Those whom God sends to share our joy, in tears and in belly laughs. Those whom God gives us, who can read us like a book, even if it is just by observing our posture from across a room. Who are these people in your life? Who has opened a window in your life and let you fly free into a deeper sense of God's blessed presence? Who are they? Be they living or be they dead, for as our faith tells us there is no final distinction.

Our world is like a bowl floating in the sea. We live on the inside of the bowl, those who have died have to on to the world of the sea – they surround us on every side, they buoy us up. And each week as we gather for our worship around the altar, we join them in one unending hymn – Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord... One heart, one voice before God through Christ. Some of them we can see around us here this morning in the pictures on our window sills. We will read some of their names later during the roll call of saints. Still others we simply carry in our hearts. They have been God's tools

for reaching us. And together with them, by virtue of our baptism and our life in Christ, we are saints of God also. Not because we are perfect, but because God reaches out through us to others. Sometimes we know nothing about it. Sometimes it is as simple as speaking the right word. Sometimes it is as simple as opening a window. Sometimes it is more evident and more demanding. Blessed are we when we throw the rope of hope into someone else's pit of impoverished despair. Blessed are we when we wrap our arms around the grief of another. Blessed are we when we relieve the hunger and thirst of another, or pursue peace, or share our pure hearted vision of God... Blessed are we, not because we are racking up some sort of divine brownie points, but rather because God is in us, working through us, blessing us even as we bless another, giving us joy of being part of God's great plan of unbinding, releasing, soaring redemption and reconciliation for all the world. Praise God! Blessed we are! Blessed are we also by the 5 little ones who come to join us in this calling through the waters of baptism this morning! New saints born among us – blessed are we! Amen.