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Praise for *Inwardly Digest:*

The Prayer Book as Guide to a Spiritual Life

Too often, *The Book of Common Prayer* is open to a few familiar pages on Sunday and closed the rest of the days, with little regard to the deep, transformative spirituality inside. With humor, deep reverence, and academic insight that is anything but dry and boring, Derek Olsen reminds us of the breath of the Spirit, the lives of the saints, the love of Jesus, and the magnificence of God held in the words, silence, and worship of our *Book of Common Prayer*. Clergy and laity should read this to discover and re-discover the daring words and liturgies of our faith spanning eons and to engage the prayers and worship of our faith.

—Laurie Brock Episcopal priest and author of Horses Speak of God: How Horses Can Teach Us to Listen and be Transformed

Derek Olsen is the patron saint of the overlooked; campaign manager of the undervalued; tour guide to the taken for granted. His patient, scholarly watchfulness and his gift for rendering complex ideas in clear, concise prose make *Inwardly Digest* an insightful guide to *The Book of Common Prayer* and a sure and steady introduction to Anglican spiritual practice.

—Jim Naughton
Founder of Episcopal Café and
partner of Canticle Communications

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THE ESSENCE OF THE CALENDAR

Pick up a prayer book from a church pew and—keeping it closed—look at the edges of the pages. There will usually be a thin section of dark edges a little past one-third of the book. That's where the service for Holy Eucharist appears. The pages are worn and dirtied from use. The rest of the pages are usually fairly clean in comparison. That's because no one is looking at them on a weekly basis the way they are the Eucharist.

If you were to look for the cleanest pages of the prayer book, they would be at the very front—where the Calendar and the Church Year are listed—and the very back—where the lectionary tables appear. Clergy and worship leaders consult these pages every once in a while to make sure they are ordering things correctly, but on the whole, most people are not aware of these sections. Despite the apparent lack of interest, the way we as prayer book people order time impacts us on a daily basis. It regulates how the church worships, what hymns we sing, and what parts of scripture we hear.

Think for a minute about how humans reckon time. Genesis 1 gives two reasons for the creation of the celestial bodies—the sun, moon, and stars: Light is the second purpose.

The primary is that they may "be for signs and for seasons and for days and years" (1:14); they are time-keeping devices first and foremost. Some aspects of time are built into the fabric of the created order. The revolution of the earth gives us a day divided into light and dark with a particular point (noon) where the sun hits a high-point and all the shadows go away. The journey of the earth around the sun gives us a year with intermediate points at the solstices and the equinoxes. Additionally, the moon gives us periods of twenty-nine-anda-half days. Astronomers could add a few more, I'm sure, but these are the big ones.

I bring this up for a particular reason: Notice just how much of our timekeeping doesn't show up here! Hours, minutes, weeks, months: None of them follow natural indicators. Time as we experience, measure, and mark it is a social construct more than anything else. The way we reckon our years (Anno Domini [Year of Our Lord] 2013, 5774 years from the giving of the Law, 2766 Ab urbe condita [from the founding of Rome]), the way we structure our weeks, the way we subdivide our days reflect choices about what things are worth reckoning. Even more socially conditioned are days, times, or seasons that we observe as particularly memorable. The government proclamation of a day off work, whether it be Labor Day, or the Queen's Birthday, or Corpus Christi, says something about what a country values.

This is just as true of the Church as any other social grouping. We tell time in particular ways for particular reasons. Much of the order of time in the secular world revolves around business—originally around agricultural demands and more recently by the work week and the punctuality required by a mechanized society. On the other hand, the Church's time is primarily structured to orient us toward God. At points, Church time adopts the secular ordering; in other points, it adapts it, and in a few places, it

explicitly contradicts the wider reckoning. In some areas, the relationship is not one way—the secular culture's time has itself been shaped by the Church's traditions. We will explore what these mean in relation to the system of spirituality laid out in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Before we get to our particular time-keeping system, let's focus on the inner workings of the two main aspects of the Church Year. In particular, I want to talk about the Christian year from two different perspectives. The first relates to its connection with our doctrine; the second relates to its connection with our emotion. We grasp the Church Year most completely only when we see both aspects and when the two are understood to be complementary parts of a whole.

LIVING THE CREED

Our doctrine—our beliefs—are stated in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. What exactly are the creeds, and what are they for? Stated briefly, the creeds are a relatively quick overview of what the Church believes and teaches. The Apostles' Creed plays an important role in baptisms because, for almost two thousand years, it has been used in the Western Church to show that the person being baptized (or their sponsors) knew and assented to the beliefs of the organization they were joining. The Nicene Creed is a slightly longer form modeled on an Eastern baptismal creed. It was hammered out between the fourth and eighth centuries by bishops from across the Church in an effort to address how we understand the interrelations between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is the creed that we say or sing during Eucharist.

Modern churchgoers are sometimes a little unclear on the purpose of the creeds. In a culture that emphasizes thinking for ourselves and is suspicious of organizations telling us

controversy and render a clear judgment on the Church's about everything but rather nail down certain points of perspective. interpretive boundaries. They don't tell us what to believe to determine which is which. The creeds represent a set of literal and metaphorical material, one of our chief tasks is we acknowledge—as we must—that scripture contains both in many different ways, from many different angles. Once but precisely because of it! That is, the scriptures can be read Church came about not in spite of the reading of scripture Some of the greatest problems and heresies of the Early creeds are a framework to guide our reading of the scriptures we have disconnected them from their proper function: The the full role and purpose of the creeds in the life of faith. I further along in our journey. None of these options capture the road of faith that can be left on the wayside once we are to be transcended and left behind-sort of a starting place on sheep from the goats. Or, some say, the creeds are something time? Most often, people have one of three perspectives about with the question: What do we do with the creeds in modern believe that our major problems with the creeds are because believers that can and should be used to separate out the disconnected from real life. They are litmus tests for true the creeds. They are a laundry list of ideas, a set of thoughts what to believe, creeds seem like an anachronism. We are left

It's worth emphasizing the "points of controversy" notion. I have often heard questions and concerns about why the life and ministry of Jesus is not discussed in the creeds. It's not because the Church didn't think these were important; rather, it's because there weren't fundamental arguments about it. The orthodox and heterodox alike believe that Jesus lived, taught, and worked wonders. There was no controversy about these things and hence no need for clarification.

is the God of creation and that creation is not what we need to be saved from, within it. But that conviction begins with the belief that God took the material world so seriously that he became incarnate only did God get tangled up in material things, but God also material things. But that's precisely what we believe. Not was convinced that no good God would get tangled up in impulse that saw all spirit as good and all matter as evil and humanity in flesh. This is in deliberate contrast to a dualistic lesser god who sought to trap the spirits and souls of God who is the father of Jesus Christ and not some evil, that the creation of the material world came about through the creator of the heavens and the earth, we confirm our belief that have practical implications both for theology and for Christian living. For instance, when we confess that God is Rather, the creeds address specific points of controversy

Too often, we only note what the creed says—and lose sight of the mistaken interpretations that it prevents. We get so caught up in arguing about what the creeds say that we forget that they are also shutting down other lines of interpretation that can have disastrous pastoral consequences and skew our understanding of and relationship with God.

So what does this all have to do with the Christian Year? Quite simply, one aspect of the Christian Year is that it is a temporal embodiment of the interpretive doctrines of the creed. Almost every line of the creeds has a corresponding feast or fast. In observing these feasts and fasts, the Church has an opportunity to explore and explain exactly what the terse lines of the creed are—and are not—trying to say. For those who feel a little wary about the creeds, this facet of the Church Year should, actually, come as good news. What the creeds state quickly and sparsely, the feasts explore at more leisure. The traditional liturgical materials of these feasts

Let me give you an example. The feast of the Epiphany concludes the season of Christmas and begins an emphasis on how Christ revealed himself and was revealed to the world. The Early Church connected the feast of Epiphany with three different biblical events: Matthew's story of the Magi arriving to honor the infant Jesus, John's story of the wedding at Cana identified as "the first of his signs" (John 2:11), and the Baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan, which is mentioned in all four Gospels. While these Gospel stories were eventually expanded to their own Sundays, an anonymous liturgist operating perhaps in the sixth or seventh century wove these narratives into a single antiphon as a way of driving to the heart of the feast:

This day is the Church joined unto the Heavenly Bridegroom, since Christ hath washed away her sins in Jordan; the wise men hasten with gifts to the marriage supper of the king; and they that sit at meat together make merry with water turned into wine. *Alleluia*.²

Using the central notion of the wedding feast, the doctrine of the Incarnation is made even more relational as the wedding of Christ and the Church by means of the sacrament of Baptism. The first miracle of Christ reflects the joy of the banquet, and the gift-bearing Magi hint at the inclusion of the Gentiles into God's promise of reconciliation. This is the sort of liturgical play that helps us return again to the creeds with greater appreciation.

Of course, with the simplification of the church services that occurred during the Reformation, we lost sight of many of these liturgical gems, but the last century has seen a

renewed interest in their perspective and they can be found in several devotional resources like Saint Augustine's Prayer Book.

THE SEASONS AND THE RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS

Doctrines—like those revealed in the creeds—are an important part of the Christian faith. They are less important for their own sake and more because they help us get a clearer sense of the relationship that we are developing and the identity of the Triune God to whom we relate. More than being an exercise in right thinking, the Christian faith has been described as a particular pattern of deep emotions shaped over time.

are gratitude, holy fear and penitence, joy and suffering, and love of God and neighbor. it as a way of being. The Christian affections, as identified by and cultivate. There is a difference between feeling anger and theologian Don Saliers in his work, The Soul in Paraphrase, difference between feeling gratitude and choosing to cultivate choosing to live out of an attitude of anger; similarly, there's a suppress them. The affections are more than this; they are more like emotional habits, patterns of feeling that we choose and we respond to them, express them, give vent to them, or things over which we have little control; they arise within us, a feigned joy. But emotions, like thoughts, are often fleeting religion that rely upon emotional manipulation, using guilt or process of self-discovery. However, we have all seen forms of be—an important part of the religious life as well as the whole having feelings, and listening to your feelings is-and must to talk about them is not always clear or precise. Feelings, Emotions are tricky things, and the language that we use

In what may seem like a paradox, an important part of this "feeling" work is about ideas, thoughts, and doctrines. Just as what we know about a person may influence how we feel toward them, what we know and the ideas we hold about God shape our feelings in our relationship with the Divine. Because of this interrelation between thinking and feeling, the affections are a constellation of beliefs, doctrines, and feelings that are shaped and reinforced by language that not only provokes emotions within us but also offers us images and descriptions of reality that help us understand what living out these perspectives looks like.

When we examine the emotional atmosphere of the seasons of the Church Year, we recognize that each season provides its own particular entrée into one or more of the affections. Lent disciplines us toward penitence; Easter explores holy joy. Advent teaches us about hope and expectation; Christmas also returns to joy—but from a slightly different angle than Easter. These seasons give us an opportunity to concentrate on an affection, to cultivate it, and to understand it more thoroughly. Recognizing the seasons as affectional frameworks also helps free us from a particular kind of seasonal guilt.

Sometimes, I'll catch myself rejoicing in the spring air and newly warm sunshine and feel badly that I am enjoying myself so much during Lent. Conversely, holidays—particularly Christmas and Easter—can be difficult for those who have recently lost loved ones or who experience familial conflict at these times, contradicting the joyous intent of the Church's celebrations. If we understand the seasons as training opportunities rather than emotional straightjackets, we can free ourselves from this unnecessary guilt. It's okay to feel something different—to experience a whole range of emotions despite an affectional intention of the season. Neither our emotions nor the affections should be restricted by the seasons. Rather, we focus upon particular affections as we

move through particular seasons in order that these patterns may become features of our long-term way of being in the presence of God.

a feature of Advent since its creation while Lamentations is a subtle means for creating a season's mood is in the selection of consistent feature of Holy Week. the biblical readings in both the Office and the Eucharist, For instance, Isaiah's prophecies of the coming Messiah have been Prayer also help shape the season's mood. One of the more these seasons of patient endurance. The canticles at Morning and Lent. The traditional rule that it is used only on Sundays occasion in Christmas and Easter but not at all in Advent the Church communicates tone. The Gloria is used at any (and not weekdays) in green seasons elevates Sundays within songs of rejoicing, and its absence is one of the ways that elements. The Gloria in exclesis is one of the Church's great dominant role as now), its tones were often suppressed during the chancel organ played a supplemental role (rather than a Advent and Lent, More telling is the use of certain musical where multiple services occurred at the same time and where the sanctuary. Music, too, changes. In the great cathedrals visual indicators of the Church's mood as you glance around and an absence of floral decoration in Lent provide further of Advent and Lent. The use of unflowered greens in Advent and Easter give visual cues as do the darker, more somber hues to the season's character. The bright white colors of Christmas of a season. The liturgical color often provides an initial clue ways; several factors converge to create the emotional tenor The seasons cultivate particular affections in a variety of

The prayer book gives us free reign on many of these things. Although seasons, readings, directions on canticles, and other elements appear in the prayer book, there are no directions on things like colors or floral decorations. Rather,

choose to celebrate the seasons. color of vestments on hand inform how various congregations denominational practice, parish tradition, and the type and

form the basic grammar of the Christian way of being. movements between love and holy fear, penitence and joy, their sometimes complementary, sometimes sequential character of an affection. And the affections together with doctrines, and feelings that contribute to the composite All of these elements combine to focus us on certain ideas,

THE POWERFUL PRESENT LITURGY, HISTORY, AND

one who comes to preside over the final consummation of all of God's people for the coming Messiah, but this time as the things as judge of heaven and earth. Resurrection. Finally, Advent once again reflects the waiting from that point is dually informed by both the Spirit and the for the Church, and the later ministry of Jesus that unfolds the Risen Christ in the midst of his people until the Ascension to explore the character of Jesus in both word and works. In one sense, the Church Year unfolds like a Gospel, following The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost initiates a new period Week. Easter features the Resurrection and the presence of Lent begins the turn to the cross, which is intensified in Holy Incarnation. Epiphany combines manifestation and ministry for the coming Messiah. Christmas focuses upon the birth and the life of Christ. Advent reflects the waiting of God's people

is kerygmatic—an act of proclamation in and of itself. It To do this is to miss something important. The Church Year that we can view it as a panorama of historical remembrances The danger with only seeing the year like this, though, is

> night, this day, us, new light, in our very midst! you did some things that we now remember fondly. No! This of Common Prayer, p. 213). We don't say, a long time ago upon us the new light of your incarnate Word..." (The Book pp. 212, 213). During Christmas we pray, "...you have poured and "...you have given your only begotten Son...to be born this day of a pure virgin..." (The Book of Common Prayer, this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true light..." very midst. At Christmas we pray, "O God, you have caused Risen Christ and professes both presence and power in our proclaims not just the past but also the present power of the

The deacon sings: staring at the single paschal candle, our own pillar of flame. present moment as the faithful stand in a darkened church, Egypt and the Resurrection of Christ, they are united in our up the great biblical images of redemption in the Exodus from which is one of the high points of the Easter Vigil. Scooping crescendo in the Church's great song of rejoicing, the Exultet, Book of Common Prayer, p. 222). These themes reach full night to shine with the glory of the Lord's resurrection" (The second collect for Easter—"O God, who made this most holy We see the same language, emphasis, and themes in the

Israel, out of bondage in Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea This is the night, when you brought our fathers, the children of

the gloom of sin, and are restored to grace and holiness of life. This is the night, when all who believe in Christ are delivered from

and rose victorious from the grave. This is the night, when Christ broke the bonds of death and hell,

is washed away. It restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to How holy is this night, when wickedness is put to flight, and sin

those who mourn. It casts out pride and hatred, and brings peace and concord.

How blessed is this night, when earth and heaven are joined and man is reconciled to God (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 287).

This isn't about the past: It's about now. The mighty acts of God in the past and the great promises of God that will reach their full fulfillment in the future are bound together in this sacred moment—and our present expands to encompass them both.

The Church Year isn't just a catechetical exercise (although it does that). It is a means of accessing the power and the promise of God now! This is why the Anglican fathers fought the Puritan attempts to get rid of the Church Calendar; They recognized that this cycle is a means of tapping into the mysteries that God offers us in the sacramental life.

COMMEMORATING THE SAINTS AND HEROES OF THE FAITH

The temporal cycle that celebrates in time the high points of the creeds and, in doing so, the main movements in the life of Jesus, is mirrored by the sanctoral cycle that celebrates Christ and his Church in and through the heroes of the faith. The temporal cycle operates along two major axes: incarnation and redemption. That is, the seasons of Lent and Easter focus our attention on how God acts to redeem us; the seasons of Advent and Christmas along with attendant feasts involving Mary and John the Baptist focus us on God becoming human. The best way to think about the sanctoral cycle is not as some other separate thing that gets plopped on top of the temporal cycle as an occasional interruption. Rather, the sanctoral

cycle is the logical next step from the temporal cycle that flows from the life of Jesus and shows us the fusion of both redemption and incarnation as they intersect within human lives. The sanctoral cycle shows us the promise and potential of humanity reconciled with God; it gives us vivid examples of redeemed humans who incarnated Christ in their very flesh to the wonder of the watching world.

dual mysteries of redemption and incarnation. way that helps us touch the heart of it: the intersection of the principles of the prayer book to wrestle with the topic in a the difference of opinion here but, instead, will try to use the to respect the diversity of opinion while still providing for problematic. The prayer book and associated material tries liturgical celebration of these heroes. We're not going to solve it and see the notion of saints as inherently troublesome and using the "s-word" (saints). Others are much more leery of fine with the sanctoral cycle and are perfectly comfortable from, or reject what it is that they do. Some Episcopalians are honor these heroes and Episcopal desires to emulate, learn way that the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches remember them in church. A lot of this has to do with the whole toward the heroes of the faith and how we decide to within The Episcopal Church and within Anglicanism as a that's understandable. There is a wide range of attitudes Some people are a bit wary of the sanctoral cycle. And

A BAPTISMAL ECCLESIOLOGY: WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

The best way to untangle this matter, it seems to me, is to cut to the heart of the matter. It starts with Baptism. One of the real achievements of our prayer book is its embrace of the sacrament of Baptism and the restoration of its place as one

of the two great sacraments of the Church. You won't spend very long around arguing Episcopalians without somebody referring to the Baptismal Covenant or even tossing out the phrase "baptismal ecclesiology."

and rising from them, sharing in his new risen life (Romans Paul speaks of us dying in the waters of Baptism with Jesus event-me and Jesus. And yet, that's not how the New 6:1-11). This is the moment when we get plugged into the properly if we are only looking at the clergy. Or if we're only those who are fellow travelers with us by virtue of Baptism. into the life of God. That's the heart of what the Church is: all plugged into Jesus. It is all of us who are connected by Christ and the dead quite so starkly either. to church attendance or denominational lines. Furthermore, seriously that everyone who is, was, or will be baptized shares on Sundays. A real, robust baptismal ecclesiology takes The Church is defined by Baptism. We fail to see the Church Jesus—it's me and Jesus and everybody else who is likewise Testament or the Church talks about it. It's not just me and life of God. It can be seen as an individual and individualistic risen life means that we don't see the line between the living Paul's insistence that baptismal life is a sharing in Christ's in a common bond, the union with Christ, without regard looking at the people who decide to show up to our church But what is baptismal ecclesiology and why does it matter? Baptism joins us to Christ. Using the image of drowning

I fear, despite all of our talk of a baptismal ecclesiology, that we tend to have a parochial view of the Church. And I mean that in two different senses of the word. I mean it in the word's negative sense when parochial is used to mean short-sighted and narrow. I also mean it in the word's most literal sense as it relates to the parish we go to on Sundays. We tend to think of Church as restricted to the people we see around us—and that's a mistake. If we take Baptism seriously, we

have to see Church not only as the people within our walls but also the folks in the church down the street (even if we don't agree with them on some things), all the folks who don't actually attend our church or any church, and the whole host of those who have gone before us that we see no longer. If the act of Baptism replaces our life, plugging us into the life of God in some fundamental, meaningful way—however we understand that—then the dead share the very same life that we do. We are all bound together into the energies of God. What we do with the dead, how we understand them, and our relation to them finds focus liturgically in two days at the start of November: the Feast of All Saints and the Commemoration of All Faithful Departed, historically called All Souls. If we want to do the sanctoral cycle right, we have to start with these two days and what they mean for us.

ALL SAINTS AND ALL SOULS

To approach this topic from a prayer book perspective, the place we have to begin is one of humility. We don't have all the answers here, and that's okay—we have enough to get by on. The first thing to note is that, despite what you might think, the Bible doesn't spend very much time at all talking about death or what happens after we die. Christian tradition has filled in the gaps with a whole lot of stuff and often in some fairly imprecise, rather sketchy, and often downright contradictory ways. Some of our most treasured notions about what happens when we die are more products of cultural myths than anything rooted in scripture and historic Christian teaching. Frankly, that's part of what makes this discussion a bit tricky—we are touching on treasured notions. It is certainly not my intention to harm anyone's faith or pass judgment on what you were taught, formally or not. As a

result, I will stick closely to the words and intentions of the prayer book.

groups? Are they distinct or does one flow into the other? Lord" (Form V, The Book of Common Prayer, p. 391). Too, there is no pain or grief but life eternal, we pray to you, O with all the saints, they may have rest in that place where 389) and "For all who have died in the communion of your and we pray that we may share with all your saints in your all who have died, that your will for them may be fulfilled; your saints who have entered into joy; May we also come the saints in close proximity: "Give to the departed eternal another. For instance, in the various forms of the Prayers Dead and for the Saints. But how do we interpret these two we have sets of fixed prayers (Commons) appointed for the Church, and those whose faith is known to you alone, that, eternal kingdom" (Form IV, The Book of Common Prayer, p. Common Prayer, p. 387) and "We commend to your mercy to share in your heavenly kingdom" (Form III, The Book of rest; Let light perpetual shine upon them. We praise you for of the People, we routinely mention both the departed and Most often, these are verbally placed right next to each reference to two general groups: the departed and the saints that fundamental recognition, the prayer book then makes the promises of Baptism, death is a shift—not an end. From else is built. Because of our faith in the Resurrection and That declaration is the foundation upon which everything changed, not ended" (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 382). Dead, we say, "for to your faithful people, O Lord, life is In the Proper Preface for the Commemoration of the

I suggest that the prayer book is being deliberately vague on these points. The clearest statement that I can find that sheds light on this comes from the Prayers of the People in the Rite I Eucharist, which reflects the language that we inherited from classical Anglicanism: "And we bless thy

final consummation of all things. will, as that process of growth is played out and as God's promises in Baptism and Eucharist are fully delivered in the who do not yet experience the full presence of God but who of God's presence; and the Church Expectant-those departed Triumphant—those departed who currently enjoy the fullness division into the Church Militant—we the living; the Church a process of growth that is not ended by physical death. The pattern that is laid out here reflects a classical threefold are partakers of the heavenly kingdom and also envisions Prayer, p. 330). This language affirms that the saints of God good examples of all thy saints, that with them we may be and fear, beseeching thee to grant them continual growth in partakers of thy heavenly kingdom" (The Book of Common thy love and service; and to grant us grace so to follow the holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith

Keeping these categories in mind, the feast of All Saints celebrates the mighty deeds of God in and through the Church Triumphant; the feast of All Souls recalls to us the Church Expectant who shall yet enjoy that final consummation.

Now we get to the tricky part: If we are saying that we have two buckets—who goes where, and why?

Well, that's complicated

BACK TO BAPTISM

The Church uses two primary definitions for the term saint. The first definition is a general one with biblical roots; Paul consistently uses the saints to refer to the whole people of God.⁴ Those who have been joined to Christ in Baptism are holy ones (which is the same word as saints in Greek) because they have become part of a holy whole. Thus, there is a general sense that saint is appropriate for every member of the Church.

But there is also a more specific use of the term that the Church has used for centuries: A saint is a person who manifests Christ to the world. A saint is a person in whom and through whom Christ can be seen. In a sense—like the icons that represent them—the saints can be seen both as windows and as mirrors. The saints are windows because the light of Christ flows through them, and their primary purpose is not to reveal themselves but, in their transparency to the Divine, reveal the heart of God. The saints are mirrors because they offer us an opportunity to see ourselves as we could be—to show us what life in the service of Christ looks like. Just as we might glance into a mirror before a big meeting, the saints reveal when we still have spinach stuck in our teeth, when and where we fall short of living a life glowing with God.

The saints represent the goal for us. What we receive in the spiritual patterning of the prayer book, in the spiritual patterns of the Church at large, is a sacramental path to discipleship. Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, and Reconciliation (confession) are tools that lead us ever deeper into discipleship where we hear and answer God's call to follow, to learn, to love, to die, to truly live. The saints model Christian maturity in a variety of ways. These ways take many forms in a host of situations, but the central qualities never stray far from the pattern of Jesus himself: faith, hope, love, mercy, justice, and peace.

Paul, positively influenced by the Stoic teachings of his day, understood that the true transmission of the faith could only be partially accomplished through language; the deeper patterns required examples. Hence, a critical part of his proclamation is captured in this simple (but not easy) call: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). There is an inherently incarnational element in the call to imitation. It contains the recognition that the essense of people cannot be reduced to their thoughts or their teachings or even their

virtues in an abstract sense. Instead we learn from the whole embodied reality with which they engaged the world. The saints are mediators of the faith to us because, as Paul wrote, they call us through themselves to imitate Christ and to learn from him what it is to be holy, what it is to be fully human.

saints—particularly using the second, more particular, sense of life and means of imitation. monasticism to the West by means of a dialogue about ways another early writer, likewise offers a mediation of eastern weaves oral teachings with human lives; Sulpicius Severus and stories. John Cassian's great work is a dialogue that whom he had ministered. Even the first great writings on in his letters of people with whom he had lived and to Christian spirituality sought to retain a connection with lives Epiphanius and the various examples and remembrances and editing the Latin (Vulgate) Bible, gave us a number, ascerbic monk and translator best known for translating Malchus as well as the more historically grounded life of including the more fantastical lives of Paul the Hermit and bishop of Alexandria, gave us the life of Antony. Jerome, the ascetical theology in narrative form. Athanasius, the fiery movement writing in the fourth century presented their Instead, they wrote lives. The fathers of the nascent monastic did not appear in the form of treatises or doctrinal essays. earliest literature about spirituality and teaching spirituality What I'm getting at here is that when we deal with the Imitation of the saints means learning lives. Some of the

What I'm getting at here is that when we deal with the saints—particularly using the second, more particular, sense of the term—we are working within the realm of Incarnation. How is Christ made manifest in material means to heal and redeem the world? An answer is in the lives of those called to follow him. We, in turn, learn Christ in and through them.

To return again to the prayer book and to Baptism, the Baptismal Covenant lays out a set of ideas that have always been implicit in Baptism and in discipleship. The Baptismal

Covenant asks: fidelity to the Church's creeds (particularly the Apostles' Creed), persistence in the Church's worship and gatherings, the practice of repentance, spreading the Good News of what God has done in Christ, humble service to Christ in the person of all humanity, striving for justice, peace, and respect for all. These promises are not new but reflect facets of discipleship that the Church has taught through the ages. Some individuals embrace these promises more concretely than others. Some embody them more profoundly than others. These are our exemplars of Christian maturity, these are the stewards of the virtues, from whom we learn Christ and imitate him in them. To the degree that they model the more excellent way, they deserve to be set apart and held up by the Church.

we have a sense of whom to hold up as exemplars and positive signs that certain individuals are among the blessed can—and should—do is to state that there are strong come as quite a shock to us! No, the most that Churches tradition, some of those enjoying that nearer presence will if God's ways are true to what we find in scripture and in population of the holy. There are far more who enjoy the declare saints, they are not attempting to identify the whole can state the contents of the buckets. Even when Churches that fundamental truth, no Church or ecclesiastical body our decision. We can't put anyone into these buckets--that is who goes where. The good news, of course, is that it's not the issue of the two buckets-the saints, the departed, and Not so that whole company can be catalogued, but so that fullness of the presence of God than we can imagine. And, has ever said (or at least not properly or wisely) that it God knows his own far better than we ever will. Recognizing buckets fails as being overly concrete. Here's what we can say God's work. And, at the end of the day, even the metaphor of And, in making that connection, we come full circle to

representatives of the holiness and spiritual maturity to which all of us are called.

the first place. degree it gets fulfilled, but why this criterion is important in more useful for our purposes to ask, not how and to what getting bogged down in the whole question of miracles, it's recognize saints, no such criterion exists. Rather than Significantly, among the various Anglican churches who process that makes many modern people uncomfortable. two documented miracles. To this day, this is the part of the incorporated this principle in the famous criterion requiring century—in a way that the Christian East never did—it centralized the process of sanctity in the mid-fourteenth centers would spring up as healings or apparitions or other might ratify this by proclaiming a feast, and pilgrimage as an agent of God's power in their community. Bishops signs of sanctity was identified as miraculous power. The manifestations occurred. When the Roman Catholic Church who were convinced that one who was dead was still serving sanctity was something declared on the local level by people of supernatural power. For most of Christian history, in fact, saints could be known and identified because they were agents to focus on the one that makes us the most nervous. In Late Antiquity and through the medieval periods, one of the key Now, what may these strong positive signs be? I'd like

Truthfully, it's all about connections. The point about miracles originally was that it established proof that the saint was hooked into the life of God and was serving as a conduit of God's grace and power to the local community. Furthermore, most of the miracles that are described in the medieval lives of the saints aren't terribly original. A disciple of Saint Benedict might do something that Elisha did, or healings and meal multiplications mirror what Jesus did. What were these people doing, just copying scripture?

No. They were, in fact, *imitating* scripture. When the saints either performed or were thought to have performed biblical sorts of miracles, it confirmed that they were participating within a continuity of sanctity that points directly back to scripture and to Christ himself. The Christian life—the holy life—was about embodying scripture, not only by following its guidelines but also in receiving the same graces the biblica personages enjoyed. Imitation of the saints and imitation of the scriptures ultimately point to the imitation and the scriptures

physical death. The prayer book encapsulates this notion in but who are still fellow workers with us in the kingdom of we're remembering those around us whom we see no longer culture and church culture. The secular culture has days these two collects: recognition that this baptismal connection is not severed by God. Recovering a true baptismal ecclesiology requires the It's not so with the Church. When we remember the saints, national story. They are dead, gone, and fondly remembered important historical figures who are a significant part of our Luther King Day, and so forth-and they do it to celebrate that celebrate certain individuals-Presidents' Day, Martin sense. And that's precisely the difference between secular precisely proof that you're not dead, at least not in the usual alive-it's another to do so when you're dead. Because this is It's one thing to show evidence of holy power when you're

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom all our intercessions are acceptable through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns forever and ever. *Amen* (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 250).

O God, the King of saints, we praise and glorify your holy Name for all your servants who have finished their course in your faith and fear: for the blessed Virgin Mary: for the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs; and for all your other righteous servants, known to us and unknown; and we pray that, encouraged by their examples, aided by their prayers, and strengthened by their fellowship, we also may be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (The Book of Common Prayer, p.504).

The proper theme here is fellowship, connection, and continuity. The saints pray for us, love, and remember us, just as we love, remember, and pray for those we see no longer. The celebration of saints' days gives us an opportunity to honor and thank those who pray for us, to lift up their examples before our eyes, and to point back to Christ himself who gave them gifts of grace and courage in their trials.

Just as the seasons of the Church Year foreground the great religious affections that motivate us as Christians—love, joy, penitence, hope, etc.—the saints show us what these affections look like lived out in incarnate lives. Some favor one or two affections over the others, but each one of them helps us get a better sense of what Christian maturity looks like. As the seasons show us different facets of Christ, so the saints demonstrate for us what his message of love, hope, and redemption is like in different times and places. By living with and praying the temporal calendar and sanctoral calendar in the prayer book, we find ourselves formed by and drawn into the life of Christ and his saints. Praying through these times and seasons shapes us in their image and incorporates us into their midst.