

In their attempt to wipe out the Jewish people for all time, the leaders of the German 3rd Reich operated the now infamous system of concentration camps in which slaughter was carried out on an industrial scale. There perished in those camps men and women who could have made a major contribution to German and European civilisation had not the bizarre concept of a pure Arian race blinded its adherents to the intellectual and cultural riches of the men, women and children they consigned to the flames. In one camp however there was a group of musicians who, prior to the war, had been at the top of their field. These were allowed to survive, often forced to perform for the senior officers, providing an element of culture in the midst of barbarity.

After the war, this group was asked to perform at a concert. The final item was a piece composed by the conductor while they were in the camp. It had a strange haunting melody, using combinations of instruments you would not normally come across. After the concert the piece was much admired. Someone asked the conductor; ‘What inspired you to choose that particular combination of instruments for this piece?’ To which the conductor replied, ‘Those were the only instruments we had to work with.’ I want to take this idea ‘These are the only instruments we have to work with’ into our thoughts on Christian pilgrimage on this All Saints Day.

In the context of our 11:00 Service we are celebrating the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. At the close the Service we say together the Post Communion Prayer:

Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the spiritual food
of the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.

‘We offer you our souls and bodies’ - These are the only instruments we have to work with. What is it we offer? What is it this child we baptise this morning has to offer? We bring our DNA, our genetic make up. This will determine the colour of my eyes, my hair,

my skin colour, my height, my build. It will probably influence my temperament, possibly my predisposition to certain diseases. But we are of course more than just the sum our genes, more than just pre-programmed machines. Part of our understanding of who we are is that of being ones ‘made in the image of God’. There is something in each one of us that reflects the divine. It may be obscured, it may be shadowed by sin, by our human imperfection but there is something in each one of us that reflects, that shows something of the God who made us.

After the Signing of the Cross in the service of Baptism, there is the prayer for the child:

**May almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness,
restore in you the image of his glory,
and lead you in the light and obedience of Christ.**

**‘Restore in you the image of his glory, lead you in the
light and obedience of Christ.’**

Our Christian pilgrimage, our journey into Christ, our response to the call laid upon us in baptism to be saints; this is a process of growing into the person God wants me to be, of the Kevin I am becoming the Kevin God wants me to be; one who more faithfully shows something of the image of his glory.

In this I bring to God the person I am, in all the strengths and limitations God has given me, all the frailty and failure of my service and ask him to take me and use me in his service. In the words of hymn 310

Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me.
Break me, melt me,
mould me, fill me.
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me.

We offer him our souls and bodies, the only instruments I have to offer. The DNA of my makeup and all the challenges and opportunities that presents me with; the spark of the divine image that God has planted within me and the offering of my life and with that the strength God has offered to those who seek to follow.

All Saints is a reminder that I do all this not in isolation but as part of a community, in communion with those in different circumstances, backgrounds and traditions, in communion furthermore with those who have gone before, who have offered their souls and bodies in worship and service down through the ages. And so as part of that fellowship transcending space and time,

we offer him our sacrifice of thanks and praise
and lift our voice to join the song of heaven,
for ever praising him and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

and in our Post Communion Prayer this All Saints Day we pray:

May we who have shared at this table
as strangers and pilgrims here on earth
be welcomed with all your saints
to the heavenly feast on the day of your kingdom;

As so as we welcome young Zachary into the fellowship of the Church at the beginning of his own earthly pilgrimage, we remember with thanksgiving those who have gone before us, who in their own time offered themselves in all the strengths and weaknesses God gave them and the ways in which God worked in and through them. In fellowship with them we offer ourselves, the only instruments we have, asking only that God may take us and use us in his service for the advancement of his Kingdom.