Expanding the Communion of Saints

All Saints Year C || November 2, 2025, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Hanover, MA 02339 || Daniel 7:1–3, 15–18; Psalm 149; Ephesians 1:11–23; Luke 6:20–31 ||The Rev. Amy Whitcomb Slemmer, Esq.

I'll admit, I really appreciated the extra hour this morning. The light this time of year feels softer, the pink hues linger across the horizon a bit longer, and having time for a second cup of coffee feels like a small miracle. Of course, in my experience, babies don't recognize Daylight Savings Time, so I suspect that little Mia didn't give Mark and Ashley much of a break, and Haley and Kirk probably didn't get an extra hour of grace from Annie's routine either.

Still, what a joy to gather on this beautiful morning—to welcome new life in baptism, to remember and honor those saints in light who have gone before us, and to launch our season of stewardship as a living expression of gratitude for all that God has entrusted to us.

From the outset of today's liturgy, we have been surrounded by names—those of the dearly departed, spoken aloud and carried in our hearts. At St. Andrew's, we stand in a long, holy lineage: 300 years of accumulated faith, joy, heartbreak, love, and renewal. This community has endured the tides of time and the challenges of history because faithful people, generation after generation, have declared this to be their spiritual home.

Today, we add two more names to that great communion: Annie and Mia. With their baptism, they become part of the Body of Christ, inheritors of God's promise and participants in the unfolding of God's Kingdom.

As a congregation, we affirm not only their belovedness but also our shared belief that they—like all people—are made in the image of God. I'll confess, I find it easy to see God's image in babies and children. Their curiosity, their laughter, their unguarded wonder—it's all right there, shining through.

But when we renew our baptismal covenant today, we also reaffirm something far more challenging: that *everyone* is made in God's image. Everyone. Even the people who frustrate or offend us, the ones whose actions we find odious or incomprehensible. This is part of the holy work of being Christian—seeing Christ where we least expect Him, and loving as God loves, not as convenience allows.

This morning's reading from Daniel helps frame that challenge. Daniel's vision of beasts rising from the sea may sound chaotic or strange to us, but those beasts symbolize the empires and fears that dominate human life—the forces of greed, violence, and pride that rise up again and again. And yet, amid all that turmoil, Daniel offers a steady promise: *"The holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess it forever."*

That assurance—the permanence of God's kingdom and God's peace—anchors us. It reminds us that beneath the chaos of history, God's law of love endures.

Mia and Annie, and indeed all of us, are heirs to that same promise. We are God's beloved children, inheritors of divine light, participants in a covenant that offers both comfort and calling. God promises to be with us—to comfort when we are weary, to strengthen when we falter, and to correct us when we lose our way.

But inheritance, in God's economy, is not passive. It invites participation. To be a child of God is to join in God's mission: to bring light to dark places, to seek peace where there is strife, and to embody love where the world expects indifference or contempt.

That's why today's Gospel—the Beatitudes—feels like such a gift on All Saints' Sunday. If you ever wonder whether you're living the life God intends, return to these verses. The Beatitudes are our blueprint for sainthood. They turn the world's assumptions upside down, declaring that those who mourn, who hunger, who are persecuted, who long for peace and righteousness—*they* are the blessed ones.

And to those of us who are not poor, hungry, or reviled at this moment, the Beatitudes issue an invitation: to use our abundance and comfort not for complacency but for compassion. We are called to stand in solidarity with those who struggle, to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us, to do to others as we would have them do to us.

This is the work of saints—not perfect people, but faithful people. Saints are those who keep showing up with open hearts and willing hands, trusting that love has the final word.

When we baptize Annie and Mia, we promise—on their behalf—to live by those values. To help them learn that God's love is wide enough to hold their joy and their sorrow, their

questions and their convictions. We pledge to stand beside their parents and godparents, supporting them in the hard and holy work of raising children in faith.

And as a parish, we also renew our shared commitment—to be stewards of this community and its ministry. Stewardship is not merely about maintaining a building or meeting a budget; it's about carrying forward the mission that has been entrusted to us by the saints who came before. It's about ensuring that St. Andrew's continues to be a beacon of light and hope—for these children, and for generations yet to come.

When I look at this congregation—at faces of every generation, at the saints we have loved and lost, and the new life we welcome today—I see continuity. I see the body of Christ, alive and well, holding together past, present, and future in one great act of thanksgiving.

Annie and Mia join a chorus that stretches across centuries—a choir of saints and angels singing God's love into being. They will grow up in this household of faith, surrounded by prayer, nourished by grace, and, if statistics hold true, eventually testing the patience of their parents. When that day comes, may we—the community that made promises on their behalf—stand ready to remind them of who they are: beloved, baptized, and blessed.

As we welcome these children into the communion of saints, I want to end with words from **Kahlil Gibran**, the Lebanese-American poet and mystic, whose reflection on children captures something of the sacred trust baptism represents:

> Your children are not your children.
> They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
> They come through you but not from you,
> And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.
>
> You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
> For they have their own thoughts.
> You may house their bodies but not their souls,
> For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
>
> You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.
> The Archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,
> and bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.
> Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness;
> For even as He loves the arrow that flies,
> so He loves also the bow that is stable.

On this All Saints' Sunday, may we remember that we, too, are God's arrows—sent forth by love, shaped by community, and steadied by grace.
May we live as saints-in-the-making: faithful, flawed, and radiant with the light of Christ.

Amen+