

A baptism on All Saints Day gives us the opportunity “remember our baptism and be thankful.” We have been given a message of hope; a message this world desperately needs to hear; a message of hope the world will only hear from the Church of Jesus Christ.

The message is this: Because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, no more death – life!

A baptism on All Saints Day invites us to proclaim that message by the way we live our lives. This is our mission that we are asking one another to commit ourselves to in 2016. Our life style looks forward with expectant hope to the good things that God will do and looks around to see the good things God is doing right now. With the people of God in all times and in all places, we add our voices to the song of triumph in Isaiah:

Isaiah 25:9 (NRSV)

⁹ It will be said on that day,

Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.

This is the LORD for whom we have waited;

let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Christian hope is far more than rose colored glasses; Christian hope gives us the capacity to see the world as it is, to own the reality with a clarity that allows us to respond to the challenge creatively.

All Saints Day is when we celebrate the lives of those saints who went before us who did just that.

A recent trip to the University of Pittsburgh found me on holy ground; no, not Heinz Field, I was in Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood, and I was reminded of the witness this ordained Presbyterian minister offered us all; a witness that inspires us still and challenges us to a truly alternative life style with his simple song,

So, let's make the most of this beautiful day.

Since we're together we might as well say:

Would you be mine?

Could you be mine?

Won't you be my neighbor?

Won't you please,

Won't you please?

Please won't you be my neighbor?

That’s a song that changed the world; it’s still changing the world; it’s a song of hope; a song that says: I believe in a world where I don’t have to be afraid of people who do not look like me, act like me, believe like me, or live like me. I don’t have to see them as a threat to my existences; I believe I can see them as my neighbor, for I am living in hope: No more death-life!

In February of 1999, Fred Rogers was inducted into the Television Hall of Fame.

This is an excerpt from his speech (emphasis added).

Fame is a four-letter word; and like tape or zoom or face or pain or life or love, what ultimately matters is what we do with it.

I feel that those of us in television are chosen to be servants. It doesn't matter what our particular job, we are chosen to help meet the deeper needs of those who watch and listen--day and night!

The conductor of the orchestra at the Hollywood Bowl grew up in a family that had little interest in music, but he often tells people he found his early inspiration from the fine musicians on television.

Last month a thirteen-year-old boy abducted an eight-year-old girl; and when people asked him why, he said he learned about it on TV. 'Something different to try,' he said. 'Life's cheap; what does it matter?'

Well, life isn't cheap. It's the greatest mystery of any millennium, and television needs to do all it can to broadcast that ... to show and tell what the good in life is all about.

But how do we make goodness attractive? By doing whatever we can do to bring courage to those whose lives move near our own--by treating our 'neighbor' at least as well as we treat ourselves and allowing that to inform everything that we produce.

Who in your life has been such a servant to you ... who has helped you love the good that grows within you? Let's just take ten seconds to think of some of those people who have loved us and wanted what was best for us in life--those who have encouraged us to become who we are tonight--just ten seconds of silence.

[Ten seconds elapse.]

No matter where they are--either here or in heaven--imagine how pleased those people must be to know that you thought of them right now.

We all have only one life to live on earth. And ..., we have the choice of encouraging others to demean this life or to cherish it in creative, imaginative ways. (From *The World According to Mister Rogers* (Kindle Locations 540-558)).

We have the choice; we have the message of hope that can change lives and give life; there is a day coming, a day of the Lord, when the song of the saints will be heard.

Until that day comes, we are given this day; this day to choose how we will live – in fear or in faith.

Pennside, choose to live in faith. Choose to live in hope. Choose to live in love.

So, let's make the most of this beautiful day.

Since we're together we might as well say:

Would you be mine?

Could you be mine?

Won't you be my neighbor?

Won't you please,

Won't you please?

Please won't you be my neighbor?

Pennside, let us witness together to our hope in 2016: No more death-life! Amen.