

BLESSINGS ALWAYS

November 3, 2021

Association Minister Message

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UNLESS. "UNLESS it is the Lord who builds the house, the builders' work is pointless. UNLESS it is the Lord who protects the city, the guard on duty is pointless." (Psalm 127:1-2, CEB). The words used in public discourse these days are destructive, belittling of so-called enemies, seem so thoughtless and mean-spirited. A friend of mine told me that his extended family can no longer get together for family celebrations because there is so much anger and shouting at each other. It is not just about politics but there is now antagonism against faith understandings of each other's position about what it means to be a Christian. It got to the point that grace before the meal was eliminated because of what might be said in the prayer *UNLESS* it was spoken using certain words.

This past week was the celebration of All Saints Day. In some traditions saints are chosen for their special spiritual gifts and graces of miracle sharing. Others know saints who have made a difference in their lives and we honor them for the many blessings given to us in our lifetime. Saints do not have to die to be so honored. However, at *"Services of Thanksgiving for Those Who Have Died,"* we do memorialize persons who touched our lives in special ways by naming them saints. As one hymn reminds us, *"I sing a song of the saints of God...and I mean to be one too."*

The Psalmist reminds us that *UNLESS* God is the builder of who we are, all things are *"pointless"* (*"in vain"* NRSV). *UNLESS* we affirm the Creator God in each of us, animosities continue between family members, neighbors and nations. Saints have a way of being kind, concerned and tolerant of others *"...to heal the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to those who are bound."* (Isaiah 61). Saints listen and act (*"minister"*) to others out of love, respect and care, for without being Christ-centered, scripture inspired and Spirit led our lives are *"pointless/in vain"* and chaos ensues. *UNLESS* we know who we and whose we are, there is no foundation upon which to build our lives. *UNLESS "...and I mean to be one too."*
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