Friends, may grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

All Saints’ Day has a bittersweet quality to it. We mourn the absence of our deceased loved ones. Parents, spouses, grandparents, yes, and sometimes children, too. Dear friends taken too soon or at the end of a long and fruitful life. Neighbors, co-workers, teachers, congregational friends.

We miss them day after day. But we also remember them with fondness. We’re strengthened by their memory. And we rejoice that they now dwell in the eternal light of Christ. It’s a bittersweet remembrance, this All Saints’ Day.

The Saints. They’re not just the superheroes of faith, like Martin Luther, Mother Theresa and St. Augustine. It’s all of us who live in Christ! We have been sanctified – made holy – but not by anything we’ve accomplished.

St. John addresses this in his letter of Revelation. He asks, “Who is this host arrayed in white?” The answer is, “These are the ones who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.”

That’s what makes us holy, that’s what makes us saints. We’ve been sanctified through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. It isn’t anything we’ve done! It’s the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That’s how saints are made.

Saints are ordinary people. Until you get to know them. Then they’re YOUR saints! They’re anything but ordinary! These saints have populated our lives. They’ve delighted us, infuriated us. Their actions and words have shaped us into who we are. They’ve given us direction. They’ve supported us through trouble and sorrow; we’ve shared meals and joy. Some of them we’ve only known by reputation, like the great, great grandfather whose stories live on across multiple generations.

Each one of them is unique and special. In their own way they have reflected the light of Christ. Their points of light have created a beautiful constellation above and before us. They point us to the great Light that no darkness can overcome.

As a man who grew up in a family of knitters, I’ve always loved the prayer of the day for All Saints. It begins, “Almighty God, you have KNIT your people together in one communion, in the mystical body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Knitting takes one long string and intertwines it. The varied loops go under and over in such a way that they create an intricate mesh. To say that we’ve been knit together into the communion of saints is very appropriate. Out of the oneness of Christ, we form a bonded community. Together, we’ve been knitted into the body of Christ.

This communion is something we feel. The comings and goings of our lives, our ups and downs and ins and outs, they’ve intertwined us. Together we’re thick in Christ!

As we earlier mentioned the names of our departed Hope saints, I felt the resonances of kinship. And even more: friendship. We have forged bonds in this communion of saints!

Friendship has a warmth to it. You probably have some friends that you don’t see every day. They’ve moved away, or they go to a different school now. But when you have occasion to get together, you discover that the spark of your friendship has remained kindled. You pick up right where you last left off.

This everlasting friendship is certainly true in our community of saints. Those saints victorious, they who have completed all the days of their lives, their significance doesn’t diminish. The fire of their friendship stays lit within.

“True friendships are lasting because true love is eternal. A friendship in which heart speaks to heart is a gift from God, and no gift that comes from God is temporary or occasional. All that comes from God participates in God’s eternal life. Love between people, when given by God, is stronger than death. In this sense, true friendships continue beyond the boundary of death. When you have loved deeply that love can grow even stronger after the death of the person you love.”

We have been knit together in one communion, into the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ. It’s Christ’s love that binds and sustains us together. Formed from Christ’s love, these ties that bind are stronger than death, for his love and life have overcome death. In his resurrection life and love, the bonds within the communion of saints remain unbroken.

On this day, many churches light candles as they remember the saints who have passed from this temporal realm into eternal life. These lights remind us of the light no darkness can overcome. The darkness of Christ’s tomb has been unsealed to reveal Easter light.

This light, this blessed fellowship, lights our pathway. May it guide us in truth, support us in the mystical communion, and surround us in the love that cannot die. Blessed are we.

Amen.