
Holy Hacks: November 1, 2019

By the Rev. Julia Mitchener

I was taking my children to school recently—it was “one of those days.” We had overslept; nobody could think of anything they wanted to eat for breakfast; library books and math homework had gone missing. We pulled out of the driveway in a funk. I hadn’t had time for coffee and could feel a headache coming on. One child wanted to listen to music; the other did not. Whining and kicking of seats ensued. Then, all of a sudden, my daughter shrieked and pointed out the window, “Look, Mommy, the trees have turned into gold!” We craned our necks and gasped as we saw the tops of some tall oaks glowing in the early morning light. Just like that, our bad mood was broken. “Wow!” my not-very-easily-impressed nine-year-old let slip. “That is so amazing!”

“Saints,” the writer Frederick Buechner once observed, “are people who point us to God.” Saints are those who, in the midst of a world filled with the mundane and the profane, can pick out that which is wondrous and holy, bringing it to the attention of the rest of us so that we can enjoy it, too.

Today—All Saints’ Day—we remember those individuals throughout history who have been particularly gifted “pointers.” We recall those who, even in the midst of great pain, terror, oppression, and persecution, showed a unique capacity for uncovering that which is just and lovely and liberating and true. People like Martin Luther King, Jr., who pointed out the dream of God’s Beloved Community in a country where black children were getting bombed during Sunday School. People like Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky, 19th century Anglican Bishop of Shanghai, China, who, after suffering a debilitating stroke, found a way to finish translating the Bible into Mandarin using the two fingers he could still move. People like Dame Julian of Norwich, who, within the confines of her tiny cell in a medieval English church, saw visions of such expansive beauty that what she wrote about them still captivates readers across the globe.

On November 1st, we remember these giants of our faith, these heroes who have helped give us glimpses of God. We also remember that we can be pointers, too. In our own way and in our own time, we can “give an account of the hope that is in us.” It is so important that we do this for our children. That in the midst of all the ugliness that exists in our world, we are intentional about showing them examples of beauty and of God’s love for God’s creation. Our little ones need this in order to become adults who can hope and dream and forgive and trust. They need this in order to maintain what the prayer book calls “the gift of joy and wonder in all [God’s] works.”

Important, too, is giving our children the chance to be pointers for us. Taking time, when they discover something especially awe-inspiring, whether it be the sight of autumn leaves swirling in a puddle, a friend who shares their passion for collecting locust shells, or even a particularly perfect scoop of chocolate ice cream—taking time to marvel over their discoveries with them honors our children’s place in God’s family and the important role they have to play in telling God’s story.

I wish you all a blessed All Saints’ Day, full of joy and wonder.