

## Thought for the Day, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020

**‘None of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.’**

### **Romans 14.7**

Social distancing, refraining from hugs, etc., has made us more aware than ever that we are created to live in community. True, the Christian Church has always included a few who lead a solitary life as hermits or anchoresses, but they are still part of the Body of Christ and have often been counsellors to other believers whose lives remain rooted in the world. All Christians belong first and foremost to Christ. Paul continues in this text from Romans: *If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord.* There’s no social distancing from that relationship! It is a bond which death itself cannot destroy. The text concludes: *So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.*

This truth strengthens us when we are faced with a bereavement, as many have been in recent days. Death can seem such a barrier, shutting us out from where our loved ones have gone. We can see nothing of their present state. Many charlatans have traded on our ignorance. But the one great fact which remains is that they with us, if we have trusted Christ, belong to him. We are all one in Christ Jesus, who overcame the barrier of death, and promises that *you also may be where I am.* (John 14.3). It’s an unbroken fellowship of the living and the departed, called in the Apostles’ Creed the ‘communion of saints’.

In this context, as everywhere in the Bible, the word ‘saint’ doesn’t refer to a special group of men and women declared by the Church to have lived such holy lives that they have gone straight to heaven. Rather, it’s a word for all those, living and departed, who are ‘in Christ’. By the time of the Reformation the year had become almost full of ‘saints’ days’, kept for remembering those individuals who had been made saints.

Archbishop Cranmer wrote a new collect for All Saints’ Day (1 November)

which refocused our attention on the communion we still have with all those Christian brothers and sisters who have gone before us:

*Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord...*

There's a hymn by Richard Baxter about this which includes these verses:

*As for my friends, they are not lost;  
The many vessels of Thy fleet,  
Though parted now, by tempests tossed,  
Shall safely in the haven meet.*

*The heavenly hosts, world without end,  
Shall be my company above;  
And Thou, my best and surest Friend,  
Who shall divide me from Thy love?*

I'll finish by thanking all those who have helped me along the way with their thoughts for the day, and pray that everyone may stay safe in the love of Christ until we all finally meet up, whether in Bayston Hill or in that better place with Christ above. .

John Tiller