

I sing a song of the saints of God
Patient and brave and true
Who toiled and fought and lived and died for the Lord they loved and knew

And one was a doctor. Saint Luke the blessed physician was a doctor.

Well, lots of them are doctors. One doctor might have accosted you - in church or in school or while you were sitting on his examining table wrapped in a paper towel - with "Hi, my name is Bill Greer - why aren't you an Episcopalian?" It didn't matter too much what you said, not even "my whole family has been Episcopalian for 500 years". His hearing wasn't great, and so he'd just wait for you to stop talking and then answer: "Well, you ought to be an Episcopalian."

Doc Greer never fazed me because he was so much like another saint I loved and knew - Dr. Robert Sigler, my grandfather. Once I was sitting in the den with my grandmother when the phone rang and I heard her say, "Yes, this is Mrs. Sigler. Yes, I'm married to Dr. Sigler. What has he done? Stolen a marine vessel from the Navy? Sailing toward Cuba? Well, you go out there and you tell him that supper is at 6 pm and I am not making him a plate, and if he is not back here at 6 he will get nothing until morning. Goodbye!" Click. Dr. Sigler did slam loudly into the back door an hour or two later swearing a blue haze. "You'll never believe what happened to me! Those blankety-blank idiots at the Navy are liars and cheats. What? Yes, I borrowed one of their lousy boats. And those blankety-blanks would not give me my trophy because I sailed in the Seniors' race and they said I belonged with the blankety-blank Old Salts!!! This country is going to hell in a handbasket. Where's dinner?"

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Nobody in this life ever called Bill Greer or Bob Sigler meek. But that is why they made such incredible role models as saints for so many of us. Because they charted their own course, and they got in your face - but when it came to the Lord Jesus Christ, both those mighty men were on their knees. Bill Greer never charged for a Camp Capers physical, even if you stopped in his office without an appointment on the way to camp because you had forgotten. Who knows how many kids he sent to camp! Bill never thought it was not okay to come to church, and he let everybody in town know it. Bob Sigler served on building committees and Layreader teams and he went to the 7:30 service before the sailboat race - but he also did two things that had a bigger impact on me. He took my questions seriously as a teenager and could talk about his own journey of faith, which else nobody around me at that time did - and he kept the current Forward Day by Day on the back of the john, which taught me that all of life was holy, and faith was not just a social event for him. If those two men could be committed Christians, then there was something to this beyond what I could see with all the trappings of midcentury parish life. Their meekness in service, in contrast to their gigantic personalities showed me a way to the kingdom.

Some of them are queens. Say, Margaret of Scotland.

I never knew actual royalty, but I have known Betsy Markland Brinsmade and Sherry Sigler Anderson – women who could have spent all their time on family and social life, women who did not especially have to contend with poverty, at least not very often – but who served in Altar Guilds and Layreader Corps and various guilds, EFM, Cursillo – you name it. Betsy chaired the national ECW and ran Triennial, my mother drove all over South Texas on a diocesan commission to strengthen small churches (a cause suddenly very dear to my heart).

These two women exercised significant leadership in years when women could not serve on vestries or be ordained, or even serve as ushers! But they believed in the cause of Christ enough to serve in a structure that did not fully honor the women's gifts. I remember during the 70's talking to my mother about the International Women's Strike that feminists were planning and her dismissal of that as an "the stupidest thing she had ever heard of". "Why?" I asked. "It might work!" Because, she said, people would die. If women stopped working for three days, a lot of people would die. That wouldn't be right. It has to happen another way. **Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.**

Some are shepherdesses on the green. Like Joan of Arc.

When I came to Saint Stephen's fourteen years ago, Judy Holmes was the vestry person in charge of Christian Education, and I basically went to work for her. She set up the whole process with focus groups and long-range plans, and then she gradually stepped away into her full time job mentoring special needs kids in the public schools. Later she answered Patrick's call to stand on the green grass and "shepherdess" people into worship and into the life of the church. I have watched her shepherd her neighbors, almost literally, walking them around the pastures until they at least encounter Christ. I hope you all are prepared for a new building campaign to expand this place to hold all the people she'll herd in here!

Blessed are the merciful, those who value the souls of others more than they value their own comfort, for they shall receive mercy .

**They loved their Lord so dear, so dear, and his love made them strong
And the followed the right for Jesus' sake the whole of their good lives long.**

And one was a soldiers – like Martin of Tours

A lot are soldiers here – as we see every veterans' day – from our beloved Fr. Ted Knies, who just would not stop harassing the Third Reich no matter how many times they shot him out of the sky, to Mikey McDaniel – who in his black beret and goatee and with his weird Star Wars Cantina electric string bass just did not fit my mental picture of an army dude – and yet he was bound and determined to serve our country and defend our values and freedoms, and by gum he has done it.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

And one was a priest – Like John Donne who was a saint with a small "s"

I grew up surrounded by a great cloud of priests – or at least was very cloudy while I was growing up – I thought being a priest was just normal. Uncle James was ordained when I was in early elementary school and I learned a lot – from his ordination service when Raynell Perkins looked in the alms basin when it came up to the altar and said – “That won’t do it, folks – pass that plate again!” to the weekends I’d go up to visit in San Antonio and we’d head out on Saturday morning with Uncle James not wearing his collar because we were going to fix an old lady’s porch because that’s part of what a Christian does. I guarantee you that none of us at that time knew that was priestly formation for me, but I suppose God knew. Later I had the privilege of working with Bishop Earl, who is another amazing role model, showing up at every Free Sale, putting up with my liturgical innovations at Halftime, modeling a graceful combination of decorum and flexibility and graceful good humor that I can only hope to achieve in another thirty years. And of course my friend and mentor Patrick, without whom I would not be standing in the place. Although Patrick has taught me all kinds of administrative and pastoral and preaching and technical priestcraft things – I mean, you might be able to tell it, but I am the most thoroughly trained 2nd year priest in the DWTX and maybe ever in the history of the world– the important thing that I learned was none of that. It was that priest is only a priest when they are the real thing, and Patrick is the real thing. I learned what it means to be a Christian. I learned that there is always hope, that God’s dream for us is always right there waiting, that Christ’s hand always reaches toward us. I learned that nobody is ever beyond redemption, that nobody is expendable, and that forgiveness is a non-negotiable requirement of the Christian life – everything we do grows out of forgiveness. That is the Gospel and I learned it from Patrick.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

And some were slain by a fierce wild beast. Like Ignatius.

We have known folks who have faced other beasts – Today I think of Joe Alsup and Estella Ann Newcomb and Kim Kirchoff. Kim fought off the beast for a long time, but it finally triumphed – over her body. But like Christ, Kim trampled down death by death. She died not only the most organized death ever died (directing who would be present, where they would stand, what they would wear. . .), but she inspired us all by arriving at that shore fully at peace, smiling – confident that when that mist lifted, Jesus would be standing there in the boat waiting to take her to the other side and that the faithful were assembled on the strand with waiting to receive her. Like the hymn we sang last week, with David leading the choir and Mary singing “Magnificat” and all the others who have gone before.

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

They lived not only in ages past – there are hundreds of thousand still.

The world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus’ will.

Today, All Saints Sunday, we especially celebrate the newest saints: **Brody Vaughan + Remi Barlow**, Whose name is written today in the Book of the Saints – who joins the great cloud of witnesses – those people no longer bound by space and time and death, those people who are always present to one another in Christ, whether we can see each other or not -

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-the whole family of God, the living and the dead, those whom we love and those whom we hurt, bound together in Christ by sacrament, prayer and praise –

Forever and ever, world without end.

Amen!