

**All Saints' Day and All Saints' Sunday**  
**Cycle C RCL**  
**Revised**

**Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18**

The Book of Daniel contains stories and visions that circulated among the religious supporters of the Jewish rebellion against Antiochus IV Epiphanes during the years 167-164 BCE. In the Hebrew Bible the book is in two languages: Hebrew (1:1-2:4a and 8:1-12:13) and Aramaic (2:4b-7:28). The Greek translation of Daniel (the Septuagint or LXX) contains additional material: the stories of Susanna (Daniel 13, LXX) and Bel and the Dragon (Daniel 14, LXX) as well as the Song of the Three Young Men (reproduced partially in our BCP as Canticles 12 and 13) and the Song of Azariah, all of which occur between Daniel 3:23 and 3:24 of the Aramaic text. A recently discovered Aramaic document from Qumran called the Prayer of Nabonidus contains a story much like Daniel 4:28-37 and attests the popularity of Daniel legends during this period. The figure of Daniel may have derived from Canaanite stories about the hero Dan'el, and some interpreters have interpreted our passage in the light of the appearance of the Canaanite god Ba'al in the court of the high god El. Our passage from the last Aramaic chapter of the book sets the vision within the time of the "little horn" (Antiochus IV) and promises that God is about to take the kingdom from Antiochus and give it to those who have fought with the Maccabees to reclaim the temple and the land, the "holy ones" or "saints" of the "Most High" (*qaddishe-elyonin*).

**Psalms 149**

The *hymns* in Psalms 146-150 all begin and end with the expression *hallelu-jah*, "praise the LORD!" and we call them the Hallel Psalms. Opinions vary as to the meaning and placement of these final compositions. Some consider them a literary composition from the second temple. Others believe that only Psalms 149-150 come from a late period. Our psalm picks up a theme also found in Psalm 2 of Israel's king as an avenging ruler. The present psalm's reference to the music and dance of the temple liturgy reminds us of its joy and magnificence as it was in the first temple. Nostalgia?

**Ephesians 1:11-23**

Professor John Knox claimed that the author crafted this epistle as an introduction to a second volume or scroll of short letters ascribed to Paul. Because of Ephesians' heavy dependence upon Colossians, few commentators now believe that Paul was the actual author and assign authorship instead to an unknown student of Paul. Since the words "in Ephesus" (1:1) do not occur in several important Greek manuscripts of Ephesians, there is even substantial doubt about the epistle's destination. (The heretic Marcion, for instance, thought that it comprised an epistle to the Laodiceans.) In many respects, however, Ephesians faithfully represents Paul's thought as revealed in the indisputably genuine letters of the apostle. The benediction of verses 3-14 is a carefully elaborated expansion of the "pious blessing" expected in a Hellenistic letter, following the word *xaris* ("grace"). Only in v. 15 does the writer turn to the first item in his discourse: ostensibly the church's reputation for faithfulness, but really a statement about the revelation of God's power through Christ's resurrection and Christ's installation at God's right hand above all authority and dominion (vv. 19-23). The identification of the church as Christ's body with the entire *pleroma*, the "fullness" of all things comprises a surprising novelty.

**Luke 6:20-31**

Most of the material in this reading comes from "Q," the source of sayings used by Matthew and Luke but not by Mark. The "woes" in verses 24-26, however, amount to sayings from Q that Matthew omitted or sayings Luke appended. Luke's Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49) comprises less than a third of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-7:27), but other sayings from Matthew's Sermon on the Mount occur elsewhere in Luke. Jesus contrasts the happiness of his students ("disciples") in the face of poverty (v. 20b), hunger (v. 21a), sorrow (v. 21b), and hatred for the sake of the Son of Man (v. 22). Their happiness will be on account of their reward "in heaven" which they will share with the prophets who suffered persecution before them (v. 23; see 11:47-51, 13:33-34, Acts 7:52). This School of Jesus, then, comprises the community of the end of this age, a school whose teaching recapitulates the prophets' faithfulness even unto death.