

Sunday after All Saints Day  
Ecclesiasticus 44:1-10, 13-14, Psalm 49:1- 5, Matthew 5:1-12  
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I put out my fall and winter bird feeder last weekend. One of the many birds that come to feed from it is the nuthatch. The nuthatch has the distinction of being able to climb up and down tree trunks. When it climbs down looking for insects, it does so headfirst. We might say then that the nuthatch is the upside-down bird.

Unfortunately, people often live upside-down lives. They are poor, sad, hungry and thirsty, hurt or weak. The beatitudes, which we heard earlier, reverse the fortunes of people with upside-down lives – blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek and those who hunger and thirst for what’s right.

Maybe these upside-down people are like the ones in the reading from Ecclesiasticus “who have perished as though they had not lived.” (Ecclesiasticus 44:9) Yet we know we, too, can be turned upside down for a while as well when unwarranted circumstances strike. What is most important, however, whether we are upside-down or right-side-up, is our faith. The beatitudes suggest that the people whose lives are upside-down will more likely be “poor in spirit,” which actually means “rich in faith.” They are wholly dependent on God because they have little else to cling to.

We call such people saints and recognize them today because they are blessed by God – little people in the world, perhaps, but inheritors of the kingdom of heaven and the earth.

As I have done for a few years now, I invite you to think of someone you know who in a quiet way acted as a saint for you. This year I will light a votive candle in memory of and in thanksgiving for Art Arnold or Mr. Arnold as I called him. He was elderly and of slight frame when he hired me at the age of 21 to work as the third man, part time, in the lumber company he owned and ran – Arnold’s Lumber in Rhode Island.

Mr. Arnold was a devout Southern Baptist and probably a little skeptical of Episcopalians, but he was always kind and patient with me as I learned the business. The one story I will tell to illustrate his sainthood was when he had just purchased a brand new pickup truck for delivering small loads of lumber materials. Since we often had to back into delivery sites, the truck had side-view mirrors that stuck out well beyond the body, more than regular cars or trucks. They were custom-made for this purpose. The truck was not a week old when I was sent out to deliver various items to a location where I had to back down a narrow alleyway. I misjudged the

opening and mangled the passenger side mirror causing some damage to the right side of the body of the truck as well.

It was a long and dread-filled ride back to the yard. I fearfully went into the office and asked Mr. Arnold to come out and see what I had done. He wasn't happy, but he didn't fire me or make me feel terrible either. He simply said, "These things happen," and asked the other long-time employee, Everett, to fix the truck as best he could.

I will light a candle for the man who didn't diminish my light that day and taught me how to be a better Christian. I worked on and off for Arnold Lumber for the next 10 years until I moved to Virginia to start seminary.

You are now invited to come forward and light a candle in memory of or in honor of a saint in your life.