I speak to you in the name of our Creator, the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit, the one who heals, restores, and transforms us. Amen.

On this day we celebrate all the saints and loved ones who have gone before us. I confess I was a little confused as to why we were reading the beatitudes. But then it struck me. Oh, Jesus is describing the saints. Jesus is not telling people how to suffer better. He is naming where God already is among the suffering. It is a blessing spoken over people who are poor in spirit, grieving, meek, hungry, merciful, pure-hearted, peace-seeking, and often wounded for their faithfulness. These are the saints! The ones who have gone before us and the ones all around us today in St. Mary's!

But as I preached on this passage in February this year, I thought I would take the opportunity to do a little teaching on the creeds. When I have done spiritual formation for those preparing for baptism or confirmation we talk about the various creeds we use at St. Mary's. Our Creeds reflect our faith or set of beliefs. We use a number of different creeds. Some focus on what we believe. They are concerned we believe the right thing. This is called Orthodoxy (right belief). Examples of this are the Apostles's Creed and the Nicene Creed found on page 188 of your BAS. Others are focused on what we do, how we behave. This are called Orthopraxy (right action). Examples of these are the Hear O Israel found on page 53 of your BAS and the creed from the Iona Community in Scotland. If you look in your leaflet you will see two creeds side by side. The one on the left is the Apostles' Creed. You will notice that there is no action on our part, apart from belief. It is a creed concerned with right belief.

In the second century, Christians did not yet have a single, fixed document that we would recognize today as a creed. Instead, there was a much simpler practice, rooted in baptism. Those preparing for baptism were asked three questions: Do you believe in God the Father? Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit? The candidates responded to each question in turn. This baptismal confession was known as the Rule of Faith. It was a way of expressing the essential beliefs that Christians received, lived, and passed on.

Over the next two or three centuries, these baptismal statements gradually developed into a more familiar form. As the Church encountered theological controversies, particularly around the nature and divinity of Christ, the language became more precise. The Church needed to find ways of expressing more clearly what it believed about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

At some point in this development, an early Church Father attributed the twelve statements of the creed to the twelve apostles, suggesting that each apostle had contributed one. This gave the creed the name we know today: the Apostles' Creed. Attributing the creed to the Twelve was a way of claiming apostolic authority for a baptismal confession that had in fact grown organically out of the Roman church's teaching. By the seventh and eighth centuries, the Latin version had taken on a form very close to the one we use today, and it had spread throughout Western Europe. By the medieval period, it had become a familiar and established part of Western Christian worship, alongside the Nicene Creed. It was also taught to children and new Christians as a way of learning and remembering the foundations of the faith.

What is important for us to remember is that the Apostles' Creed did not arrive fully formed. It grew out of the Church's experience of baptism, worship, teaching, and reflection. Across generations, Christians sought words to express the faith they had received and the God they had encountered.

Are there statements in this creed which are challenging for you or you have questions about?

How about the Nicene Creed?

Now let's look at the creed from the Iona Community. Unlike the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed, this affirmation of faith is a contemporary expression, emerging from the life and spirituality of the Iona Community in Scotland. The Iona Community was founded in 1938 by George MacLeod, a Church of Scotland minister who believed that Christian faith needed to be lived out in the world, particularly alongside people experiencing poverty, injustice, and exclusion. The creed or affirmation we are looking at was written by Jan Sutch Pickard, a poet and liturgist closely associated with the Iona Community. Although we don't know precisely when it was composed, it has circulated in Iona worship resources from the late twentieth century onwards.

What makes this affirmation different from the ancient creeds is its emphasis. The ancient creeds give us a framework for expressing what Christians believe about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This creed takes a different approach. It asks us to consider what believing actually looks like when we live it out in the world. Notice its language. It speaks of God being present in darkness, uncertainty, conflict, and places where human courage is tested. It describes a "with-us God" who enters into our humanity and sits among us. There is a strong sense of God's

presence not simply in places of safety and comfort, but in the difficult and sometimes dangerous places of human experience. I really like that!

It also moves us towards action. Faith takes us beyond what is comfortable and familiar, into vulnerability, responsibility, and solidarity with those who live on the margins. It calls us to work for change, take risks, and participate in what it describes as "God's new community of hope." This reflects a distinctive emphasis within the Iona Community: that Christian spirituality and the pursuit of justice belong together. Prayer and action, contemplation and engagement with the world, are inseparable. It is important to recognize that this is not intended to replace the ancient creeds or provide a comprehensive statement of Christian doctrine. Rather, it offers a contemporary expression of what it means to live out the faith we profess. It reminds us that belief is not simply something we say together; it is something we are continually invited to embody.

Contrary to what some say today, the early church did not abandon right practice for right belief. Rather, the early Church valued both belief and action equally, but creeds became necessary tools for maintaining unity amid rapid expansion, theological diversity, and external pressure—not to replace ethical living, but to safeguard the theological foundation from which it flows.

We use the Apostles' Creed to ask the questions of faith in our baptism liturgy today. But did you ever notice that the next part of liturgy asks the Orthopraxy questions? See page 159 in your BAS. Please respond to the questions:

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

I will, with God's help.

Will you persevere in resisting the powers of evil and, whenever you fall short, will you repent, make amends, and return to God?

I will, with God's help.

Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?

I will, with God's help.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself?

I will, with God's help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

I will, with God's help.

Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation, and respect, sustain and renew the life of the Earth?

I will, with God's help.

I mean seriously, how cool is that? Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy all in one liturgy! It's not one or the other. It's both together.

And this brings us back to All Saints' Day. When we hear the word *saint*, we might think of people whose names have been written into the history of the Church. People like Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, or Oscar Romero. People whose faith and courage have inspired generations. And so we should. We give thanks for them. But the New Testament has a much broader understanding of sainthood. Paul regularly addresses ordinary members of Christian communities as saints. The word *saints* simply means holy ones, people who belong to God. It describes a community being shaped by God's grace. Think again about the Beatitudes. Jesus looks at people who are grieving, struggling, making peace, hungering for justice, showing mercy, and sometimes paying a price for their faithfulness. And he calls them blessed. These are the people of God's kingdom. These are the saints.

And this is where our two kinds of creeds come together. The saints are people who have received and carried the faith through generations. They have confessed their belief in God, in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. And they have tried, sometimes imperfectly, to live that faith in the world. They have prayed, loved, forgiven, worked for justice, cared for the vulnerable, and made peace. They have stumbled along the way, as we all do, and found the grace to begin again.

Today, as we remember those who have gone before us, we give thanks for the ways their lives have shaped our own. Some of them may have been people of extraordinary courage. Others may simply have been the people who showed up, who listened, who made room at the table, who loved us when we were difficult to love, and who helped us discover something of God's goodness. And I wonder who might be on your list? Whose faithfulness helped you become the person you are today? Whose life taught you something about God's love?

The wonderful thing about All Saints' Day is that it also turns our attention to the present. We are part of that same great company. We are still learning, still growing, still being transformed by the Holy Spirit. Every time we say, "I will, with God's help," we are renewing our place in that story. We don't have to be perfect. We don't have to have all the answers. We simply keep returning to God, keep learning to love, keep seeking justice, mercy, and peace, and keep allowing God's grace to work in us.

One day, someone may remember us in the same way. They may give thanks for something we said, something we did, or simply the way we were present in their lives. So let us celebrate the saints who have gone before us. Let us give

thanks for the saints sitting beside us. And let us continue, with God's help, to become the people God is calling us to be.

Amen.

AMEN.