



November 3, 2025

My Balcony People

May I be so bold as to quote John Wesley the father of Methodism? He called *All Saints Day* his "*favorite holy day*." In his journal Christmas passes with hardly a note and though his brother Charles wrote numerous hymns for Easter, including *Christ the Lord is Risen Today*, John simply acknowledges it in passing, but All Saints was his day to celebrate.

Over the centuries, we Protestants pretty well threw the saintly baby out with the holy bath water, leaving the veneration of saints to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox branches of the church. In my early days in ministry, we made a bigger deal about Reformation Day, Oct. 31, than we did All Saints on November 1. In more recent years, it seems we have rediscovered the day, albeit without the actual worship of the saints. It has become a day to honor not just *THE* saints of old, but *ALL* the saints who have blessed our lives and gone on to glory.

Rev. Bill Ritter, my predecessor in Birmingham, called them his "balcony people."

He was thinking about that balcony in the back of the sanctuary which we could view from the pulpit, and he was referring to the Book of Hebrews where it says,

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with perseverance the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the pioneer and

perfecter of our faith.” (Hebrews 12:1)

There they are.

Like the fans in The Big House (or Spartan Stadium if you prefer) they are gathered with one purpose—to cheer us on in the race which is set before us. There they are. The great cloud of witnesses, all the ones we have loved and lost, all those who have blessed us on the journey of faith, gathered in the stands to inspire us in the life of faith. There they are. **Our balcony people.**

The great hymn *For All the Saints* says it well and always brings me to tears:

*O blessed communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are thine. Alleluia.*

*And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong. Alleluia.*

Giving thanks for all the saints...my balcony people.

~Written by Jack Harnish

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