

"THE NIGHT THE LIGHTS WENT OUT"

A Sermon By

Rev. Philip A. C. Clarke

Park Avenue United Methodist Church  
106 East 86th Street  
New York, New York 10028  
November 15, 1987

## "THE NIGHT THE LIGHTS WENT OUT"

TEXT: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.  
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness  
has not overcome it."

(John 1: 4 and 5)

### INTRODUCTION

How does a preacher approach a Sunday like this when we are celebrating Dedication Sunday (and all that is involved) and also celebrating the ministry of music of a man who for twenty years - Sunday after Sunday - has helped to send so many of us out of here with a "song in our hearts" and ready to do battle with life once again? Indeed, we have been richly blessed, and none more so than myself!

I grew up in a musical home - a mother who played the piano, a father who loved to sing, a sister who studied organ and who even today is often at the organ console of a Church up in Stamford, Connecticut. And perhaps you won't believe this, but back when I was 17 I entered a singing contest in my hometown High School upstate and won first prize. I used the forty dollars I won to buy a recording of Handel's Messiah - those old shellac records and recorded by the Huddersfield Choral Group of England.

And once trying to impress Lyndon back in those early years I told him how I sang the baritone solos in my college choir's performance of Faure's Requiem, but he never picked up on that, inviting me to do it here.

### WHAT DOES A PREACHER SAY

But seriously, what does a preacher say and how does he go about trying to link these two concerns, to blend these two special notes together in harmony - Dedication Sunday and the celebration of 20 wonderful years of a ministry of music in a church like ours? You know, it's often been said that the choir is apt to be the battleground of many a church, but never so here...thanks to the gentleman who presides over it for us. Our occasional skirmishes ~~it seems to~~ me have been elsewhere.

I struck upon my sermon approach back in early August, one evening up in Saratoga - not at the race track, but at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center where I was listening to the cellist, Yoyo Ma, play. Sitting there I was reminded of something that happened there in that huge outdoor auditorium one July evening back in the mid seventies...or it may have been earlier.

### WHAT HAPPENED

Let me tell you what happened. We're told it was a warm, lovely Summer evening in late July. The gifted pianist, Rudolph Serkin, was the featured guest artist with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Performing Arts Center. The house lights were dimmed, and thus began a performance of Beethoven's Emperor Concerto for a capacity crowd that spilled out onto the green lawn around the Center.

Suddenly, well along in the First Movement, all the stage lights went out. In the inky blackness the orchestra could see neither the music nor the conductor, and the keyboard of the Steinway was enveloped in darkness.

The audience tensely anticipated an interruption, but the artist continued to play, never missing a beat of that difficult score, as though nothing had

happened. Two minutes of darkness seemed like an eternity, but finally the lights came back on and a ripple of applause ran through the auditorium. It was a magnificent display of musicianship which left most of the people in that audience just tingling. Picture it, if you can. Complete darkness and the pianist and orchestra kept right on playing.

KEEP THE MUSIC GOING

And herein rests a lesson or two for all of us on this special Sunday. First, we're reminded that someone needs to keep the music going when the lights go out. And surely this is part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ, part of what it means to be a Christian in today's world - to keep on playing Christ's melody even in times of darkness and discouragement...to keep that beat going.

It's so easy to let up on the music, especially when faced with some difficult, demanding and discouraging circumstance. It's hard to sing Christ's song especially when it's in danger of being downed out by the melodies of secularism and agnosticism. But this is what people of faith are asked to do. Admittedly the music is hard and the demands are high, for the great Composer of life has given us a magnificent score, one that calls for our best efforts - hard work, dedication, sacrifice. Yes, nothing but our very best. And His music is even more important than ever when the darkness and the gloom are threatening us. Let me paraphrase that verse which I put before you in the way of a text:

"The music rings through the darkness,  
and the darkness has never silenced it."

On more than one occasion I've said, "I'm sure glad Lyndon and the choir brought us through that service", recognizing that my effort fell a bit flat. Friends, there aren't many churches that I know of that enjoy or are blessed Sunday after Sunday with such a consistently high level of music as we have here. Praise God for it!

TO KEEP IT GOING

Now this talent and skill, if you will, to keep the strains of faith and of hope and of love alive...sounding...does not come by accident. In order for Rudolph Serkin to do what he did that night in Saratoga that Summer ten years ago took years of practice and discipline. For Lyndon Woodside to do what he does here or over at Carnegie Hall directing the Oratorio Society (incidentally Lyndon has a Grammy on his mantel at home) also took years of dedication and discipline. And for us to keep Christ's melody sounding in our world takes practice and dedication and discipline.

We know the music, the score, the passages, the great themes. And this takes time and effort. It calls for the discipline of study, of prayer, of giving, of serving. Yes, "only as we give does the beat go on".

If overtaken by some "dark night of the soul" and unable to see the next measure, this ability to keep playing will be provided by honest effort and by familiarity with the resources of the spirit. The faithful cultivation of some "holy habits" in the life of a person will support a Christian when the lights of his world are flickering. I lay this question on your heart: is your spirit being nourished properly so that when the time of testing comes you'll be able to keep on playing the melody that life has given you to play? Prayers, presence, gifts, service - here are some "holy habits" on which to build the notes of your life.

LIGHTS COME BACK ON

Another lesson we need to remember that's suggested by this incident is that the lights came back on that Summer night at the Performing Arts Center in Saratoga. Those two minutes of complete darkness must have seemed like an eternity, but it was only temporary.

The lights do come back on. You may be in darkness right now - the darkness of despair, or loneliness, or grief. But remember that the lights of love and faith, of joy and happiness do come back on. This I believe. While in the darkness it may seem to you like an eternity, but remember - it is only temporary.

What was that O Henry whispered on his death bed...something like "Turn up the lights...I'm afraid to go home in the dark". Friends, there is one ringing truth, one glorious note that the Christian attests to and that is that he does not operate in the darkness, that there is nothing of which to be afraid when the lights are dim or down. The Christian quietly walks with faith in the light of that assurance of John's great insight:

"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

And, oh...how we need to hear that word. This is the melody we need to march to. What a verse. Twenty centuries of history since the event of the Incarnation and still that light burns and people find their way by it. Rejoice, for the darkness has not overcome it. The Christ event. God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. God - present in the world where we are to have dealings with our sin, our sickness, our sorrow, our trials and troubles and temptations - to have ultimate dealings with our death. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men".

Yesterday, as I was working on this sermon Lyndon was here at the organ console practicing the prelude and postlude for today's service. I had to stop writing and listen...it was as if the faith of those of other years, times and places was flowing through him to us...those notes of light and love, joy and peace. How blessed we are to hear this Sunday after Sunday.

HELP COMES

There's still another lesson in this for us to consider. Some of you may remember that November night back in 1966 when our city experience the first of several power failures and our lights here temporary went out. Remember it. Ron and I were talking about this yesterday on the phone and he said, "Sure...I remember...I was up at Brick Church, working with the scouts". Where were you?

I clipped something from the paper the day after that power failure. It told that Vladimir Horowitz had just started to play Chopin's Polonaise before an invited audience of 200 at Carnegie Hall. And although the hall was in pitch black, Mor Horowitz, like Mr. Serkin, kept right on playing - not missing a note or beat. Mor Horowitz lives in our neighborhood and I often see him on Madison Avenue and whenever I do I'm reminded of that performance of his. (He and I use the same barber as a matter of fact, but the barber says he has more hair than I have).

In such moments, it's good for us to remember that help comes and often it will come from unexpected places and people and in ways you least expect. Now, can you imagine how Mr. Horowitz must have felt and how surprised he must have been when a stage hand rushed out on to the stage next to the piano with a flash light in hand and focussed light on the keyboard? Good man. He was prepared.

Yes, help comes and often from people and places we didn't expect. And the light go back on. Praise God for those who respond and help us around the tough corners of life.

TEAM WORK There's one last lesson suggested by this incident at Saratoga. In it all we saw some magnificent teamwork. It was a thrilling demonstration that involved the orchestra, the performing artists and some people behind the scenes.

Yes, we call it teamwork. And, there must be something of this in the Church of Christ if we're going to play some music that others will stop and listen to. We must work together in harmony and in a spirit of Christlike love, in support of each other. Less "I" and more "WE". Let no section of our program orchestra go sour or get off key because of hurt feelings, or smallness of spirit, or lack of "ego" gratification, or hardness of heart. Solo performers may have their place in music, but be careful in the Church of Christ...work together in committees as a team, listening to each other and practicing a bit of give and take in teamwork.

Remember, too, that the conductor is the Lord. We must keep our eyes on Him. To Him we turn and to Him we give our attention. Stay close to Him, remembering that we belong to Him and not that He belongs to us. The harmony of goodwill, those contagious rhythms of joy and of love, those moving melodies of fellowship and open acceptance of each other...with our strengths and our weaknesses, those distinctive sounds of service to others in Christ's name - all of these come when we work together, keeping our eyes on Him.

Then is our music magnificent and bright are the lights, strong the sounds...all in a world that needs to hear His Word and follow in His way. Said St. Paul:

"For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

LET US PRAY We thank Thee, O God, for the light that came into our world in Christ Jesus and for those who in our time and through their "God-given" gifts help to let the light shine through to others. Help us as we try to catch something of that glorious light in our lives...and let it shine...shine through to a world that in its despair needs to hear the message and music of Christ's love for all. In His name and in His spirit, we pray.

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PASTORAL PRAYER: November 15, 1987

O THOU who art with us in our restlessness as well as in our rest, help us in this call to prayer to find a gracious invitation to renewal.

WE FIND it in our hearts this day to thank Thee for mercies that have followed, yea preceded us, all our earthly days:

For seedtime and harvest and food enough.  
For energies of mind and hand, and work to do.  
For dead-end streets and U turns made, and open roads that followed.  
For critical interventions of the right friend, the right book, the right thought - at precisely the right moment of life.  
For the sheer wonder of our creation, our preservation and redemption.  
For stout promises and bright hopes that keep us thinking kindly of the future.

WITH mind and heart and strength, O God - YEA...with all that is within us - we would bless and praise YOUR HOLY NAME!

WE PRAY THIS MORNING in support of the quiet people of our city who go on day by day rendering a much needed service in a world that is often loud and unappreciative:

Visiting nurses, hospital orderlies, change-booth clerks.  
Those who bus our dishes, take our orders, clean our offices, open our doors.  
Those who care for the sick and troubled.  
Those who counsel the unemployed and distressed.  
Those who show up faithfully to teach in our schools and who show what love and concern and patience can mean in a young life.

HERE WE SIT, O LORD, hardly knowing who we are, and yet in moments of worship often sensing that we live in relation to a Power and Presence higher and greater than ourselves.

HELP US to love YOU - without loving ourselves the less.  
HELP US to serve YOU - without serving our world the less.

CONSOLE THE frayed affections of all who find it difficult to cope with change.  
STEADY THE RESOLVE of those who would lead us in new and untried ways.  
AMPLIFY the voices of those who speak the cause of peace, the cause of the poor, the disadvantaged of our society - the hurt and the hungry.

AND KEEP US ALL close to the side of Christ - mindful of His values and dependent on His spirit, receptive to His peace and power -

FOR WE would live, even as we now pray - through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Sunday, November 15, 1987

I. GREETING TO THE VISITORS

- A. We greet the visitors in the congregation...and hope that we shall have the opportunity to greet you in a more personal way following the service...
- B. Take a moment to fill out a visitor card...or to sign...join us...work with us...
- C. You worship in a Church whose roots are deep in the soil... primarily a neighborhood Church. Fourth building. Celebrating our 150th year. We minister in the name of Christ....

*Masha of  
Leslie  
Missy*

II. PARISH CONCERNS / IN THE BULLETIN

- A. Review them on your own...noting that we have another busy week before us. Ushers Annual Supper Meeting. Day School Committee Meeting. Finance Committee.
- B. "Hounds of Heaven" on Tuesday. Choir on Wednesday.
- C. Sharing in the Church Fair this coming Saturday. Are there any last minute concerns that need to be shared? Setting up begins on Wednesday, again on Thursday and Friday evenings.
- D. Next Sunday we shall be celebrating Thanksgiving Sunday. The children will be with us. As in other years, we shall receive food for the Yorkville Common Pantry. Note the flyer in the bulletin. Bring your gift of food next Sunday....table set up.
- E. New members to be received on December 6th. We have a number of people who have expressed an interest in strengthening a tie with the Church this Fall..."Conversations in Membership" on Monday evening, November 30th....come and learn more about this Church and what it's all about!

III. SPECIAL SUNDAY / FOR TWO REASONS

- A. Today we are celebrating 20 years of Lyndon Woodside's ministry of music to us....we invite all of you to come downstairs for this grand occasion following the service...we'll all have opportunity to say our collective thanks to Lyndon for all he has done for us and meant to us.
- B. Our congregation and our choir are both a bit larger this morning than usual...some former choir members have come to be with us today for this celebration and we're delighted to

Richard & Lois Fae -  
Met in choir

- 2 -

have them with us and to recognize them. Among those here are David Low (Chairperson, Music Committee, early seventies) Janean Sherwin (Music Committee, Chairperson, mid to late seventies)

And also with us today to share in this significant milestone is our former Associate Minister, Ronald Witmer, now a lawyer in Boston....both he and Lyndon joined our staff here in the Fall of 1967...and that was a good year for the Church...turning point. I've invited Ron Witmer to bring greetings and to say a few words both now and later downstairs.

- C. Today we are also celebrating our Dedication Sunday, the peak of our Financial Canvass. And present to bring us up to date on our progress and to keep our eyes on the not-too-distant goal is the splendid chairperson of our Financial Canvass, Dr. John Simms. When he came before us three weeks ago to "kick-off" the canvass I told you that he hits a long ball in the game of golf. Friends, he and his faithful canvassers have been "hitting the long ball" for us. John, what's word. Good? Bad? Bring us up to date.

#### IV. OFFERING

- A. We shall receive the morning offering in a few moments as well as pledge cards and then following the singing of the Doxology we shall share in the Litany of Dedication in the bulletin.
- B. Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive".

V. ROSE ON ALTAR: Julia Russell Solow, infant daughter of Janet Aldrich Solow and husband, Michael. Nov. 7th.

Formal  
Choir  
Member

Next Sunday: we shall have a rose in honor of the birth of Megan Alyssa Westermann-Clark, infant daughter of one of our non-resident members, Cynthia Westermann, -Clarke, gdaughter of Phyllis, and Megan is the granddaughter of Phyllis. Born Friday, Nov. 13th. Phyllis called me at 8 this morning and right now is on a plane flying to Gainesville, Florida to be with her loved ones there.

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(John 1: 4 and 5)

### INTRODUCTION

Enjoying last Tuesday evening's Philharmonic concert in Central Park reminded me of something that happened a number of Summers ago up in Saratoga. It was a warm, lovely Summer night in late July. The gifted pianist, Rudolph Serkin, was the featured guest artist with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Saratogage Performing Arts Center. The house lights were dimmed, and thus began a performance of Beethoven's Emperor Concerto for a capacity crowd that spilled out onto the green lawn around the Center.

Suddenly, well along in the First Movement, all the stage lights went out. In the inky blackness the orchestra could see neither the music nor the conductor, and the keyboard of the Steinway was enveloped in darkness.

The audience tensely anticipated an interruption, but the artist continued to play, never missing a beat of that difficult score, as though nothing had happened. Two minutes of darkness seemed like an eternity, but finally the lights came back on and a ripple of applause ran through the auditorium. It was a magnificent display of musicianship which left most of the people in that audience tingling. And herein rests a lesson or two for all of us. Let me share them with you in the way of a meditation before we share in the Sacrament.

### KEEP THE MUSIC GOING

First, it reminded me that someone needs to keep the music going when the lights go out. And surely this is part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, part of what it means to be a Christian in today's world - to keep on playing Christ's melody even in times of darkness and discouragement.

It's so easy to let up on the music, especially when faced with difficult, demanding, discouraging circumstances. It's hard to sing Christ's song especially when it's in danger of being drowned out by the melodies of secularism and agnosticism. But this is what people of faith are asked to do. Admittedly the music is hard and the demands are high, for the great Composer of life has given us a magnificent score, one that calls for our best efforts - hard work, dedication, sacrifice. And His music is more important than ever when the darkness and the gloom are threatening us. Let me paraphrase that verse which is our text:

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servicing. Yes, "only as we give does the beat go on".

If overtaken by some "dark night of the soul" and unable to see the next measure, this ability to keep playing will be provided by honest effort and by familiarity with the resources of the spirit. The faithful cultivation of some "holy habits" in the life of a person will support a Christian when the lights of his world are flickering and failing.

So think about this in these moments before you come forward to receive the bread and the cup. Is your spirit being nourished properly so that when the time of testing comes you'll be able to keep on playing the melody that life has given you to play? Holy habits. When did you last sit down to read your Bible or to whisper a prayer? Prayers, presence, gifts, services - some solid "holy habits" to build on.

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You may be in darkness right now. The darkness of despair, the darkness of loneliness. But remember that the lights of love and faith, of joy and happiness do come back on. While you're in that darkness experience it may seem to you like an eternity, but it is only temporary.

They say that O. Henry whispered on his death bed, "Turn up the lights. I'm afraid to go home in the dark." Friends, there is one ringing truth, one glorious note that Christian attests to, and that is that he does not operate in the darkness, but there is nothing of which to be afraid when the lights are down or dim. The Christian goes his way in the light of the assurance of John's great insight:

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Some of you may remember that November night back in the sixties when the city experienced the first of several power failures and our lights temporarily went out. Remember it? What were you doing that night?

I clipped something from the paper a day after the event. It told that Vladimir Horowitz had just started to play Chopin's Polonaise before an invited audience of 200 at Carnegie Hall. And although the hall was in pitch black, Mr. Horowitz, like Mr. Serkin, went right on playing - didn't miss a beat, a note. Mr. Horowitz lives in our neighborhood and I often see him on Madison Avenue or Fifth Avenue and I often call to mind that thrilling performance.

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It's good for us to remember that help comes. Often in unexpected ways, from places and from people you least expect it. Those lights, dim and almost off, do come back on and up.

TEAM WORK There's one more thought, or lesson suggested by this incident that Summer night in Saratoga. In it all we saw some marvellous teamwork. It was a thrilling demonstration that involved the orchestra, the performing artist and some people behind the scenes.

Teamwork is what one might label it. And, there must be something of this in the Church of Christ if we're going to play some music that others will pause to listen to. We must work together in harmony and in a spirit of Christ-like love, in support of each other. Let no section of our program orchestra go sour or get off key because of hurt feelings, or smallness of spirit, or lack of ego gratitification. Prima donnas and solo performed have their place in music, but if the Gospel of Christ is going to be played effectively then there has to be some solid teamwork. And finally, we need always to remember that:

Remember that the conductor is the Lord. We must keep our eyes always on Him. To Him we turn and to Him we give our attention. The harmony of goodwill, the contagious rhythms of joy and love, the moving melodies of fellowship of acceptance of others, the distinctive sounds of service to others - all of these come when we work together, keeping our eyes on Him and when we do this - great is our music and bright the light..strong are the sounds.

"For God" said St. Paul, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

LET US PRAY We thank Thee, O God, for the light that came in to our world in Christ Jesus. Help us as we try to catch something of that glorious light in our lives; then let it shines through us to bring light and love into the lives of others.

Help us to feel Thy nearness in these moments of worship. To feel your closeness as we kneel on our knees and take the bread and drink the cup.

May the bread and wine open our eyes to the presence of Christ among us. Bind us more closely to each other and to Him and lift up our hearts and minds to thee, that we may go out renewed in body and soul, fed, nourished and made new. In the name of Christ. Amen.

## "THE NIGHT THE LIGHTS WENT OUT"

### INTRODUCTION

It was a lovely Summer night in early August. The gifted pianist, Rudolph Serkin, was the featured guest artist: with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center upstate. The house lights were lowered and they began a performance of Beethoven's Emperor Concerto for a capacity crowd that spilled out onto the green lawn around the Center.

Suddenly, well along in the first movement, all the stage lights went out. In the inky blackness the orchestra could see neither the music nor the conductor, and the keyboard of the Steinway was enveloped in darkness. The audience tensely anticipated an interruption, but the artists continued to play, never missing a beat of that difficult score, never creating a discord, as though nothing had happened. Two minutes of darkness seemed an eternity, but finally the lights came back on and a ripple of applause ran through the auditorium. It was a magnificent exhibition of musicianship which left most of the people in that audience tingling. And herein rests a lesson or two for all of us.

### KEEP THE MUSIC GOING

First off, it suggests that someone needs to keep the music going when all the lights go out. And surely this is the role of church people, the task of people of faith like ourselves. Never suffer an interruption to our programs of discipleship - of social concern and outreach, of mission and proclamation of Christ's way. Admittedly the music is hard and the demands placed on us are high, for the great Composer has given us a magnificent score. And His music is more important than ever when darkness threatens us all. Paraphrasing that verse from John's Gospel:

"The music rings through the darkness, and  
the darkness has never silenced it"

### TO KEEP IT GOING

Then, too, the skill to keep the strains of faith and hope sounding does not come by accident. For one thing, we have to know the music. We have to know the score. And this is something that comes only by faithful practice, study and discipline. If overtaken by some "dark night of the soul", and unable to see the next measure, the ability to keep playing will be provided by honest planning, and by familiarity with the resources of the spirit. Honest rehearsal supports a musician when the lights go out, and faithful cultivation of holy habits will support a Christian when "The lights of his world" are interrupted. Beethoven became deaf, but he heard his music with an inner ear implanted by his own prior cultivation.

Think about this in these moments before you receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Is your inner life being nourished properly so that when the time of testing comes you will have what it takes to keep on playing the piece that life has given you to play?

Our job as Christian people is to keep the music going, and in order to do this we have to know the score, the music, the melodies of Christ's music.

### THE LIGHTS COME BACK ON

Then, we also need to keep in mind that the lights come back on. They came back on that night up in Saratoga. It's only temporary. We believe in a universe where "the lights come back on". We believe in a universe where the darkness has been overcome. O. Henry, legend has it, said on his death bed, "Turn up the lights. I'm afraid to go home in the dark". There is one ringing truth the Christian attests to, and that is that he does not operate in the darkness, that there is nothing to be afraid of when the lights go out. He goes his way in the assurance of John, the

Evangelist, who said back there in the first century:

"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.  
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness  
has not overcome it".

Upon hearing about what happened in Saratoga last August, I was reminded of something quite similar that took place here in our own city seven years ago the coming week on that night when the lights went out in this town. Vladmir Horowitz had just started to play Chopin's "Polonaise" before an invited audience of 200 at Carnegie Hall. Although the hall was pitch black, Mr. Horowitz, like Mr. Serkin, went right on playing - not missing a note! In such moments, it is well to remember that help comes, and often it comes from the most unexpected sources, sometimes from people you know and sometimes from people you don't know. For instance, can you imagine how surprised Mr. Horowitz must have been when a stage hand rushed out on to the stage with a flash light and focussed it on the keyboard. Help comes in unexpected ways, and the lights temporarily off, do come back on.

#### TEAM WORK

There's one more lesson in this incident that we need to consider as part of this meditation. This marvellous exploit of the orchestra and its guest artist was a wonderful demonstration of team work.

And it must be this way in our churches. There must be team work. We must work together in order to create some powerful music for others to hear. Let no section of our program orchestra go sour or cease playing because of the failure to work together and to support each other. In a sense, we're all performing and sounding important notes of God's music: the harmony of goodwill and peace, the contagious rhythms of radiant joy and celebration, the moving melodies of fellowship and acceptance of each other, the distinctive sounds of service to others.

What the hippie says of society at large, I think, is so true of this church "Different strokes for different folks". We have an interesting fellowship of people in this parish. Different abilities and interests and talents and this month of November is one of those busy months when so many of our programs come to fruition and peak. The Financial Canvass, the Fair and Dinner, the reception of new members, the special music program of last Monday night, the Sunday School party of last Sunday, the celebration of Thanksgiving and then on to Christmas. It's a busy time and harmony and team work are essential.

This is not the time to stand on the side-lines doing nothing and criticizing those who work so hard to make the good things happen. And this too: we need to be more supportive of each other's music. It hurts when we get so wrapped up in our own part that we have no time or concern left to listen to another person's part. We want these programs, in our church - but we must be more supportive of each other's stroke. So let's work together and support each other with concern and enthusiasm, remembering that we are one body - one body in Christ, one family of faith.

#### SUMMARY

Last Wednesday the Christian Church paused momentarily to celebrate "All Saints Day". It is always celebrated on the first day of November, and this is why we came in here earlier this morning singing that great hymn, "For all the saints who from their labors rest, who Thee by faith before the world confessed thy name, O Jesus". Great words and a great melody.

I like to think of the "saints" of the church as the "A students" of the faith. They are men and women who in other days and in other places kept the music going when the lights went out around them. They were able to do that because they knew the score, the music. They had done their homework well. And above all else, they knew with that knowledge of the heart that they did not operate in the darkness alone, for they believed with all of their being that "The light shines in the darkness, and darkness has not overcome it".

Why were the saints, saints? And someone has put it:

"Because they were cheerful when it was difficult to be cheerful, patient when it was difficult to be patient; and because they pushed on when they wanted to stand still, and kept silent when they wanted to talk, and were agreeable when they wanted to be disagreeable. That was all. It was quite simple and always will be"

#### PRAYER

"Teach us, good Lord, to serve Thee more faithfully; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do thy will.

As we try to find our way through the darkened and dangerous tunnels of everyday life, open our eyes that we may see that light which the darkness cannot put out, and which, if we will let it, will shine in us and through us to others.

All this we ask in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ. Amen"