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After I had graduated high school and held a job for 2 years to the date (I had been told graduates couldn’t do that so I had to prove “them” wrong,) I took a job as a counselor at a Girl Scout Camp. For a 19-year old me, this was a dream job! I got to work outdoors. I could wear shorts and t-shirts every day. I was working with kids so this was great experience for my future career of teaching. I got to learn new stuff every day. It provided room and board for free, plus I got paid!

My first summer, I was an assistant counselor. Over the next 5 years, I returned each summer and was promoted to head counselor then Program Director then Assistant Director then finally to Camp Director. I loved being camp staff! We sang songs, cooked over open fires, went swimming and canoeing. We hiked, learned to identify various trees, plants, and animals. We biked. We travelled. We investigated and we learned. But not every day was all fun and giggles. Girls got home sick. Injuries happened. During the night, spiders walking on dry leaves would sound like Sasquatch right outside your tent. Food got burned. Sometimes our food was still raw. Raccoons didn’t care how the food was. They’d frequently ransack our trash cans looking for leftovers, much to the fright of the campers. Mosquitos found us every, single day! Occasionally we would go 2 or 3 days without a shower.

But never did I expect that the best fringe benefit of the job would be the life-long friends I would make. While I became friends with all my co-workers whether other unit counselors, kitchen staff, the Camp Nurse, the Director of Arts & Crafts, the Nature Director, the Waterfront Staff, or the maintenance guys, there came to be a core group of us that returned summer after summer. During the off-season, we got together for birthdays, holidays, and any other excuse we could think of. We called ourselves The Boomerang Gang. And to this day, some of my closest and dearest friends are from this group. (A shout out to Shells, Mouse, Ollie and Coky!) I haven’t remained in close contact with all of them though. (But I still love you Banana, JuJu, Suds, and Muppet.) One or two even seem to have fallen off the face of the earth. (How can you not be able to find someone on the internet or social media nowadays??? PeeWee, where are you?!?!?) Regardless if I spoke with them today or have not in 25 years, they helped in my formation as a person and hold a special place in my heart. They are my people.

And that’s kind of what the Communion of Saints are. They are God’s people. They are those who have died but were recognized for their loyalty towards and love of God while alive, those who’ve been canonized: St. John the Baptist, St. Paul, St. Joan of Arc, St. Francis de Sales, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. Pope John Paul II, St. Teresa of Calcutta, and the whole litany of saints. But it also includes all the faithful departed, all those “whose faith and devotion are known to you.” (Eucharistic Prayer I) We pray that these folks intercede on our behalf. It involves, too, those who have died but are in purgatory. As Catholics, we believe by Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection that we are redeemed, yet if we die with venial sin on our soul, we have to go through a time of purification. Prayers for the souls of our loved ones speed them through this stage of refinement. The Communion of Saints also includes all the living! Through our baptism, we are called to be saints. Right now we are “saints in progress.” (Check out http://thecatholicspirit.com/featured/understanding-the-communion-of-saints/ ) Please join us for Mass to honor All Saints on November 1st at 9 am in Lakeview or 7 pm in Howard City. This is a Holy Day of Obligation. Join us at Faith Formation, too. This week we have GIFT, Generations in Formation Together. Small groups of different-aged folks will work to create a project focusing on a particular saint of their choosing. Hope to see you there! All are welcome!

 Blessings,

 Julie Gould, aka Slugger

 faithformation@ctknsf.org