The Feast of All Saints 2021

October 31 and November 7

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Holy one, in you we live and move and have our being, in your blessed name we pray.

Amen.

Good Morning.

Sometimes I wonder if God exists.

I suspect I am not the only one. So, I will name this for us and hold it for a moment.

There is in Celtic Spirituality, and in ancient Celtic tradition something known as “thin places” or “thin spaces”: geographic locales—places and or times in our world when the veil between heaven and earth collapses and suddenly all that is holy wafts over us and we know that we are on Sacred Ground or in a Holy Moment and that holiness, that “heavenliness” shall envelope and prevail.

It is in those times and those places, when I have absolutely no doubt of God’s enfolding presence and love. Perhaps you’ve also experienced these moments. I know when it is happening, I feel extremely vulnerable and exposed and part of me wants to retreat into my protective day in and day out armor, so as not to feel so very much and be so very open. It takes some courage to stay with and experience the Holy. At least it takes courage for me.

All Saints Day, El Dio de Los Muertos, Day of the Dead as it is called in some cultures, All Souls Day, All Hallows’ Eve, these three days are *thin spaces.* These are the times when we have an invitation to lay aside that protective armor that so many of us wear that enables us to function in this time of amazing sadness and upheaval, it’s an offer to shed this protective cloak and to feel the loss of the people in our lives who have shaped us, formed us, held us and cared for us and who now, no longer live.

Embracing the offer to re-member viscerally the ones whom we love but see no longer is an invitation to pay the price of love, to experience an enveloping grief, that seems to shovel out gaping holes in our hearts…and if we stay with it—to experience those holes being filled with a pure sweetness, sacredness, holiness, presence of God, that is like no other.

I cannot tell you how much I miss my mom, gone from this world now more than four years. Mary Jane Perry, what a force of nature, how excited she would be for my move to Michigan. She would want to know all about you—what are they like? How many churches are in the diocese? What sorts of things do they do? And I know she would have asked—are they nice to you? Yes, mom they are. And I would have told her how stunning these past two years have been—all that I’ve learned, the mistakes I’ve made (she would shake her head knowingly because she is well aware of my flaws) and then I’d say, “you know what mom—It’s just amazing.” And she would say, “I can hardly wait to meet them.” And then of course you know, it all comes back to me, how in this world she will not meet you. Then, having dared to remember and grieve, I am filled with searing sadness and (pause x5) then a moment of her very real presence and love—a thin space has happened, and I feel God’s surrounding protecting love and I have no doubts of God.

How do you mark All Saints’ Day? Day of the Dead?

For whom do you grieve?

Who for you are you missing? Your amazing big brother?

Your spouse?

Your child.

Your very best friend?

That teacher who took you seriously, treated you with a respect that now you pass onto other young people…?

Friends this is the day, to embrace our grief, remember that love and let the veil between heaven and earth collapse. This is the day for us to know that the great cloud of witnesses encircles us and surrounds us, this is the day that we remember that we are not, and we never have been in this world alone.

This is the day that we openly grieve so that we may know deep in the marrow of our bones that:

 I know that my *Redeemer lives*

*And at the last our redeemer, he will raise me up,*

*And in our bodies, we shall see God,*

*We shall see, and our eyes shall behold, the one*

*Who is our friend and not a stranger?* BCP p 491 (Job 19:27)

For even at the Grave, we make our song,

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Give rest O Christ, to your servants with your saints, where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting. BCP p 499.

Amen.