



Galaxies Evening Service 4 November 2007

Service by Pete Cowley



Welcome:

Tonight we are celebrating and the Christian feast of All Souls and All Saints and what the difference is between them.

Gathering together:

Leader: The world weeps, but somewhere beyond our sight there is a dancing. The creation groans, but deep within its life there is still a singing. Our hearts are empty of God but suddenly Christ sits at table between us and invites us to a feast of life.

ALL: Let us worship God

Introduction:

Leader:

I observe how nature speaks the word of God in parables that support the patterns of our lives. I watch the movement of the tides, the cycle of the seasons, and see how they are echoed in us; ebb and flow, winter and spring, loss and increased gain, the entire universe expanding in a sacred plan for growth, and I know that I am part of this oneness.

Today I held a dead bird in my hand, stiff as a board, legs like sticks, and I thought how rigid is this thing we call death. How hard and inflexible. The wind comes in from the sea and sweeps through the green hair of the willows, and the branches sway in the soft and supple dance of life. But the same wind in a dry, dead tree causes the branches to break and scatter.

Today, as nature spoke the word of God, I looked at the parables of death and life and I reflected on my faith.



All saints day in Croatia

Affirmation of faith (said all together):

We believe

in God the creator who gives birth to all that is .. with labour and sighing and looks to the world with joy and love.

We believe

in Christ the reconciler, who is earthed in our life and enfleshed in its patterns of dying and rising, who gives honour to our reality and grace to our way.

We believe

in God the free Spirit, who weeps with our grieving in the depths of our darkness and dances among us high on life's mountains - the Spirit who finds us with newness and hope.

We believe

in the community of faith, which is born of our humanness, is nurtured in sharing and grows whole in our struggling and celebration as one people of God.

Passing the Peace:

Leader: Now that we are reminded that God the free Spirit shares itself with us, we can share our peace and love with one another.

Let us feel the power of the earth that holds us together.

Let us celebrate our gifts in song and dance.

Let us all rejoice in our power and our beauty.

All: We open our hearts to the miracle of birth and the mystery of God's love in all Creation.

We carry in us the divine light, which shone so brightly the night of Christ's birth. The gift of love, which we share tonight, deepens us as people, deepens us as sisters and brothers.



Each person shares hugs or whatever those around them.



Notices:

If you have any notices to bring to our attention please speak up.

Contemporary reflections:

All Saints and All Souls Feast Days

Author: Kathryn Morse

Catholic Customs Contrasted to Halloween

Many of the customs of Halloween have to do with fear of the dead. It was believed by the Celtic people that evil spirits roamed the earth on the last night of the Celtic year (October 31) and that they worked mischief among the living. Part of Celtic belief was that one could live safely through the night by dressing up as a ghost, witch, etc., or bribing the evil spirits with treats.

It was also believed that the souls of sinful persons who passed away during the year were imprisoned in the bodies of animals and that they on this night could be freed through gifts and sacrifices. Often the sacrifices were human.

Communion of the Saints

In contrast, the Catholic feasts of All Saints Day and All Souls Day offer a much more pleasant opportunity for recognition of our *Communion of the Saints* or fellowship with those dead to this earthly existence. As a convert, one of the things I found very interesting about Catholicism is the different definition of Communion of the Saints.

It seems that when Protestants talk about Communion of the Saints they mean fellowship among local church members and/or members of other churches or denominations. This is a fellowship for people who are living in this see/touch world.

The Catholic Church emphasizes that with Christ at the head the body of the Church, the people who make up the Church, living or dead, cannot be separated. Therefore, Communion of the Saints has a much broader meaning in the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church teaches that the Church exists in three different *states*. One is the *pilgrim church* struggling to live faithful lives in this earthly existence. Another is the *triumphant church* of saints already in Heaven. The other state is existence in purgatory or the *suffering church*. In purgatory, the faithful are purified for entry into the triumphant church.

The Feast of All Saints Day on November 1 and the Feast of All Souls Day on November 2 reminds us of our relationship to those in the other states. These are days of remembrance, celebration and prayer.



Feast of All Saints

The Feast of All Saints is the celebration of our relationship with those in the *triumphant church* - those who have preceded us in entry to heaven. It began with local festivals in the early church. Ever since there were Christian martyrs, local churches have honored their martyrs. Lists were kept locally and feast days were held locally. Of course there were martyrs who were not recorded for various reasons.

In the sixth century, Pope Boniface IV proclaimed May 13, 610, Feast of All Holy Martyrs held in Rome to honor all martyrs not listed in local records. In 835, Pope Gregory IV changed the date and name to November 1 and Feast of All Saints. A theory for the change in date is that since the feast was large and popular, it was easier to have a fall date to take advantage of the fall harvest for the food supply.

The change in the name of the event from Feast of All Holy Martyrs to Feast of All Saints probably became about because there was a change in the customs regarding who was listed as a "Saint." In the early years of the Church, only martyrs were given that title, but after the Roman persecutions ended the title was given to others who had led meritorious lives and who were credited with miraculous intercession.

In a "message" on September 27, 1998, Our Lord Jesus said to Carol Ameche, a "seer," *"The Communion of Saints shines with the joy of union on every level of life. A bond of prayer and community exists that is stronger than all of you on earth realize. This should be a motive for you to pray with greater joy and the excitement of a new and deeper awareness of the Presence of all the Angels and Saints, of My Mother and Myself."*

Feast of All Souls

While the Feast of All Saints is a day to remember the glories of Heaven and those there, the Feast of All Souls on November 2 reminds us of our obligations to live holy lives and that there will be purification of the souls of those destined for Heaven - in this life or in purgatory.

II Maccabees 12:42b-46 is a wonderful lesson about eternal life and caring for the souls of the dead, *"The noble Judas exhorted the people the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened as the result of the sin of those who had fallen. He also took up a collection . . . and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin."**

The traditions of the Feast of All Souls began independently of the Feast of All Saints. The Feast of All Souls owes its beginning to seventh century monks who decided to offer the mass on the day after Pentecost for their deceased community members.

In the late tenth century, the Benedictine monastery in Cluny chose to move their mass for their dead to November 2, the day after the Feast of all Saints. This custom spread and in the thirteenth century, Rome put the feast on the calendar of the entire Church. The date remained November 2 so that all in the *Communion of the Saints* might be celebrated together.

Traditional Catholics still honor customs related to the relief of the souls suffering in purgatory. One custom is for persons to pray six Our Fathers, Hail Mary's and Glory Be's for the intentions of the Pope in the church, and thereby, receive a plenary indulgence for a soul in purgatory. This action may be repeated for another soul, by leaving the church building and re-entering to repeat the prayers.

This sounds strange to Protestants who do not believe in the exchange of "spiritual goods" and charity among the living and the dead.

Enjoy the Feasts! Celebrate eternal life!

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (I Corinthians 15:54b-58)**

Leader: So, that is how it is seen in traditional terms and traditional theology. For most of us though, our cosmology has moved on somewhat from this and All Saints and All Souls is not a time of prayer for the sins of those who had died and are in purgatory, or at the least, "down below", but a time of remembrance and hopefully celebration of the of the person who is now dead.



All Saints ritual

Leader: Let us quiet our minds and souls and bring ourselves into peace remembrance of those who have gone before us.

Music: Era- Sombre Day



Leader: Please take a stone to hold - like people they come in many different and varied colours and styles, decorated and plain, polished and natural. The stone or stones - represents a person or people who you were close to who have died. Now light a candle for each persons you have a stone for. Remember the important times you may have shared together or just honour their memory - honour the light that they may have been to you.

Music: Delirium - Remembrance

Leader Now, with thanks in your heart for the life of the person, place your stone or stones on the green of "all saints". If you wish to keep your stone or stones and take it home please feel free to do so at the end of the service.

Prayer:

All: God, may we be forever grateful for those who have gone before us. Those that have been a light to our way and a help on our journey. May we honour them and hold them in our memories, in our hearts and in our souls. Amen

Departure:

As we depart from this place
of light,

love,

and warm hearts

may we be a light to others

may we treat all we meet with loving-kindness

may we warm others hearts with our care and commitment

to compassion, truth and justice

in all our dealings.

