

Good morning,

What a beautiful day to celebrate All Saints Day. So, with the time that is ours I would like to share with you from this thought, unbound and set free.

I was deeply moved hearing all of the names read during the necrology. This summer I have had the opportunity to walk with many of those families who have had to say goodbye to the earthly presence of their loved ones. I look at all the pictures of all of those people and I think about life, their lives, I think of all of the experiences they must have had, the love they shared with all of us and I am moved.

As one of your priests and pastors, your youngest one, I have learned a lot about death.

Something that in this earthly life, is absolutely inescapable.

Some might say we are bound to death, because it is something that will touch each and every one of us, and it will, if not already has changed our lives.

I've done 20 or so of these funerals over the last few months, Elaine adding a bit of levity one day dubbed me the funeral king. One of the things that I have come to see and experience as we gather for funerals, some would think since we are bound by death, at a funeral we gather around death. But I am here to tell you this morning that it is life that we gather around.

A beautiful line from a prayer in the funeral liturgy is life has not ended but changed. That reflects our reading this morning from revelations that says that God makes all things new.

Something happens as we gather, both as a community and as an individual. That person who is no longer with us, is not with us because they have stepped into new life, into the closer presence of God. The community that gathers is transformed, brought closer together as God holds us all. This doesn't negate the sadness that we feel. But God transforms. God makes all things new.

Truly, we must believe this. This is the singular core of our faith, that death does not have the final word. That there is life after death, new life. When we say that faith matters it all begins here. I mean how do we have faith that God is going to see us through this difficult time in our lives, how do we have faith that God is going to heal us, how do we have faith that God will solve our problem, if we don't believe that God in Jesus has conquered death. It all starts here.

As revelations says, see, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more.

Death is not about death, about an end, death is about life, a new beginning! God makes all things new. God has unbound us and freed us from death.

All saint's day is a special day, because we celebrate those who have gone before us into glory, we don't celebrate life that has ended but those whose lives are ever present with us through God.

We listen to those names, those saints in our community and we remember.

We remember, we remember the impact that they had on us, we remember their love, ...we remember what god has taught us. That death does not have the final word. We are not bound to death.

And we rejoice. We give thanks, because we know something that the world does not want us to know. When we look all around us, when we turn on the news, when we open up our newspapers, do people still get newspapers? Anyway, we see death. But we know that this is not the end, and so we have faith.

And our faith gives us the strength to look death right in the face, whatever manifestation that death appears to us and we say, like my favorite character in the tv show the game of thrones, we turn to death and we say, not today.

All saints is a celebration of this community turning to death and together saying not today... All saints the actual day is November 1<sup>st</sup> and so each year it follows Halloween.

Halloween being a day when death is all around us. People dress up, it's a tad spooky. But we wake up the next day on all saints and we say to death not today. We are not bound to death.

In our gospel story Mary runs up to Jesus weeping and asking Jesus to bring her brother Lazarus back from the dead.

Jesus is swayed and so he goes to Lazarus's tomb and he calls out in a loud voice, Lazarus come out. And so, Lazarus comes out from his tomb....

I find the last words that Jesus says in our reading to be the most powerful because Lazarus comes out, this dead man comes out, wrapped in all of death's garments, cloths around his arms and his face and Jesus tells those people to unbind him and let him go.

Jesus says to all of us in the face of death, unbind us all and let us go. We are not bound to death any longer. As Paul reminds us in Romans, the death that He died, he died once for all, but the life he lives, He lives to God.

And so this all saints day, let it be a reminder that in the face of death... that we are unbound and freed. ...And full of faith, and so we live our lives, but we live them to God.

So happy All Saints Day,

Amen