

## Liturgy of Remembrance 2019

Isaiah 25.6-10

I John 3.1-2

John 14.1-6

In our gospel today Jesus is bidding farewell to his disciples and in doing so, he speaks of going to God's house where there are many dwelling places. To us, who already live in homes with many rooms, this image may not grab us. But if you lived in ancient Palestine and were poor, and could not picture a house with more than one or two rooms, you would find this compelling. To me this image speaks of the spaciousness of God, the expansiveness of God's embrace – a house with many places in which all can dwell.

To be spacious is to be expansive, without limit, room for all, beyond our reckoning. Here is one of my experiences of spaciousness. When Ron and I visit his family home in small town Hawaii, one of our favorite pastimes is gazing upward at the clear night sky, away from city lights, and seeing it emblazoned with planets, and stars and galaxies, some brilliant, some in a dense twinkling fog- not feeling small but feeling alive: filled with wonder at the immensity of the created order.

On one visit we took a guided stargazing tour to the top of Mauna Kea, highest mountain in the Hawaiian chain. Now it should be noted that this is sacred space to the native Hawaiian people, who are currently protesting the construction of a huge new telescope in that space. Bundled up against the chill we peered into a portable telescope and saw the rings of Saturn. In scriptural traditions, the mountain top is the holy dwelling place of God. And here we were, peering into the heavens. What a banquet-feast for the senses and for the soul on this holy mountain.

As he faces his own death, Jesus characterizes the place to which he is going as one that surpasses all expectations and promises that we shall join him there. It is in this space, this state of being, however we characterize it, that we will see God as God is.

Today we heard proclaimed our own "Litany of the Saints"- the names of the many who have passed into a new dawn and arrived at the mountain top and into the embrace of God. You know some of them, personally and you feel their loss, some of them you may deeply grieve. You knew some of them from a distance – through the witness of their good works for all the public to see.

There are those in our LGBT+ community we remember today, and it is these upon whose shoulders we stand: prophets, pioneers, activists, healers, teachers, visionaries, servants, poets, journalists, scientists.

There are those public figures who governed, led protests, entertained, made music.

There are those who suffered death at the hands of others. Those whose lives were cut way too short, who were persecuted to death itself because they were perceived different, did not fit the mold, yet struggled to live fully and authentically.

There are many, many stories in this long list of names. Stories about goodness and generosity, about courage and integrity, suffering and healing, success and failure...stories we need to tell and retell.

When Jesus is our beacon, when Jesus is our way to truth and life. --- we create a spaciousness within our lives – a spaciousness that others enter, find welcome, and catch a glimpse of who God is.

The many whose names we heard today had their faults, their quirks, their shortcomings. When we eulogize we tend to emphasize what is good and right about those we remember. That's OK. We are drawn to goodness and righteousness.

We need to tell and hear these stories. Telling these kinds of stories stirs the goodness within us. Telling these stories stirs within us the desire to do right. We need to hear these stories. Especially now. One of my favorite spiritual writers, Sister Macrina Wiederkehr, says this: "For in dark moments when light has hidden its face for awhile we are the stars meant to shine for each other. And we do!"

And as we enter into November, darkness comes earlier we may feel our losses more acutely. But it *is* the harvest season, and at the same time, we may find ourselves grateful...grateful for the life well lived and for the bond of love that death does not break. We commemorate this day with an Alleluia in our hearts and in our voices – a bit of Easter in this autumn chill.