



Another week of too many things happening that beg for our attention. Halloween and the fun of seeing so many go down Main Street trick-or-treating in weather that would ordinarily make us run inside and have a cup of hot chocolate. Balance those smiles with knowing another terror attack has resulted in death and destruction and another challenge to our way of life.

The thrill of the Astros winning the World Series, the first time in their franchise history – and in a city still recovering from devastating floods and hurricane damage. The resilience of people who looked outward to help others without thought of payment or what was “owed” to them.

Today we remember those we love and see no longer. All Saints Sunday is a specific time of honoring the love we have for one another. We read the names of those who have died as a way of honoring the place they had in our lives. The influence they had in who we are today. Those relationships may not always have been easy ones, especially between parents and children who naturally fuss at each other from time to time as we each strive to become independent persons but ones who acknowledge and appreciate those who gave birth to us and those who sheltered us until we could become independent adults.

We live in a “both/and” world. We see good and evil side-by-side each day. How do we keep our faith in times like these? I think partly we keep our faith by remembering that God is in control even as we acknowledge that we have no idea what God is up to. Even as we acknowledge that God’s giving us free will means that some will abuse us and our world given their own need for power and control.

We also can keep our faith by remembering that we are each blessed even as certain days or certain seasons in our lives are difficult and it can be hard to see the sunlight. We are blessed in different ways and with different gifts and talents. And that we are called to use those gifts and talents for the benefit of all creation. We keep our faith by simple things and by complex things. Planting flowers now that we know will overwinter and bloom in the spring when we need that bright pop of color to remind us that one more winter has come and gone – and new life returns and offers us hope that we too can begin again, we too can rise up and give thanks for all that God has given to us. We can keep our faith by being St. John’s, a beacon in this community that welcomes all that enter our doors, all who worship with us and all who come to the table not only for solace but also for strength. You make a difference and you are important. We miss you when you are not here.



Stewardship is a complex word and a difficult concept. Many people prefer not to talk about it, but sometimes it is because they fail to understand what it really is. Stewardship is the management of what God has given us¹. Sometimes we forget that we are sons and daughters of God. God has blessed us, God blesses us, and God will continue to bless us abundantly. Think about how God blesses us daily: with time, physical and mental health, energy, talents, possessions, friends, money, food, home, family. Yes, those gifts will change over time as we age but they still are gifts that God has given to us to enable us to be the children of light. Even our very life is a gift from God. Stewardship is a practice of thankfulness and generosity, and it reflects our walk with God.

A way to express our Christian values is making stewardship a priority in our lives. We can remember this by asking ourselves the following question: “In what way will everything in my life show that I am a Christian?” If we constantly ask ourselves that one question we will see a change in the way we think, act, speak, listen, and give. The Very Rev. Miguelina Howell explains, “Stewardship is a spiritual practice of thanksgiving that helps us get closer to God.

One of the questions asked of a Search Committee is “reflect on a time when the ministry of a priest was particularly important to you.” I’d change the question a bit for us today on All Saints Sunday. Reflect on a time when the ministry of another Christian was helpful to you. Where did someone in this Parish reach out to you when you were sad or grieving or uncertain of the way forward? When did someone in this Parish walk alongside you when the way forward was dark? Was there a time that someone in this Parish celebrated with you when your life overflowed with blessings? And then, when did you walk alongside someone who needed your presence? When did you take comfort that someone at St. John’s saw your need and responded? We are blessed in the giving and in the receiving.

Your presence here is needed and necessary. Your presence here helps us live into the kingdom of God where and when we care for one another. We are stronger together than apart. We can do great things when we believe that God loves us and God blesses us. Help St. John’s remain a vital congregation by offering your time, talent and treasure.

Let us pray: Gracious and loving God, giver of all that is good and true and beautiful and life-giving. These cards represent our sweat, they represent our lives, they represent our dreams. The pledges which we make on them are but tokens of the awesome gifts that have been given to us and they are pledged in thanksgiving for all we have received, for all we have been inspired to be, for all we are challenged to become, in this place. May they be the first fruits of all we have and not what we have left over, so that we may live out as closely as possible how you give to us. May we see them as our offering to you, sacred, holy, yet earthy, filled with possibilities. May we hold this image in our hearts and minds so as we watch our offerings each week come to your

22 Pentecost (Proper 26)

November 5, 2017

Joshua 3: 7-17; Psalm 107: 1-7, 33-37; 1 Thessalonians 2: 9-13; Matthew 23: 1-12

*table, we can see our very selves being part of this offering, it is us on the table, living sacrifices to you. Amen.*²



² Prayer is written by Bp. Greg Rickel, Diocese of Olympia.