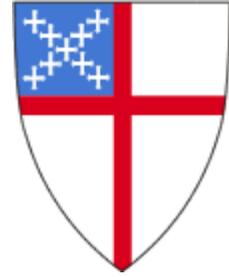


The Lessons Appointed for Use at
the Feast of

All Saints' Day

Year C
RCL



[Daniel 7:1-3,15-18](#)

[Psalm 149](#)

[Ephesians 1:11-23](#)

[Luke 6:20-31](#)

November 3, 2019

The Way of Love – The ancient practices of Christian Life
Rev. Dr. Gail Shafer, Priest in Charge
Trinity Episcopal Church Grand Ledge

This was the weekend of our diocesan convention. The business of the diocese was done. Our delegates, Bill Peloquin and John Lanese voted on delegates to the Episcopal Church convention, and changes to the diocesan canons. We listened to reports on the finances, and accomplishments of the various staff and clergy of our diocese. And we listened to the keynote speaker, Dr. Lisa Kimball, the president of Virginia Theological Seminary, and Bishop Hoagland speak about the initiative put in place by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, the Way of Love.

There are seven practices in the Way that come from the very earliest vestiges of the church. Turn, learn, pray, worship, bless, go, and rest. Our key note speaker was present in the room where these practices were enumerated, and brought

into the modern church. These are practices of church people with lots of historical, and spiritual, precedent.

As Christians, we are challenged to turn from the secular world to Christ. To leave all that we want to hold onto, and embrace the bountiful love and acceptance that Jesus demands. Two of our parishioners took a new step, one confirmed, the other received into the Episcopal church. This represents a turning for them. A change in direction. How will this change their lives?

How many of us remember our adult commitment to Christ? Confirmation, adult baptism, reaffirmation of our baptismal covenant, or reception into this church? Let's take a moment to contemplate how that impacted our lives. First, we ask, did it impact our lives in some profound way? Or was it just one of those lovely, barely memorable milestones? Did you change your way of thinking about your personal relationship with Christ? We accept this laying on of hands, this spiritual touch as the modern Pentecost. God in the spirit coming down to alight on our heads as a tongue of fire. If that how you remember that day?

When we accept Christ as adults, there is that very visceral experience of standing in front of those who know us, and speaking to our belief in God, Jesus our savior, and the Holy Spirit. But did it lead us to be more active in our community, be

more generous with our time or treasure in helping others, did we study more, pray more, worship more regularly, bless others who travel this journey with us, go out and be with those who are different than us? And do we see the need for rest. There is the need to take time away, to restore ourselves.

If we say no, it did nothing. I felt nothing. It changed nothing. What does that mean? Maybe we need to redo that moment, until we get it right. There was that portion of the service where the Bishop turned to those present, and asked us to support these people in their commitment. And so, I ask you, to take a step back and join with the whole church in answering this question:

Will you do all in your power to support these people in their life in Christ?

That is where the fire of the spirit comes alive in each one of us as we affirm our willingness to support them in their ministry.

That is how Christianity was established, and has remained strong throughout the millennia. It began with Peter, and Paul, and Mary Magdalene, Joanna, James, and John – all of Jesus' disciples. They blessed each other. Laid hands on the newly baptized and then they too were sent out to carry the good news.

As we know, Paul sent letters to the churches he established; to check on them, answer questions, encourage them, and sometimes upbraid them for falling away from the message.

Let's imagine for the moment that we are the Ephesians – Paul writes his letter to us. I expect that everyone would be excited to hear from Paul, what would he have to say about their church? Someone would be the reader, and would do just as we have done this morning, and announce a letter from Paul to the Church in Grand Ledge:

“I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.”

What thoughts come to you as you hear this message?

Paul has heard of our faith! He gives thanks for us, and remembers us in his prayers. He remembers us! He knows we love and support the saints, offers us encouragement, praying that we will receive enlightenment, strength, and gifts of wisdom and revelation.

It is so important that we remember that we are part of so much more than what we see here on Sunday morning.

When we witnessed the laying on of hands yesterday, the bishop reminded us that this tradition reaches back to Peter, to Christ himself, in unbroken Apostolic succession. We are connected, physically through the ages to the very act of laying on of hands as a sign of our membership in the Jesus movement.

I have a small gift for each of you this morning. Remember that we have been given rich gifts in our faith. And we are to share those gifts with others who share our path.

We are Christians because we live in community with each other and with Christ. We celebrate Christ with us in the Eucharist as a community. And we live into the Way of Love as a community.

As Presiding Bishop Curry reminds us ... God loves us, no exceptions.