

Unbind Him

“Unbind him and let him go!”

Isn't that the goal of every spiritual journey?

Isn't that the point of every effort toward spiritual maturity?

Isn't that our hope when we set aside time here every Sunday?

What binds us up?

What keeps us from being free?

For some, it's the trauma of childhood tragedies.

Abuse.

Insecurities.

Fears.

The damaging effects of early trauma can leave so many with the mistaken belief that they simply don't matter.

That they just aren't worth it.

For others, the binding up comes from playing the fools game of pursuing the world's standards of success, prestige, and power.

How many of people spend a lifetime chasing money and professional status?

The very things that lead to death bed confessions acknowledging the sterile emptiness of that chase.

And for still others, the binding up comes from an inability, or unwillingness, to let go of old resentments or hurts.

An unwillingness or inability to simply let things and other people, be.

We are, as human beings, so good at tying ourselves up in knots.

And it is untying those knots, becoming unbound, and being set free, that All Saints Day invites us to experience.

Which raises other questions.

Who is your hero?

Who is your role model?

To whom do you look for inspiration and courage?

Think about that for a moment.

Put that person or those people front and center in your mind.

Here at St Elizabeth's, we have so very many wonderful role models.

This week especially I've been thinking a lot about Aunty Lani Kealoha.

She's been living the life of Job these past years.

Three adult children have died.

Then her husband.

And just recently, her granddaughter-in-law, who herself leaves a grieving husband and 4 young children.

Yet in the face of all of this loss, Aunty Lani, like Job, remains faithful.

Crushed, but faithful.

The staff and volunteers at Wallyhouse are my role models, my heroes.

They tend to the hungry every day, always with a smile and a kind word.

They recognize the difference between simply handing out food and being in solidarity with those in need.

People are seen and treated as people; as beloved children of God.

And I know that so many of you also have your role models, the heroes in your life.

Perhaps it's a grandparent who was able to give a kind of love a parent couldn't muster.

Perhaps it's the giants who have walked among us: the Gandhis, the Mandelas, the Kings or the likes of Mother Theresa or the Berrigan brothers.

For myself, it was and is my cousin Ed.

He was gracious enough to come and preach at my ordination nearly 15 years ago.

He had the whole place cracking up.

Even the bishop was laughing out loud!

A Maryknoll priest who organized poor farmers in the southern Philippines, he was arrested shortly after Marcos imposed martial law there.

Imprisoned and knowing that many Filipino activists had been murdered by the military, he declined the invitation to leave the country for the safety of the US.

Instead, he stood trial in Manila.

He sought to become a citizen of the Philippines, which, fortunately didn't happen, since his US citizenship probably saved his life.

Then they deported him!

He has since returned to the Philippines, where he has spent the last many decades organizing among the elderly for a decent poor person's pension and other forms of social security.

Always, Ed stands in the background.

Always putting the people in the limelight.

All Saints Day is the gift our church gives us once a year to stop and reflect about those who have made a difference in this world, and those who make a difference in our lives.

It's a once a year chance to say thank you for the vision they give us.

The courage they stir up in us.

And the desire to do better, to become better people.

And when we go to that place, who do we bump into, but Martha?

Martha, who today comes to see for the first time that resurrection is not only something that will happen in the distant future.

At an uncertain time.

But that in Christ, resurrection happens every day — if we have the eyes to see it and the heart to embrace it.

Resurrection happens NOW, is what Jesus so adamantly tells Martha.

Not only to once dead (but now alive again) Lazarus.

But to all of us.

Once dead in our separation from one another and from God.

Now alive — as we leap in faith — trusting that the net will appear.

As we let go of controlling people, places and things.

As we fearlessly examine our own selves, our motives and foibles.

As we seek and give forgiveness.

The whole point of following Jesus is to enter into the flow of life.

That's why we surrender.

Let go.

Let things be.

Because in that flow, the reality of Christ, who holds all things together, can suddenly be touched, felt, and experienced.

As my pal Bob Capon likes to say, "Jesus never meets a corpse that doesn't sit up right on the spot." Capon, *Kingdom, Grace, Judgment*, 405.

There's the widow of Nain's son.

Jairus' daughter.

And today, it's Lazarus!

"They all rise, not because Jesus does a number on them, not because he puts some magical resurrection machinery into gear, but simply because — he has that effect on the dead.

They rise because he is the Resurrection — even before he himself rises.

Because, in other words, he is the grand sacrament, the real presence, of the mystery of a kingdom in which everybody rises." Id.

Because, what this All Saints Day begs us to remember is that “if God can raise someone from the dead in the middle of human history – doesn’t that very fact reveal that death is not inevitable?”

That God isn’t only capable of forgiving us all things, but the very texture and shape of God’s forgiveness reaches directly into, and undoes, reverses, brings to an end, the twisted, human reality of death?” James Allison, paraphrased.

What if it is true that death no longer has the last word over any human life?

What if we begin to see each other, and all of life, through the reality of the resurrection?

Might we then return to a place where hope can once again begin to grow?

Because death, the barrier to hope, has lost its power over us?

Isn’t this the very meaning of the cross?

That even when everything seems lost, even when God seems to have hidden God’s self completely, it’s precisely then that the presence and power of God whispers:

“I am with you, always.”

“The one who was seated on the throne says, ‘See, I am making all things new.’

And he says, ‘Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.’

Then he says to me, 'It is finished!

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.'"

These are the promises of our faith!

They encourage us, as we trudge this road of happy destiny.

On this All Saints Day, may whatever is tying you up in knots — be released.

Give it to God, and leave it in God's capable hands.

Then get on with the tasks of this life!

Feeding the hungry.

Visiting the sick.

Tending to the vulnerable.

And forgiving all things.

We are each of us drops of water in the vast ocean that is the Spirit of God.

But if ever you think your drop is without immeasurable significance, always remember that each drop contains the essence of the entire ocean itself.

Meister Eckhart says:

"The eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me.

My eye and God's eye are one eye.

One seeing.

One knowing.

One love."

Who are the saints of God?

You are!

May you receive the grace to know that it's true!

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