

Last night, Sarah was remarking that it's been a while since she danced so hard she was a bit sore! She said it with a broad smile ... I heard in it, for her, good news—doing something she loved for the purposes of expressing God's love. In a way, today is about goodness and beauty amid soreness, ever in God's grace. Someone here early this morning remarked: "I'm worn out just watching her!"

It was a time of much soreness for Isaiah and the people he loved and lived with ... feeling worn out in life. Powerful armies threatened their country from the outside. Prophets lamented corruption and injustice on the inside. So many sources of death. Yet, he trusts in God who deposes oppressors and gives refuge to the poor. That's what Isaiah writes just before raising the people's spirits with a promise of abundant life—a feast to nurture all people with the best food and drink; lifting the shroud of death, wiping away tears, disgrace, despair, in the radiance of hope and peace.

And that's what John provides his beloved in his letter we call Revelation. You may know he fills earlier parts of his letter with metaphoric expressions of death, destruction, suffering, oppression. It's poetry, not intended to be something like a weather forecast of reality. The old earth as people knew it wasn't such a pleasant place. They face chaos in society, ultimately epitomized for ancients in their experience with the sea—unknown depths and mysterious creatures, where far more people sink to the death than swim.

Here's the central question of these texts, as of the Bible in its entirety. Amid life as we know it, where is God? How do we make sense of suffering and loss? What keeps us going through the good and bad; what or perhaps more intimately divined, whom can we trust to guide us? to receive our hearts, our lives, our passion, our questions, the fullness of flourishing we long for and offer in service?

I love how Marilyn Chandler McEntyre imagines the heavenly communion of saints. Togas, bonnets, military gear, martyr's robes, and a dancing bear.¹ Or rather how she's noted what she's seen in other places, other people, other experiences around her. And it seems that's in part the point for us today. Amid all the difficulties and delights do we see the divine?

John wrote to early followers of Jesus who faced horrors of persecution and fear. They longed to glimpse the Holy One, to give their lives to a greater purpose beyond the limits they knew. The text we're about to read would have been for those who heard it something like the beautiful transition in the very first movement of Rutter's *Requiem*, from the dark, foreboding opening "*Requiem aeternam...*" into the lyrical "*et lux perpetua luceat eis*", "let perpetual light shine" as we lit the Christ Candle to begin our worship. As we share the longing for the light of Christ amidst our stress and loss, friends, hear what the Spirit may say. {Read Revelation}

All Saints

We celebrate, give thanks
for how we've twirled, entwined, and harmonized
joy and adversity, dreams and necessities,
with others dear to us.
Relationships of life,
ever in sacred reciprocity of love.

In a few moments, we name members
who entered the realm eternal this past year.
In this sanctuary of space and time
we bear in heart and mind
memories of others whose spirit still lingers—
cherished, grieved, resurrected among us.
Then we return to regular routines,
seeking inspiration for our daily living faith,
as eternity permeates and radiates
through every rumination, every conversation, every action,
every expression of Holy Grace in ordinary gifts.

Do we see the Divine? Do we trust the One crucified? Do we seek Sacred Purpose?

Out of the deep we call: *Kyrie Eleison!* Lord, hear our voice!
Maybe it's tears for a loved one we lost.
Maybe it's fears in the life we lead.
Then a new heaven on earth, John reveals.
God is at home among us, unveiled
in glimpses of beauty unexpected,
in graces of blessing undeserved,
in the glory of you and me flourishing fully alive
in the gift of each new day, each person we meet,
every moment we are privileged to share.
New Jerusalem ... as in faces of grandchildren we see our beloved.
New Jerusalem ... as in spite of news for us and our world, we serve, we persevere.
New Jerusalem ... as in our hearts the Spirit dances, raising us to be
joined together in the One who is Alpha and Omega
from before the beginning and without end.

I am resurrection, I am life, says our Good Shepherd Lord.

And so we believe—we give our hearts to hope, to affirm, to trust—
wherever in life we are led, we dwell in the house,
in the heart, in the holiness of Loving, forever.

Requiem aeternam,

friends, feel God tenderly wipe every tear from our eyes.

Then share a banquet of heaven at this table,

Pie Jesu Domine, agnus dei, qui tolis peccata mundi.

A voice from heaven, well our choir loft, sings
our greatest promise: *Sanctus! Sanctus!* God is with us!

Do we see the Divine? Do we trust the One crucified ... and risen?

Do we express Sacred Purpose?

All Saints

We celebrate, give thanks

for how, in us, God continues to twirl, entwine, and harmonize

joy and adversity, dreams and necessities,

with others dear ... to us ...

and to God.

ⁱ Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, *A Faithful Farewell* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015), 134