Homily All Saints 2026

Yesterday some of the Lethbridge spiritual directors gathered in our home for a couple of hours of prayer and education. Our theme this year for our monthly gatherings is "dreams." During our peer time, a time in which we assist each other with any conflicts or struggles, whether they be personal or to do with the practice of spiritual direction itself, was structured as a dream circle. We opened up one member's dream with its symbols and images and messages. And during the education part, we watched a ten-minute video teaching from Jeremy Taylor, a now deceased expert on opening dreams in groups.

Taylor spoke of dreams as an ancient dream language even before homo Sapiens evolved he said that there were discussions of dreams among the Homo erectus and others. He said that dreams are spiritual, that they connect us to the Holy Source of Life and they exist for our well-being—even nightmares. Rather prophetically, he said that dreams and the work of Carl Jung are often ignored by our culture to our peril.

I agree with Taylor that dreams are important, because personally, they have had a way of making themselves known to me at certain times in my life and have brought about positive change. If we don't remember our dreams and we don't have visions in our waking life, there are still enough metaphors in our everyday life to keep us tuned in to a language of nature, of wind and sea and plants, messages from the colours of birds and animals and their behaviours. These are metaphors that Jesus liked to use. He also, in the beatitudes, spoke to our emotional and spiritual wellbeing according to our life experience.

Today's readings take us into the dreamworld or waking visions and the gospels use language that stretches our understanding of this world according to how Jesus sees the relationship of his *Abwoon* (Birther in Aramaic) with humankind.

The Beatitudes seem to take a twist that create a paradox rather than reassurance. Kind of like a nightmare, we are blessed when life is stressful, because good will come from whatever that affliction is.

The Book of Revelation, the last book of the Christian Scriptures, and the First Reading that we heard today, is, according to the late Bill Parker in his book *Scripture 101*, a Redemptorist priest friend of ours, made up of 4 styles of writing: It is written in the form of a letter. Second, there is prophecy, -- which is language that wakes us up to the present rather than predicts the future, and third we find hymns to sing. Finally, there are apocalyptic visions, some of which we heard read today.

The visions of John of Patmos are very much dream language often rooted in metaphor and meaning, even playful in their colours and numbers or in the action of the living beings we hear described. These images are there to speak to the Christians who were gathered for worship privately in houses. The overall message, like our dream group discovered, is for the well-being of the hearers of this letter.

Parker says that (p128) "the author of these visions did not tell the faithful *how* or *when* the world would end, but rather assured those who were suffering for their faith that God would bring such evil to an end." We hear that same message in the Beatitudes. Creator will comfort.

The hymns found in Revelation were sung to support and uplift communities, to reassure them that they were not alone. Even the prophecy was to caution believers against a tendency to go along with a materialistic view held by the Roman culture under the emperor. Parker says, "John wants us to see the world and its future from heaven's side, and it is quite an extraordinary view." This view is in contrast to emperor worship in which the various ritualistic acts the public were forced to make did not, according to John, lead to a place of new life and love with Christ.

To me, the language of Paul to the Thessalonians is also spirit-world language. When he talks about the various waves of spirits at the end time and what happens after Christians die, and how the flow of afterlife takes up people still living into the heavens with Christ, he is describing something he's seen in a dream state. Once again, the images are there for comfort, and consolation, for the wellbeing of those who gather for Christian worship, sometimes in secret, often under persecution.

These images are in contrast to the experience of non-Christians who have not tasted the joy or love present in the Spirit-world of Christ. Paul speaks to people who are in active grief for the loss of loved ones who have be martyred or died before the second coming that they thought was imminent.

This time of year, All Hallows Eve, All Saints Day and All Souls Day is a season of opening ourselves to the possibility of the spirits of ancestors and of loved ones in dreams and their afterlife in God's love. We might explore the four written forms in the Book of Revelation ourselves.

That is, we can receive the messages metaphorically hidden and explicit in our dreams (when we remember them) and take the time to open them with others or find out more about how to do so.

We can sing hymns about the realm of the communion of saints and listen to or make music that lifts our spirits in a time of sorrow.

We can pray with words from Paul's letters written to the Early Church and take time to listen for the prophetic message of what our Creator is saying now about our environment, about our relationships with friends and family members, and about our need to serve one another in love.

We are an apocalyptic people grounded in service to one another through a prophetic word, a dream sharing, a song or communicating our story to another person with a phone call, over coffee or by an old-fashioned card or letter.

Happy All Saints Day!