

Let us pray... God of wonder, you are holy. Create a space for holiness in our lives. Usher your Spirit in our midst. Infuse your loving presence in our hearts, calm our minds, and bring us peace. So, we may know we are loved by the Creator of the universe... Amen.

I have dearly enjoyed our book club... The books we have read have covered a lot of different topics and have hit each one of us differently.

For me... I have liked some books more than others... But I have finished them all... Partially to be responsible, so that I am better equipped to lead the discussion...

But partially because I want to see how the book ends...

Now, I know that not everyone in the book club agrees with needing to finish the book, and that there are others who always finish the book, even if it is after our discussion...

But regardless of ones' thoughts, when we meet, we always talk about how the book ends. We talk about the journey, and how it felt for us to read it.

In an essence we share our own story of the story... Because the story we read is interpreted through our own life experiences...

The way that we understand the world, the way that we make meaning, the way that we see and experience things.

And this is the beauty that I love from our discussions...

I call them glimmers...When you experience where someone else is coming from... When you get to know them even more.

Because everyone has their own story... Their own real story... A story that is ever changing and evolving... A story that is unique and beautiful and loved.

Because every single person is unique and beautiful and loved...

Which makes days like today that much more sacred... As today we are commemorating All Saints Day.

A day of remembrance specifically for those who have passed since November of last year... And for us here at St. John, that is Patsy Askew, Vernon Bahr, Kathie Reissman, Marilyn Grunenwald, Dale Smith, Pat Poeske, Andrew Schreiber, Rodney Treu, Joanne Hartfiel, Patrick Plunkett, and Clifford Knapp...

All of whom had their own story... They made wonderful memories, but they also had painful experiences.

And just like any story, theirs were filled with ups and downs... They laughed and cried... They had great days and hard days...

But through it all... They were loved... Loved by so many of you here, and loved unconditionally by God.

And the names I shared today, the names of our beloved Saints, don't even scratch the surface of All Saints....

Because there are many more people that are near and dear to your hearts, who died this past year, but were not members of St. John...

And there are people you loved that died before November of last year...

There are people who we don't even know, who have died, leaving the sting of death and loss on their loved ones...

So many Saints, so many deaths...

Which can make us feel that death is the end of the story...

But we know through faith that this is not true...

As the Word of God is always providing us with glimmers of hope... With shimmers of what is yet to come...

For example, in our reading from Revelation we were painted a glorious sight.

"I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb... Where they will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Here we are assured that not only does death not have the final word... But that pain, affliction, hunger, and disease will be no more...

Here we are able to see rays of hope shining in...

Allowing us to trust that true peace is possible with Christ.

Afterall, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Because God's love is the only kind of love that creates us new.

The very love where the Saints who have passed are now held in...

But until we see and experience that kind of love for ourselves, we are left with only glimmers...

Glimmers from when you see or hear or experience something that reminds you of your loved ones who have died...

An experience that goes beyond words, where you feel it in your very soul... That though they are gone, they are not lost... They are in Christ.

As Christ crosses the boundary of space and time... And it is Christ's love that glimmers in our place.

As Christ's love continues to hold our loved ones, weaving them into every single page of our stories, even when we no longer feel their presence.

Because even when our stories endure sadness and loss, they are not lived alone.

Memories are not shaped by our loss, but rather by our love.

And our loved ones are never lost, because they are found by the great shepherd.

A shepherded that gives us grace... So, we can hold them in our hearts, our words, our actions, and sometimes our tears.

Because this shepherded knows they are our Saints and we are theirs...

As all Saints are forever held in Christ.

So, it is my prayer... Especially on the days when the loss of your loved ones feels heavy or unbearable... Remember to keep turning the page. Keep sharing the story. Because hope is found, in what is yet to come... Amen.