

Proper 28, Year B (Veteran's Observance) 11/19/06 St. Paul's

November is like a season unto its self, one of transition, on the cusp of change. It can be an unsettling time as we focus on battening down, securing the harvest, and winding down the church year. November can be cold or warm. It is not quite autumn but it is not quite time for Advent either. End times can be unsettling. Have we done all we could for this year? What have we forgotten?

Perhaps November can be enjoyed simply as a time of blessing and giving thanks. We remembered the saints on All Saints' Day. All Saints' Day is a time for recalling and retelling the stories of their lives. In our remembering we receive again the gifts of their goodness. We also celebrated the living saints...us! We find healing in the celebration of the saints all around us. We greet one another with words and expressions of peace, love, and thanks. We also take time to rejoice in our connection with believers everywhere in the world and across the expanse of time. Psalm 16 says: "You will show me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore." God has knit us together in a worldwide community unlimited by time. We celebrate and honor one another with joy. We remember the many heroes and heroines in faith in this season.

I know Veteran's Day was last weekend! But that was the only Sunday Father Gene Wise could preach. It was Consecration Sunday when we focused on committing our time, talent, and treasure to the work of God. At the same time we cannot let pass the remembrance of those who committed themselves to the service of our country, a land of freedom where we can freely worship God. The church needs to recognize that sacrifice. WE sang today "from war's alarms, from deadly pestilence, be thy strong arm our ever sure defense; thy true religion in our hearts increase, thy bounteous goodness nourish us in peace." Will those of you who have served our country in uniform, please stand. (I ask you to lead us in the pledge of allegiance).

The green season of summer and the ingathering of autumn are completed. What is left for the faithful is the remembrance of God's goodness and giving thanks for God's many blessings. November reminds us that we are blessed! Even though a blessing is wonderful on its own, it finds its full completion as it is shared with others. Blessings shared, multiply. Such is the economy of God.

As the days of November wane, the spirit of worship does not. The church year does not and should not end with a whimper, a mere tipping of the lectionary hat to Christ the King Sunday. The church year ends next Sunday with an explosion of praise as we come to worship in joy and to baptize a child into the kingdom of God.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega" God proclaims in Revelation. We find our beginnings and endings hidden safely and securely in the grace of God. God is our beginning and our end. We come from God and we return to God. Facing the endings in our lives, the little deaths, is the preparation for the ending of our physical lives. We learn and prepare not for final death, however, but for another beginning, for a new life in God. In this

transition, in death, God promises to be there with us and to wipe away every tear. If God is for us, who can be against us? We learn to face endings confident in the love and grace of God.

We begin the church year with expectant wondering and waiting as we contemplate the incarnation of Christ. We end the church year wondering in the glorious love and grace of Christ, who is the ruler of our lives, the ruler of the universe. Contemplating this wonder, the psalmist writes, "My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices; my body also shall rest in hope." We rest in hope because we know that endings with God are really beginnings. The cycle of life continue birth to death, death to birth.

We end the church year in gladness, joy, and hope. God is good. We celebrate the joy we have now and we look forward to the time we shall all be one in the goodness of God.

Amen.