

Weekly Musing † October 31, 2011

Tonight is All Hallows' Eve'n or Halloween. Of course Holy Days, using the Jewish understanding of days, start at sundown and go to sundown the next day. There is some debate about the origin of Halloween but it probably comes from a Celtic holiday at a time of the year when the spiritual world and the temporal world were thought to be particularly close. Bonfires were lit and animal sacrifice, perhaps even . . . but I believe I am sharing too much. Many think the Celts were a people of wonderful and homey customs but some of them were anything but. The date for All Saints and therefore Halloween has a convoluted history in both the west (Rome) and east (Antioch). It is an early church holiday in both. I surmise that the November 1st date was meant to compete with the Celtic (and most certainly pagan) celebration of that date.

The church's notion of All Saints is to honor the whole panoply of saints both those known and those unknown, that is, those with no specific saints day. At St. Luke's we will celebrate All Saints this coming weekend at all three services. Unfortunately people don't come out for midweek Holy Days. That is too bad. It is always wonderful to have night services with special celebrations. We have lost something.

A tradition in England and elsewhere around the time of All Saints and All Souls (November 2) was the baking of soul cakes. You may remember the song about them from Peter, Paul, and Mary in 1963 or if you are younger in Sting's Christmas Album of 2009 which I highly recommend.



Soul, Soul, a soul cake!

I pray thee, good missus, a soul cake!

One for Peter, two for Paul,

three for Him what made us all!

Soul Cake, soul cake, please good missus, a soul cake.

An apple, a pear, a plum, or a cherry, any good thing to make us all merry.

One for Peter, two for Paul, & three for Him who made us all.

These cakes were given to children and the poor. Remembering the poor is the proper way to celebrate all feasts of the church.

Yes, we do recipes and here is the one for Soul Cakes:

Ingredients

1 cup butter, two sticks American
3 3/4 cups sifted flour
1 cup fine sugar
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon ginger
1 teaspoon allspice
2 eggs
2 teaspoons cider vinegar
4 -6 tablespoons milk
powdered sugar, to sprinkle on top

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Cut the butter into the flour with a pastry blender or a large fork.
3. Blend in the sugar, nutmeg, ginger, cinnamon and allspice; beat eggs, vinegar, and milk together.
4. Mix with the flour mixture until a stiff dough is formed.
5. Knead thoroughly and roll out 1/4-inch thick.
6. Cut into 3-inch rounds and place on greased baking sheets. Prick several times with a fork and bake for 20-25 minutes.
7. Presentation.
8. Sprinkle lightly with powdered sugar while still warm.

All Souls Day or All Faithful Departed, comes the day after All Saints. Part of the celebration of it consisted of this during the mass, the famous dies irae:

Day of wrath! O day of mourning!
See fulfilled the prophets' warning,
Heaven and earth in ashes burning!

Alas, there is little sympathy for this theology except among a few of the laity and not a few of the clergy. All Souls Day is to remember all those who have gone on before. It is not to be confused with All Saints Day, the two having been merged in many protestant churches (though most have forgotten it all together). All Saints are those who are special lights in their generations. All Souls are those we each remember in our own lives, those who rejoice on a distant shore. I will close with a part of the litany for All Saints which I always find moving during this season.

Holy ones who died in witness to the Christ:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Stephen the deacon, the first martyr, stoned in Jerusalem:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Justin, Ignatius and Polycarp, who refused the incense to Caesar:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Perpetua and Felicity, torn by beasts in the arena at Carthage:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley
Burned in Oxford:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Maximilian Kolbe and Edith Stein, put to death at Auschwitz:

Stand Here Beside Us!

James Reeb, Jonathan Daniels, Michael Schwerner,
Medgar Evers, Viola Liuzzo, shot in the South:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Martin Luther King, shot in Memphis:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Janani Luwum, shot in Kampala:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Oscar Romero, shot in San Salvador:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Martyrs of Rome, of Lyons, of Japan, of Eastern
Equatorial

Africa, of Uganda, of Melanesia, martyrs of everywhere:

STAND HERE BESIDE US!

- But lo! there breaks a yet more glorious day;
- The saints triumphant rise in bright array;
- The King of Glory passes on his way.
- Alleluia, alleluia!

Holy ones of every time and place:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Glorious company of heaven:

Stand Here Beside Us!

All climbers of the ladder of Paradise:

Stand Here Beside Us!

All runners of the celestial race:

Stand Here Beside Us!

[The people may call out saints' names]
Great cloud of witnesses:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Mary most holy, chief of the saints:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Mary most holy, yes-sayer to God:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Mary most holy, unmarried mother:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Mary most holy, gate of heaven and ark of the covenant:

Stand Here Beside Us!

- From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
- Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
- Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:
- Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus our liberator, creator of all:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Jesus our liberator, redeemer of all:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Jesus our liberator, sanctifier of all:

Stand Here Beside Us!

Jesus our liberator, the alpha and the omega, the beginning
and the end:

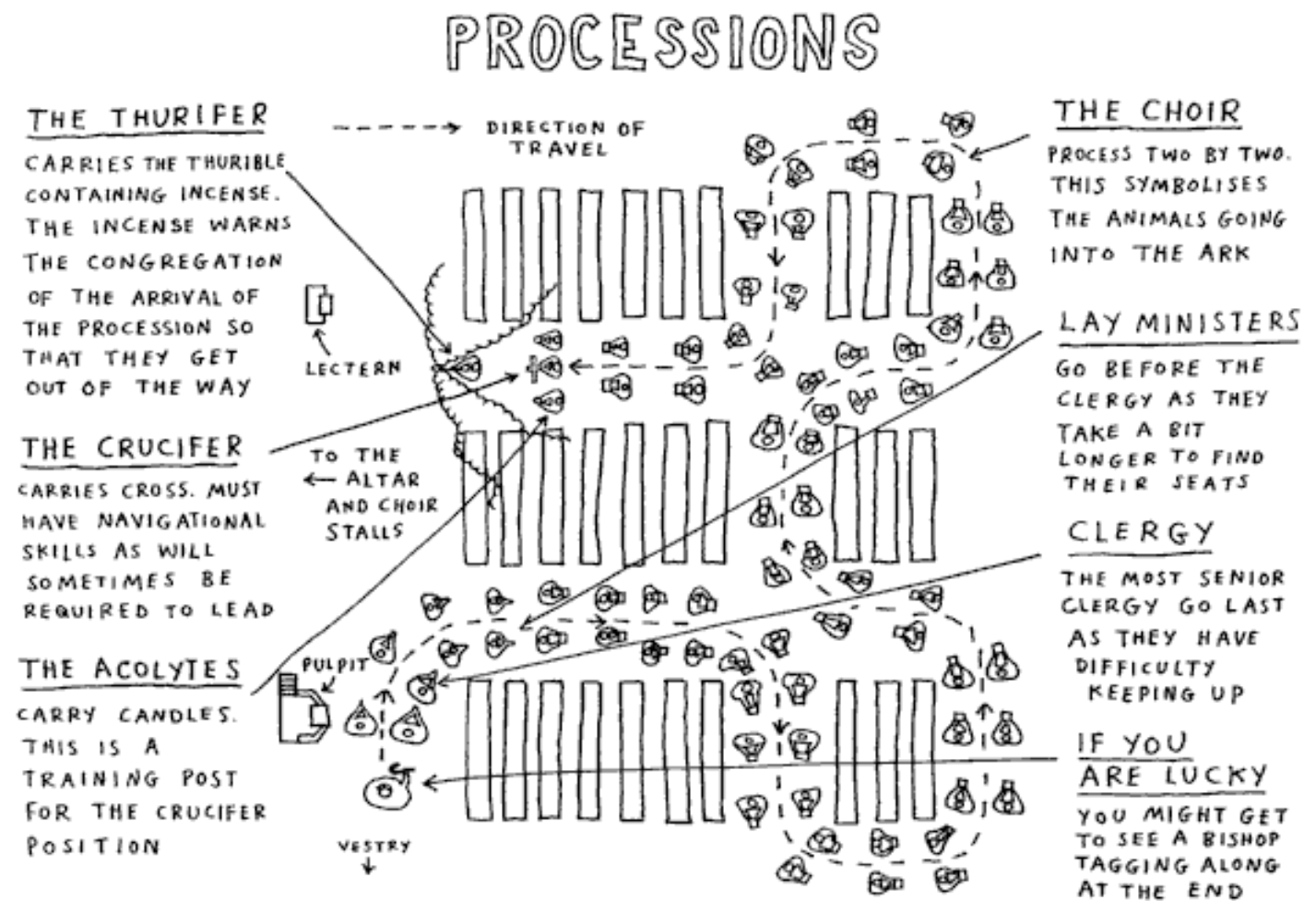
Stand Here Beside Us!

News from St. Luke's

Remember that the next two weekends, we will collect money at all three weekend services for the ECW's Dress-a-Child project. A long time ago we used to just dress one child but once we opened this up to people in the parish donating, it has expanded to many children. As always, there are many children in need.

The youth group continues to meet on Wednesdays at 6 pm. We will be doing a program on All Souls this week. This last youth group meeting saw us elect officers for our new 4H group. The next 4H meeting will be Wednesday, November 9, right before the youth group meeting. 4H is open to kids 9 and older and has many sorts of projects, some not related to agriculture. It is a good way for young people to learn to set goals and accomplish them.

You will soon get the materials for our Pledge Drive for 2012. One of the things that our research has found out about declining churches (and those that close) is they regularly say: "We only want to take care of our own." and "We don't want to offend anyone." Churches must act as servants, spreading the word of Christ by example and deed. We have come to do a lot of that at St. Luke's. A church needs to be about far more than making sure our own are comfortable and have convenient worship times. Christianity is set up to fail as a maintenance religion.



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