



All Souls Day

An address for the Cosmic Mass ● 2nd November 2008 ● Rev Lukas

I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

"O death, where is thy victory?"

O death, where is thy sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

Today is traditionally known as All Souls Day, yesterday was All Saints Day and Friday was Halloween.

All Souls Day is a time to remember and to pray for all those souls that are in the spiritual worlds: souls that are either making their way through the spiritual spheres after letting go of the earthly body at death or souls that are on their way back into incarnation, and preparing for a new birth.

Prayerful thought of our experience of Christ, directed to these souls, is said to be beneficial for them. We can strengthen them with our spiritual consciousness. Our consciousness becomes for them a warming and encouraging light.

We tend to do this most Sundays during our Cosmic Mass when we say the Prayer of Intention.

Yesterday, All Saints Day, was the traditional time for praying to all those highly evolved souls, the Saints, those who allowed the spirit of Christ to fill their earthly life. Our pray is for their benefit but also for our own. In praying to and thinking of these souls, we may receive inspiration from them which can assist us to better walk the spiritual path with Christ.

Some twenty years ago, soon after two well known spiritual teachers had died, Rev Mario said that if we thought of those two souls and studied their spiritual teachings then they would assist us from the spiritual worlds.

The origins of what is now called Halloween are not very clear, from my reading at least. The word Halloween means All Hallows Day Eve, or in modern English the day before All Saints

Day. The strange costumes and traditions associated with Halloween probably date back to pre-Christian times. If you can imagine the Northern Hemisphere at the very end of the harvest time, gathering up the last crops - the pumpkins probably - and experiencing the inevitable descent of the sun into the darkness of winter, it would have been an experience of the power of darkness overtaken the light of the sun, the death of light – a light which would not be reborn again until after the winter solstice, which coincides with our Christmas.

In those days of the old atavistic clairvoyance, at such a time of increasing darkness, people may have felt the need to protect themselves against any nasty spiritual influences that would befall them during the long dark winter ahead. Today the remnants of the old Halloween continue as a game for children in some parts of the world.

Forgotten Origins

This cluster of three festival days has probably lost meaning for most of us in our culture. We speak of them without really entering into their original significance. At the Centre we respect old traditions, but we also need to develop, now within ourselves, imagination of these festivals, so that they become living and real for us. Simply accepting dogmatic tradition is not helpful.

What is meant by developing imagination, in this context? To illustrate what is meant, I will reflect for a moment on how we use language.

Generally in our culture we use words and phrases without having any idea about the origins of these words and how they have evolved.

I was reading a book by a linguist recently (Roy Wilkinson). He gave some interesting examples of how certain words have evolved.

For example the word 'companion' is derived from the Latin words 'cum' and 'panis'. Cum means 'with' and panis means 'bread'. So the word companion originally evolved from a picture of one sitting down with another and eating bread together.

Another example is the word 'derive'. It comes from the Latin words 'de' meaning down and 'rivus' meaning river. So the words 'derived' or 'derivative' originally evolved from a picture of a river flowing downstream away from its origin – conveying the idea of something 'down river' having its origins 'up river'.

Today when I use the words 'companion' or 'derivation' I don't have these pictures in my mind. What I do have is an abstract concept only.

In ancient times, we have been taught that the sounds we made using our voice contained power and soul essence, which communicated something of the spiritual worlds. So if we were to trace the origins of words further back beyond Latin and ancient Greece, we would get to a time when a vowel conveyed something of the essence of a planetary spirit and the consonants something of a constellation of the zodiac.

If we continued further back and actually remembered the origins of the cosmos we would come to an understanding of the opening verses of the Gospel of St John:

In the beginning was the word (the logos) and the word was with God and the word was God.

How far our consciousness has moved away from that origin and from experiencing the essence of the Word, the Christ!

As we have forgotten the origins of our language, so we have forgotten the origins and living meaning of our spiritual festivals, including these last three days - the eve of All Hallows day, All Saints day and All Souls day.

Present Day Consciousness of Death and Birth

When going about our routines from day to day generally I think we also forget the meaning of birth, death and rebirth. All Souls Day provides us with the opportunity to contemplate and remind ourselves of this great phenomenon.

Of course when someone close to us dies, we can be shaken from this lack of awareness. At those times we have some experience of the departed soul in the days after their death.

When that person was alive we were connected with them on a physical and sense level and also on a soul level. When they die we are no longer connected on the level of the physical senses, but the soul connection continues for sometime.

We are no longer distracted by their physical appearance or by their personality traits or attitudes of mind. Those aspects have fallen away with the body, and we are left with a clearer sense of the essence of the soul itself and of its experience in the life it has just lived.

In a similar way when a child is born most of us would also have had an experience of the soul world or atmosphere surrounding an infant. The poet Wordsworth portrays this experience in a well-known poem:

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy.*

The Time of Scorpio

Why at this time of year, the beginning of November, do we have this cluster of three days dedicated to remembering discarnate souls? November is the month to pray for departed and incarnating souls and this probably relates to the fact that we are under the influence of Scorpio at this time.

The sign of Scorpio is traditionally associated with death and regeneration. The hermetic astrologists considered that on a physical body level Scorpio creates the organs of reproduction and elimination in the human being - thus the connection with birth and death, creating new life and discarding what is dead. This physical principle of Scorpio can be expanded out to also include the cosmic cycle of the birth, death and rebirth of souls.

The dual symbols of Scorpio, the scorpion and the eagle, together convey the principle of death and new birth. Of course there are many layers to understanding these symbols but, for today's address, the deadly sting of the scorpion indicates the suffering and death associated with our physical incarnation while the eagle represents the soul, free of the fetters of the physical body.

The Gospel of John

Over the centuries the picture of the eagle (Scorpio) has emerged from the Gospel of St John. At the middle point of this Gospel, as you know, is the story of John's initiation - from death in a tomb for four days then to rebirth. This represents the transformation from Lazarus to John the Beloved. This experience of death and rebirth could be one reason why the writer of this gospel, John, has been associated with the sign of the eagle.

All four Gospels tell of a greater event of birth, death and rebirth, and that is of course the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. Christ has chosen to join us in this great cosmic cycle, he is now our companion, and in so doing has made it possible for us to transform our souls by sharing with us his freedom and love.

Thus the Scripture from St Paul which was read earlier:

For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

*Death is swallowed up in victory.
O death, where is thy victory?
O death, where is thy sting?*

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

On a personal or attitudinal level, we can relate this time of year to the elimination or letting go of that which is dead, that which has passed its 'use-by date'. There may be something we are occupied with in life that is no longer useful for our spiritual progress.

Insight into these issues and unhelpful situations in our lives was probably made very clear during Michaelmas. Now we have the opportunity to let go of the hindrances and in so doing, bring renewal to our souls, and experience a rebirth and soar like an eagle.

This is a time to experience and know that we are involved in the great cosmic and human phenomenon of birth, death and rebirth. Even though our modern culture and consciousness distracts us in so many ways, from seeing this reality.

I will conclude with a poem by Beredene Jocelyn (with modification):

*Although the earthly body die,
The soul and spirit death defy,
And are in contact much the same
With loved ones who on Earth remain.*

*For worlds of Soul and Spirit are
Not bound by space, they are not far,
Our soul and spirit in them live,
Our love to loved ones we still give.*

*The welfare of humanity
Is thus promoted endlessly;
The sense of loneliness is gone
As (Christ's) love flows freely on and on.*

So shall it be.

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