

1st Sunday after Pentecost—All Saints  
St George Albany  
6.11.23

In the name of the F, S, HS—one God—Amen!

Often, when difficult moments happen in our lives we ask questions.

Our community has faced one such moment this week.

In the passing of Fr Gregory perhaps some of us have had questions

This is a natural response.

Questions are good

Because they make us pause.

They make us think and contemplate.

Questions often lead us to prayer.

And questions—when we take the time to ask them—take us on a search for answers

There are all kinds of places we go for answers.

Often, the first place we go is our phones.

Just for fun I typed in this question “why do we die” on my computer this week.

As you can imagine the answers were endless, from biology to psychology to sociology to religion—all of them seeking to provide some type of competent answer

As Christians though the place we go for answers is the Church

In the Church we know that we have a sure guide, and this is our Lord Jesus Christ who is present in His Church through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And when we come into the Church there are those who help to guide us and introduce us to Christ—the Pearl of Great Price (Mt 13.46)—in a deeper and truer way

These guides are the Saints of the Church.

Today we remember all the saints from all the ages of the Church

These are people in whom the Spirit of God dwelt.

The Saints show us that a life with Christ can be lived out in many many ways

One such way is as a priest of God.

Fr Gregory lived, this life of a priest of God

I only met Fr Gregory—may His memory be eternal!—one time

It was my first time filling in on a Sunday up here in early February this year.

He sat out in the pews in a very unassuming way

He came into the altar to take communion as priests do and he introduced himself

After the Liturgy he asked to talk with me

And we were able to have a conversation

In the midst of that conversation I saw that Fr Gregory loved this parish

He loved you all

Fr Gregory served as your guide to introduce you to Christ

In serving you as your priest for over 10 years Fr Gregory built relationships with you all

And it is in relationship that Love happens. But relationship needs to have a third person involved for it to work. There must be three or else love will go astray

Perhaps this prompts a question for you? How can there be three? Love is between two is it not?

No my beloved love is not between two it is between three

This is why our Lord says today *He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me*

When our Love does not include God as the head, as that third person it is bound to go astray

Love will become transactional without God. I give you this and you give me that.

Or love will become tyrannical without God—you do this because I am stronger than you

And so there must be three. There must be a third who provides headship

For Fr Gregory and this community the third person in this relationship of love was Christ

Now someone might say—why does it have to be Christ? Why cant it be some other set of values or something else like money

Well, that is simple—there is no one else that can give Life because there is no one else who has conquered death. For all the other great men who have lived and started religions Buddha, Mohammed, Confucious—they did not die and rise from the dead. Our Lord has.

Christ has conquered death. His tomb is empty. There are no relics from his body.

This may raise another question though—then why do we still die?

If Christ is so great and he conquered death why do our loved ones still die

Why must I go through this pain and suffering of death?

Well, perhaps we think of death in the wrong way..

What if the body of our loved one is like a seed that we put into the earth?

We put the seed in the ground, we water it and the sun shines and it germinates and rises from beneath the earth

There is in the seed the power of life and we do not understand this but it is so.

So also when we live a life in the Church—When we are baptized and Chrismated and we go to confession and receive communion we receive the power of life into our bodies.

When we live the life of the Church our bodies receive the Life-giving Spirit of God and we begin to change little by little into ones who can rise again. Just like Christ.

We do not rise on our own but we rise because we have become like Christ. We rise from the dead because we have joined ourselves to him and we have become like him

We have become humble because we have acquired the life-giving Spirit of God and we do not insist on or own way

We have become kind because we have acquired the life-giving Spirit of God and we do not open our mouths in anger

We have become faithful because we have acquired the life-giving Spirit of God and we show our love even when it is hard

But why must we still die?

We must still die because this is the final way that we become like Christ

We follow him into the earth JUST like HE followed us into the earth when we were dead without hope of resurrection

And so our bodies go into the earth like seeds with the power of life in them because they have acquired the Life-giving Spirit of God

And they will rise again as the Church waters the bodies with prayer—we pray for the dead because our prayers have impact and strength

So pray for Fr Gregory just like you will want others to pray for you

And the bodies will rise again because Christ our True God, the Son of Righteousness shines on them to raise them up from beneath the earth.

Beloved, take this opportunity to commit yourselves to a life in the Church like Fr Gregory did.

Take this opportunity to commit to a life of acquiring the Life-giving Spirit of God

In so doing you will rise again with Christ our True God at the last day.

Glory to the unorginate Father, the only-begotten Son and the All-Holy and Good and Life-Giving Spirit. Amen.