

## The Communicator November 3, 2024



Who doesn't love Day of the Dead as celebrated in Mexico? It is a wonderful holiday filled with color, smells and memories. I had a Mexico City Mexican tell me once that he didn't celebrate these days any more - "Just stuff for the pueblos and history." Well, his great loss.



I don't know about you but I start preparing both mentally and logistically weeks in advance. It is not something you can just throw together last minute.. not if you're going to do it right. As mentioned in an earlier Communicator, watching the movie Coco is a crash course in the importance of the *ofrenda*, family and this most Mexican of Celebrations.

John Spencer of Casona Spencer and the beautiful walls of the Church of the Three Kings at Tetela del Monte was a Brit who died and was buried in the cemetery outside the church and with no family. Most of us expats



## The Communicator November 3, 2024



don't have family buried here and so, over the years, many of us have adopted John Spencer as our own.... even many who never knew him. We tend his grave and visit his tomb to build an *ofrenda* every November 1.

This year a number of you answered the call to help decorate John's grave. We had a wonderful time and were even treated to a rare tour of this very old and historical church.

Ileana Romero Tanner took over as designer of our project - copying one of Van Gogh's paintings in flower petals. John loved Van Gogh and each of the

past several years we have chosen one of his works to copy. We have never achieved as good a likeness as we did this year under the guidance of Ileana.

At Saint Michael's, Isabel Graves, another of our very talented members created an *ofrenda* honoring our relatives as well as past parishioners who have passed in recent years. .





## The Communicator November 3, 2024



We celebrate Birthday Sunday on the first Sunday of each month. Our amazing Minister of Hospitality, Debbie Jeffress, always makes a special cake and today Isabel made tamales for the hospitality hour. Debbie's philosophy of "Feed them and they will come" works and each Sunday the hospitality hour is anticipated by young and old.



We were once again blessed by the Reverend Gillian Ball on this All Souls Sunday. I have printed Gillian's sermon at the end of The Communicator as well as another gifted sermon delivered last Sunday by the Reverend Tamara Newell. During Father Doug's recovery we have been so fortunate to have the presence of these marvelous former rectors as well as Father Victor Hugo. Father Doug said in a note earlier today

## The Communicator November 3, 2024

that he gives thanks every day for their presence. So do we. Father Doug is very much hoping to return the last Sunday in November, November 24. In the meantime, Remembrance Sunday, always an important day in the life of Saint Michael's, will be covered by the Reverend Gillian Ball (don't forget to wear a red poppy if you have one) and the following Sunday, November 17 by Father Victor Hugo.

Today's Communicator has more photos and it is thanks to Pat Manners, Isabel Graves and others among you who have returned to their faithful tasks. A grand thanks to each of you!!!!



Thanksgiving is just around the corner! Helen Millan will again be offering Thanksgiving Dinner at the flagship Helen's Pasteleria near Club de Golf. In past years Helen had several sittings on both Thanksgiving and the following Saturday. This year it will be limited to one sitting on Thanksgiving Day. More details on reservations in the following Communicator.

Choir today featured two new choir members. Daniel Curse and Suzie Jeffress' daughter Natalia Lee. Natalia loves the song from Coco, "Remember Me" which the choir sang today for All Souls but hopefully she will continue to sing with this lovely group. The choir did a postlude version of "La Llorona" which was enjoyed by everyone. It was a fun ending to a beautiful service. Thank you choir and Professor Victor Manuel!

Saint Michael's isn't just busy on Sundays, lots happens during the week. Tomorrow, November 4, first Monday of the month, Anita Gottschalk's Quilting group meets at 11. Normally there is a meditation group with Ann Moxey on Tuesday but there is no group this week. The Alexander Method meets at 11 on Wednesdays and Yoga with Ann 11-12:30 on Thursday. Friday is Senior Club 10-12. Lorena Molina was delighted to report this Sunday that there are new members of the Senior Club! Good job Lorena and Team. It is a wonderful social time for Seniors with games, crafts, activities. Lorena Molina, Pat Manners and Amanda Hooten make sure there is lots of fun and laughter!!!



## The Communicator November 3, 2024



And, if you need some relief time with your own senior or just help with light household chores, Lorena is available. Please contact her at 777-212-9575. I assure you she comes with the **very** highest recommendations.

Off-Campus, Mexican Current Events with Charlie Goff happens at Cemanahuac Wednesdays, 5-6:30. It is an invaluable opportunity to learn about what is happening in Mexico and how today's events are connected with the history of Mexico. There is a great core group of about 14 people and you are more than welcome to join. Cemanahuac is located at San Juan 4, just 1.5 blocks from the Glorieta on Avenida Zapata Sur.

Don't forget to buy your own copy (and hopefully gift copies) of The Divine Dogs of Saint Michael's Calendar. It is a perfect stocking stuffer. We're grateful to a visitor from last week, Professor Dale Blesz, who hand carried a mailing of many calendars to gift shops of churches in the US. Great initiative by Judy Frothingham!

## **The Communicator November 3, 2024**

Our Stewardship drive for 2025 has begun. Expect to hear from a member of the Vestry regarding your commitment to the support of Saint Michael's.

Library Corner: Do you have a library card? If not, why not? Our library has a long and most illustrious history of serving the English-speaking Morelos Community. There are also many Spanish language books in the collection. The first Sunday of each month is Library Sunday and even features a children's story hour! Good job Librarians!!!!

There will be no Communicator this Tuesday. I will be traveling to the US to vote and for medical procedures. Please, if you have news you would like circulated in the Communicator, send it to [carolhop1@aol.com](mailto:carolhop1@aol.com) or WhatsApp 777-328-0637.

**The Reverend Tamara Newell's sermon from October 27. Followed by the Reverend Gillian Ball's Homily of November 3.**

October 27, 2024 - Proper 25 B

St Michael and All Angels, Cuernavaca, Morelos

Good morning. Again, and as always, I am so glad to be here with you.

As you know we always preach on the lessons that we have read from the Bible. But this week real life, contemporary life, has offered a lesson for us.

I am going to go out on a limb today. Not something I do often but it seems to me this is important. The church has conspired too often to side step the real problems in life. Problems that are so much bigger than our own life. And, I admit, our own life can have some pretty big problems and if the church can offer comfort and succor and strength and courage at those times

## The Communicator November 3, 2024

than the Church does. And to my way of thinking, it does that job well. How often has the church gotten us through one thing or another? It has been the anchor of my life. I know it has for some of you too. I have a plaque in my library that says, *Almighty God, help me to remember that you and I can get through anything together.* I like that because it makes the relationship with God about - well - a relationship. And if you have a personal relationship with the church the church is faithful to you.

But, I think preachers seek to avoid controversy because as churches shrink and fewer people support the church we are scared to upset anyone who might then decide to leave the church. And gosh, it seems like leaving the church is the easiest thing to do. Because we have only one hour a week together and we are worshipping God, meditating on God's sacred scripture, sharing bread at God's table - we seem to shy away from tarnishing that time. But this is what I have on my heart this week. I want to talk to you. I want to talk to my brothers and sisters in Christ - about this.

This week a Roman Catholic priest was very much in the news. He was an indigenous priest. A priest who had been raised up from among his tribe to serve God and his congregation in the state of Chiapas. His name is Marcelo Perez Perez. He decided that the most important work that he could

## **The Communicator November 3, 2024**

do to serve God and his parishioners was to bring attention to the violence and terror that the people of Chiapas are oppressed by. He loved Chiapas with that simple love that some native people seem to have. "Chiapas es bello", he said. Chiapas is beautiful - and he couldn't bear the damage that was being done to the people and their native land. He wanted peace for his state. His beautiful state. The state of Chiapas, he said, had become a battle ground and the innocent were being maligned and terrorized if not out and out murdered by organize crime and he swore to dedicate his priesting to returning to the beautiful and peaceful place that Chiapas had been in the past. And, because he shaped his ministry around making peace he had been threatened often and because of this his Bishop moved him to San Cristobal de Las Casas which is the capital of Chiapas. He had done something else which was unique. He had taped a video of himself sitting in his humble hut, on a bed, trying to answer the question that I'm sure we would all ask. Are you not afraid? Oh, he was afraid. Anybody would be, but if he gave his life for peace that would be a life well-lived. A humble, humble man thinking how to live a life well. Such vision. He didn't strive for simple survival. No. He strove for something far more transcending or something far more elevated.

The first thing he did when he was sent to a different church in a different town was organize a march for peace. He said the



## The Communicator November 3, 2024

people wanted to live in peace. He said Jesus was the Prince of Peace. Peace was essential for his flock and for his fellow citizens and it was what God had called him to do.

As he left his church last Sunday and was walking down the street to say mass at another church, as clergy often do in poor areas ... as he left his church he was gunned down and killed. You know, if this were Good Friday, we would get to that part that says, "And he breathed his last," and we would stand and we would hold silence.

Don't stand, us with our frail knees - but hold silence for a present day Christian martyr. Marcelo Perez

Perez.....

Like Jesus, Marcelo gave his life for a cause that is critical in this country. We think of martyrs as apostles, as disciples 2000 years ago. We think of martyrs as they fought off dangerous wild animals in the Colosseum in Rome. Or as they were crucified upside down or even stoned. But martyrs don't exist only in the past nor do they exist only in the Middle East. They are here. They are among us. They fight and die for what we all need. For Peace. For an existence free from violence. Jesus fought Roman oppressors.

Marcelo fought gang oppression.

Jesus made known that the Jews deserved a more just life.

Marcelo fought and died for that.

## **The Communicator November 3, 2024**

There was a video called *La Furiosa Realidad* which strangely is no longer available on YouTube or even on the chat I received with the video attached. How I wish you could see the women draped in their rebosos weeping for this man - weeping for the violence - weeping for the hundreds murdered and disappeared in their beloved country. You could have been standing at the foot of the cross. It was that powerful. This man, his martyrdom and the mourning crowds, you could have been at the foot of the cross. Honest to God, our Christian story is not a story that happened a long, long time ago. It is a story that is happening all over the world all the time. Almost everywhere you look. It is the story of fighting evil and replacing it with good; fighting hate and replacing it with love; fighting oppression and replacing it with freedom. Always, everywhere, all the time. Don't forget. We as Christians have promised to be engaged in this. Fighting for good, fighting for love, fighting for freedom.

When I was in seminary my homiletics professor told us that the word Gospel means Good News. That has since been disputed. But Dr. Power's point was this; in the writing of your sermon, what is the good news? I asked my husband this week as I was thinking about this sermon, how can I bring this around? How does it become good news?

## **The Communicator November 3, 2024**

God knows there are tragedies. We have all encountered them and even though the Bible says that all things work together for good for those who love the Lord, and I believe that to be true, the tragedy is never overcome. It is always tragic. The deaths of thousands of people in Ukraine or in Palestine and Israel will forever be a tragedy. The children who have died because that seems to be the only solution men of power can come up with will always be mourned. In Mexico there is no foreign power attacking us, but there are bands of people attacking each other. If this were a funeral homily I would say, mourn - that is the right reaction. Mourn for the poor and the oppressed. Cry, that is understandable. But in the end, make room for the love of God that imbues all living things. And that love is so powerful that it will guide you away from the graveside and that love will shine again in you as a light that will lead your way through the remainder of your life. It needs to be kindled. Not for God but for us. It is a saving light. A saving love. A love with no end, a love that can incredibly accommodate tragedy. It is a pure love which at the very end of everything will still be holding you tight. Will become one with you.

Our service started today as it always does with the collect. We prayed, Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity. Martyrs have identified and taken



## The Communicator November 3, 2024

possession of those three gifts. How else could Marcelo have done what he did - given what he gave?

I don't invite any of you to become martyrs. It is a highly unusual gift - but do live with faith. Faith that through it all God will be by our side. That God will continue to be perfect, all-embracing love. Live also with hope. Hope that there is a better tomorrow, there is a better way as we stumble through the history we are living. It is never over. Hope endures forever. And live with charity. As we go about this week in our lives let's be charitable to all people that we encounter on the way. The people here in our home, need our love and our understanding. Many lives are in danger. Many people are scared. Evil has raised its ugly head - no doubt - but remain charitable nonetheless. Be of good courage and take heart. Let's make the intention to live into the faith, hope and charity that martyrs have. That Marcelo had. Let's believe that deeply, that intensely, that continuously. Amen

### The Reverend Gillian Ball's Homily of November 3.

Service Nov. 3/24 Wisdom 3:1-9 All Saints and All Souls Day Mission of St. Francis, Tepoztlan

*The Rev. Gillian Neville-Ball*

*(Anglican)* **Loving God, the saints through all the ages praise you. Your glory shines. Alleluia!  
The saints in our lives have borne witness to you grace. Your mercy raises us to new life. Alleluia!  
Fill us with your spirit, that we may be your saints, shining with your light in the darkness.  
Your love shines in us; and we praise you and serve you. Alleluia!**

# The Communicator November 3, 2024

**Reflection:** This passage from the Book of Wisdom that is in our lectionary for All Saints Day is a favourite of mine. When left to me to choose a scripture for a memorial service, I invariably include these verses with their moving words. *“In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.”* The lectionary carefully ends this reading on a positive note, with the elect understanding truth, abiding in God’s love, and being surrounded by God’s grace and mercy. But, of course when we lose someone deeply loved, we regard their departure as a disaster. And when a saintly person who has done much for good causes in the world departs, the world grieves.

All Saints Day and All souls Day mark a time when we remember with thanksgiving those who have died. These special commemorations can be traced to the very beginning of the church’s life. During the first three centuries after Christ’s death and resurrection, when the Roman Empire was awash in the blood of Christian martyrs, the church began to remember those who had died in the faith by designating the day of their death as a holy day called All Saints. Given Rome’s unrelenting persecution of Christians, eventually almost every day became a saint’s day. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, November 1<sup>st</sup> was designated All Saints Day in the church calendar and the 10<sup>th</sup> century added ‘All Souls Day’ on November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

We remember loved ones on All Souls Day - so remarkably celebrated in Mexico with colour, food, flowers, songs and remembrances. We might feel a bit uneasy about collectively recalling our loved ones along with saints today. We remember them as great people but perhaps calling them ‘saints’ is going a bit too far. But, in reality it is not, because the Bible refers to saints as “those who belong to God”. The title of saint is not just relegated to the famous with halos that adorn church stained glass windows.

Thanks to Jesus Christ, we are assured that we are saints belonging to God. Some of us are better saints than others. Today we especially remember those whom we regard as ordinary and whom we loved and who have gone before us. I think of my cherished grandmother who raised me as a young child in Mexico. And I think of others who stepped in to help during the wartime years of the 1940s. The kindness, the love, the generosity can never be forgotten. And others followed as the years passed - as they probably have for most of us - saints who have upheld us, encouraged us, comforted us, strengthened us, aided us - some known well to us, others perhaps strangers who leapt in to help in a moment of crisis.

As All Saints and All Souls Day lead us to recall our beloved with poignancy, churches are filled with flowers in remembrance and names are added to prayers. It is a time to pause for a few minutes for contemplation and think about Christian hope. The words spoken at Anglican memorial services speak of hope in the resurrection, eternal life through Jesus Christ, commendation of a brother or sister to God. We use the phrase: *‘In sure and certain hope’* which gives us so much promise. The word ‘hope’ has a different meaning in the Bible than in our everyday life. Hope is used casually in daily language without any certainty attached to it. It speaks of a wish for the future which may not come true. But hope in the Bible speaks of something very different. ‘Christian hope’ speaks of an assured future that has been promised by God.

We are all so aware of a world in which bad things happen to good people (and the reverse) and despair. We see oppression and exploitation and starvation and deadly diseases. But somehow we hold onto a hope held out to us that one day things will change when God’s kingdom comes. In the meantime, power-mongers carve up the world to suit their own ends and we see disaster unfolding in too many places. And yet the community of the faithful is filled with the living presence of people who died doing daily battle with powers and principalities. They did it because their hope was in him who said, *“Behold, I am making all things new.”*

As we approach Remembrance Day next week, we also pause to give thanks for the countless sacrifices that brought freedom and hope to suffering and oppressed countries and people. We cannot begin to fathom what many endured in battles and dangerous underground operations. We cannot countenance the horror of

# The Communicator November 3, 2024

concentration camps and labour camps and prisoner of war camps. We cannot imagine the determination that overcame the fear of many ordinary people enduring continuous upheaval and terror.

Sadly, wars continue and conflicts bring distress to families in Gaza, Lebanon, Israel, starvation in Sudan, dread in Ukraine, unrest in too many parts of our troubled world. Homegrown discrimination and injustice sadly affect many communities. Sadness prevails in too many places. Parents weep for children killed in schools and bombing raids, families mourn, greed destroys creation, despair prevails in the face of those who will do anything to achieve power and riches. And so we mourn for all the saints - young and old - who have lost their lives in service to country, service to those in need, service to families and communities. And in the midst of it, we try to live in the hope that (to quote Julian of Norwich), "*All will be well, and all manner of things will be well.*"

Our first reading, from the Book of Wisdom, examines some of our questions that invariably arise this time of year as we recall those who have died. This book is not included in all Bibles but the Anglican Church does recognize those incorporated into what is called the 'Apocrypha'. We may not accept all the doctrines taught, but there are some valuable insights and inspirations that can be respected and treasured.

The Book of Wisdom reflects on where loved ones are now. We ask how anyone can survive death? Our questions are not answered scientifically but this reading gives us the hope that death is not the end. *'In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace'*. When the Bible talks about the life of the world to come it uses many different kinds of symbols that give us three powerful and connected truths: the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God. They are safe. They are at peace.

Some following verses about being tested, running like "*sparks through the stubble*", governing nations and ruling over peoples, sound rather strange and not very restful. But then the author of the Book of Wisdom had similar beliefs to that of Jesus and the apostles. This was not about going to some better place forever. It spoke of a two stage view of life to come. At first the souls were deemed to be safe and then God was offering them an exciting future. Like most Jewish people in his time, Jesus believed in the coming of the kingdom of God and in resurrection. He did not believe that the purpose of life was to escape this world. He did not believe that God was going to abandon the suffering world and concentrate on those who had gone to a better place.

As we see war, poverty and disease, natural disasters, climate change, and injustice absorbing the world, we are led to believe that this was not God's original plan. Jesus came to tell us that 'the kingdom of God is at hand'. We cannot help but wonder when this will come to pass - when God will extend a loving rule and make the creation whole again; when God will raise the righteous to enjoy this world as God intended. And yet we are given assurance with the words in today's Gospel when Jesus says to Martha at the grave of her brother Lazarus: "*I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.*"

The Book of Wisdom speaks of a future for our loved ones and the Anglican Book of Common Prayer speaks of eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ. This "*sure and certain hope*" may indeed give us strength as we face an unknown future. Of course, the biblical writers' use of lot of symbolism to describe that future means we can't take all of it literally. But I pray that we can all hold onto the hope that a forthcoming world will be a glorious experience with God 's creation renewed, and new life rising from death.

As we gather to give thanks for our loved ones who have gone before us, St. Paul tells us that there is no need for us to 'grieve *as if we had no hope*'. I trust we can all take comfort in the promise of the Book of Wisdom and believe that those who have died in the peace of Christ are safe in the hands of God, where no more suffering can touch them. As C.S. Lewis wrote, "*On that day we will realise that all that we have experienced so far is simply the first chapter of the great story of our life, the story God is writing, the story in which every chapter is better than the one that came before it!*" In 'sure and certain hope' we trust in God. **Amen**



# The Communicator November 3, 2024

*(Christian Aid)* You are making all things new. A new heaven. A new earth. A new way of thinking.  
A new way of being.

You are making all things new. No more Death. No more mourning. No more crying. No more pain.  
You are making all things new. Renew our minds to renew the world by living out  
your commandment of love. You are making all things new. Amen

**Affirmation:** *(Bruce Prewer)*

**This I truly believe. I believe in Jesus the Christ. I believe in the ever-present Spirit  
I believe in God whose love transforms all things.**

**Though false teachers come and delude the gullible, God's truth remains sure.**

**Though temples crumble and churches wither, God's gospel remains sure.**

**Though earthquakes strike and diseases ravage, God's purpose remains sure.**

**Though good people suffer injustice and persecution, God's love remains sure.**

**Though saints go to prison or face execution, God's life remains sure.**

**I believe in God who treasures and nurtures us, who yearns over the fate of each one as if  
they were all, and who turns loss to gain and defeat to victory. This I truly believe. Amen!**