

Yesterday was a day of endings, and new beginnings for the Episcopal Church. As our beloved Presiding Bishop Michael Curry completed his tenure of service, the Rt. Rev. Sean Rowe was made our new Presiding Bishop. Dioceses from around the world sent greetings to Sean. There was Peanut Butter for the Presiding Bishop, a food drive in his honor to aid the hungry, as well as a bevy of unique messages that reflected the diversity and beauty of God's people, each extending welcome and bestowing blessing upon his ministry. By all counts, it was a more intimate service with less of the ceremonial flare we do so well, but with no less joy. It represented well the church that we are, and the hope that sustains us.

As he preached, the new Presiding Bishop beckoned us all to join him, to take our part. He said,

"The days are over, if they ever existed, that dioceses and congregations and institutions of our church can just go it alone and do it their own way. For we must acknowledge our mutual interdependence, our need to do ministry together, to share what we have and to sustain one another." (The Most Rev. Sean Rowe)

Although speaking to the whole of our communion, I think his words resonate deeply, right here, at the local level. We gather today, on this Consecration Sunday, to acknowledge and celebrate this community, our ministries, and our commitment to share what what we have - our gifts of time, talent and of treasure. We know that we are called to do ministry together, we know that it takes all of us to raise up and sustain this community, and we know the good that arises out of our shared generosity of giving and serving our neighbors. Maybe Presiding Bishop Rowe is preaching to the choir? Still, there are two words he spoke that I'd like to reflect upon with you:

Mutual Interdependence — I hear it as the call to recognize our need for, our requirement for, and our dependence upon, one another. The acknowledgement that although independently we can and do do great things, things that transform lives, together we are stronger. That united in the hope and promises of Jesus, we not only have the ability to transform and heal lives, we stand strong in the face of the division and evil forces that threaten to take us down.

The Bishop's call to mutual interdependence is what being beloved community is all about — the both/and of being individuals and being a part of one another. It speaks to our commitment to one another in times of celebration and joy, and in times of grief and sorrow. Today we not only celebrate member of our church, and all that St. Dunstan's is and will become, we also celebrate the Feast of All Saints, a day when we take pause to name, to remember and to honor our beloved Saints, those who have graced our lives, and those who have died.

Celebration and joy, grief and sorrow, are all part and parcel of the human experience, of what it is to be mortal beings. We walk the pathways from birth to death, from baptisms to burials alongside one another. Mutual interdependence means to choose to participate in one another's lives and the lives of our neighbors. By doing so, we find in one another the support, encouragement and companionship that sustains and which ensures that none of us ever journeys alone. Because together we are stronger.

We know that In the midst of life, there is death. We see this on display in today's Gospel from John, a story that reaches into the depths of our hearts leaving us deeply moved. Partly because we know too well the experience of grief. We understand the heartbreak of loss; we know the pain and grief that death brings; we know how it feels when our dreams or hopes or loved ones are taken from us.

And then, as we heard this story, we experience something special — a moment of mutual interdependence with Jesus. He has arrived to find that his dear friend Lazarus has died. Mary and Martha are consumed in grief and the whole of the community is wailing. Overcome by his own emotion and deeply moved, Jesus weeps. The anguish expressed here, by Mary and Martha, their community and especially Jesus, resonates with us. I imagine every one of us has at some time wished that death would not come or that we had the power to stop it.

But we don't. To die is a part of the truth of what it means to be human. It will come one day, and when it does, we will be reminded again of how fragile and precious life is.

Jesus weeps, and we realize that we are never alone in our grief. When we weep, Christ weeps with us; when we suffer, Christ suffers with us, and when we rejoice, Christ rejoices with us.

Out of depths of death, Jesus here beckons Lazarus into new life—forever changing the stories we have about death. Those present do not yet know what we know. They have not yet born witness to Christ's own death nor his own glorious resurrection. They have not yet been able to make the connection between Jesus' God-given words of promise which echoes those of Isaiah and the Psalms, which will be reaffirmed in the words of Revelation—they do not yet understand like we do that our mighty and compassionate God, the alpha and omega, the one who has and will defy evil and death is ever with us, knows the depths of our pain, weeps alongside us, and will never abandon us.

Although we know that Jesus knows death is not the end of the story, we bear witness today as our Lord, the Word made flesh living among us succumbs to the pain and sorrow that death

All Saints Day - Consecration Sunday
John 11:32-44

The Rev. Laurel Coote
Nov 3, 2025

wields. It appears that knowing doesn't make a difference — it doesn't stop him, nor us, from grieving.

Speaking about Jesus shouting out to Lazarus, Presiding Bishop Rowe reframed “in the midst of life, there is death” to “In the midst of death, we have *access* to life.” From the depths of the burial tomb, dead Lazarus heard Christ calling him into new life. In the midst of death, or sorrow, division or fear, Christ's voice breaks in, giving us access. Access to life, to joy, to unity, and to hope.

As we name, remember and honor our saints and our dead, we have access into the hope of new life beyond this life. As we mourn their loss and give thanks for their presence, we hold tightly to God's promise that one day, having passed out of life into death, we will be reunited with them.

Until that time, though, our call is not to allow death, sorrow, fear and division overtake us, but to listen closely for Jesus' voice calling to come out, to rise up, to live — with mutual interdependence that fosters kindness and care, generosity and love, hope and joy.

For all the saints of St. Dunstan's, upon whose legacy we stand, I give thanks. For each of you, who by your presence and in your faithfulness make this church all that it is— a place to come, explore, serve and be—I give thanks. It is an honor to walk alongside you in this precious moment in time. May we never lose sight of our mutual interdependence, *our need to do ministry together. May we always remember God's call to share what we have and to sustain one another, in times of sorrow, and of joy.*