

November 13, 2009



**THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION**

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Dear Friends and Parishioners of Church of the Ascension:

All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day are two of my favorite days in the church year. On these days in particular, the liturgy brings vividly to mind those who have gone before. All Saints' Day celebrates those who were great victors in the faith, those who witnessed to Jesus Christ by giving their lives, who gave us the Holy Gospels, were great leaders of the Church in many lands, founded religious orders, taught and preached, or brought God's mercy to the poor. On All Souls' Day, the roll of names of our dear departed loved ones is read, and as I hear the names, I sense ever more vividly the presence of that "great cloud of witnesses" that surrounds us, a fellowship of love and prayer.

That connection with those who have preceded us in all times and places, and with those who will take our place here, enlivens our work in this parish as we give glory to God in Catholic faith, worship, and witness. It is work that did not begin with us and, God willing, will not end with us. We're a parish with a history, and we have our own roll of saints who built this Christian community, sustained it through difficult times, kept and taught the Catholic faith, and provided for the parish's future, all with God's help. All that we now do in this parish continues that work and builds on it to the glory of God both for now and for the future.

*Ray Suarez, an Episcopalian and senior correspondent for public television's Newshour program, recently gave a stewardship talk at Trinity Church, Wall Street, in New York. In his talk, he cited Episcopalians' noted reluctance to talk about our relationship to money, and he asked, "Do we look like a people that says, not as a boast but as joyous reassurance, **'The Lord has done great things for us?'**" That line from Psalm 126 captures, I believe, the spirit in which our forebears gave of their finances, time, and dedication and should be the spirit in which we now continue that work: as a concrete expression of our gratitude for the great things God has done for us.*

It is tempting to write about the recession and its effects: the cost-cutting and rebudgeting necessary in times like this. But our annual decision about the coming year's financial pledge to the church and our level of involvement in its various ministries need not hinge on the current state of either Wall Street or Main Street. It remains a spiritual decision, best made after prayer and careful thought, and in response to God's many blessings. Whether a new pledge, an increased pledge, or a new commitment of time and work in one of the parish's ministries, this should be an act of gratitude, in concert with the many who have given and worked before us and those who will follow us. Let us pray, and then, with God's help, let us with gladness take our part in God's work here in the year ahead.

Yours in Christ,

Scott R. Knitter  
Vestryman

Then was our mouth filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy.

Then they said among the nations,  
"The Lord has done great things for them."

The Lord has done great things for us,  
And we are glad indeed.