

BEYOND THE GAP IN THE AIR

O God who brought us to birth, and in whose arms we die, comfort us in our grief and shock at Trevor's death; embrace us with your love, give us hope in our confusion and grace to let him go into new life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

IN THANKSGIVING FOR TREVOR SCOTT MCCOY
FEBRUARY 11, 1999 – SEPTEMBER 12, 2017

OCTOBER 7, 2017

ST. MARK'S-IN-THE-VALLEY

EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND PRESCHOOL

Los Olivos, California

THE REV. RANDALL C.K. DAY, D.MIN., PRIEST AND RECTOR

SCRIPTURE READING: WISDOM 3:1-5, 9

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. 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. For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his elect.

John O'Donohue, the Irish Catholic poet, philosopher and teacher wrote extensively about death before his own untimely death in 2008. Here is an extended quotation from his book *Anam Cara* on the topic: *Are Space and Time Different in the Eternal World?*

He writes:

“When the soul leaves the body, it is no longer under the burden and control of space and time. The soul is free; distance and

separation hinder it no more. The dead are our nearest neighbors; they are all around us. Meister Eckhart, the 14th century mystic, was once asked, ‘Where does the soul of a person go when the person dies?’ He said, ‘no place. Where else would the soul be going? Where else is the eternal world? It can be nowhere other than here.’

“We have falsely spatialized the eternal world. We have driven the eternal out into some kind of distant galaxy. Yet the eternal world does not seem to be a place but

rather a different state of being. The soul of the person goes no place because there is no place else to go. This suggests that the dead are here with us, in the air that we are moving through all the time. The only difference between us and the dead is that they are now in an invisible form. You cannot see them with the human eye. But you can sense the presence of those you love who have died. With the refinement of your soul, you can sense them. You feel that they are near.”

The intercommunion of the living and the dead is an aspect of the spiritual life within Christianity (and in other religions and spiritual paths) that has persisted in various forms in all ages. Interestingly, in our age, discoveries of physics are offering new insights on the realities of space and time – and unmasking the false notion of distances that has previously been the province of the spiritual intuition.

We gather here today to offer thanks to God for Trevor Scott McCoy and to entrust him to God’s eternal compassion.

We hear the same word of insight in the reading from the Book of Wisdom this morning, where we hear of Trevor abiding with God in love.

In his book *Benedictus* which is also published as *To Bless the Space Between Us* O’Donohue writes:

“If you really live your life to the full, death will never have power over you. It will never seem like a destructive, negative event. It can become, for you, the moment of release into the deepest treasures of your own nature; it can be your full entry into the temple of your soul. If you are able to let go of things, you learn to die spiritually in little ways during your life. When you learn to let go of things, a greater generosity, openness, and breath comes into your life.”

“Imagine this letting go multiplied a thousand times at the moment of your death. That release can bring you a completely new divine belonging.”

Especially in contemplating Trevor’s death and his ongoing life, and aware, as we all are, of his struggles – and of our own struggles – I appreciate this sense of freedom and possibility. In a way I look forward to it myself – and realize that my work today is the same endeavor – to let go in this life in order to be more fully what God longs for me and for all of us to be.

O’Donohue further develops this idea writing:

“It is uncanny how social reality can deaden and numb us, so that the mystical wonder of our lives goes totally unnoticed. We are here. We are wildly and dangerously free. The more lonely side of being here is our separation in the world. When

you live in a body you are separate from every other object and person. Many of our attempts to pray, to love, and to create are secret attempts at transfiguring that separation in order to build bridges outward so that others can reach us and we can reach them. At death, this physical separation is broken. The soul is released from its particular and exclusive location in

this body. The soul then comes into a free and fluent universe of spiritual belonging.”

Trevor is in that free and fluent universe of spiritual belonging.

On the back of your service leaflet is a poem by John O’Donohue:

For Grief

~John O’Donohue~

When you lose someone you love,
 Your life becomes strange,
 The ground beneath you becomes fragile,
 Your thoughts make your eyes unsure;
 And some dead echo drags your voice down
 Where words have no confidence
 Your heart has grown heavy with loss;
 And though this loss has wounded others too,
 No one knows what has been taken from you
 When the silence of absence deepens.
 Flickers of guilt kindle regret
 For all that was left unsaid or undone.
 There are days when you wake up happy;
 Again inside the fullness of life,
 Until the moment breaks
 And you are thrown back
 Onto the black tide of loss.
 Days when you have your heart back,
 You are able to function well
 Until in the middle of work or some encounter,
 Suddenly with no warning,
 You are ambushed by grief.
 It becomes hard to trust yourself.
 All you can depend on now is that

Sorrow will remain faithful to itself.
 More than you, it knows its way
 And will find the right time
 To pull and pull the rope of grief
 Until that coiled hill of tears
 Has reduced to its last drop.
 Gradually, you will learn acquaintance
 With the invisible form of your departed;
 And when the work of grief is done,
 The wound of loss will heal
 And you will have learned
 To wean your eyes
 From that gap in the air
 And be able to enter the hearth
 In your soul where your loved one
 Has awaited your return
 All the time.

Where your eyes have been accustomed to seeing Trevor in the way he has been, there is a gap in the air. But your eyes will see beyond

that gap in the air, you will be able to enter the hearth in your soul where Trevor, abiding with God in love, awaits your return.



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