

All Saints day is the Church's great day of remembrance. We remember the saints who have gone before us. We read some of their names, we recall other names in our hearts and minds, and we know many of the saints are known only to God. In our memory, we recall acts of kindness, the deeds of love, and the witness to faithful living of those in our lives.

One of the things I always do at a funeral service is to ask the people present to remember the person who's life and death has brought us together. I ask them to speak the person's name in the days to come and to tell the stories that endeared that person to us. Remember, speak the person's name. In doing so, we bring that person from the past into the present. Memory is a very important part of our lives.

Memory is more complex than we sometimes think. We can't remember everything. Our memory is selective. We cannot remember everything.

We forget things every day to make room to remember other things. If we are going to spend our memory on an injustice someone has done to us, we find it is hard to remember the injustice without forgetting the good they also did. Many times the issue is not if we remember, but what we will remember.

We are exhorted to "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy." and to "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth."

Our memory can cause us to relate to people in different ways. Memory may not be as moral as we think it is. In the little community in which I grew up, if a person got a bad reputation, it pretty much stuck with them. People would not forget.

Can you forgive if you do not forget?

Jeremiah, the prophet speaks of God as one who "who will forgive our wickedness and will remember our sins no more."

We came to Srebrenica. It is a place of memory for many Moslems from Bosnia. During the Ethnic Cleansing War in the early 90's, the United Nations declared Srebrenica a safe zone. They sent a contingent of Peace Keepers from Denmark to oversee the peace in that city. Moslems from cities of conflict flocked to the city. A general from Serbia and his army took over the Peace Keepers, took their uniforms and UN trucks and tanks and proceeded to Srebrenica.

They loaded the trucks with men and older boys in Srebrenica under the promise to take them to freedom and drove them off and slaughtered them. The Moslems realized what was happening, and the remaining men and boys began to flee back toward Savajevo. The Serb army shelled and strafed them with fire power from planes. Srebrenica is the site of the largest massacre in all of Europe since WW II. Eight thousand Moslem men and boys lost their lives there. Some ten years after the war is over, people still come to try learn if they have identified a husband, a son, a brother. The memorial is just being built and it will be years before the work is done. It is a sacred place, it is a place of memory. Even when you are there, it is difficult to imagine to horror, the sadness represented in that place.

How will the people ever move past that? It has altered their lives forever. Miroslav Volf has written a book about reconciliation.- "Inclusion and Embrace." He writes, "No final reconciliation will take place without the redemption of the past and the redemption of the past is unthinkable without forgetting. Indeed, only those who are willing ultimately to forget will be capable of remembering rightly." After

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we forgive our enemies, after we have forgive those who have hurt us, after we put down that hatred that devours us from the inside, there is one more important step in reconciliation. Somehow, we must forget the evil suffered. In forgiveness, sometimes there is the memory that keeps us from breaking free of injustice. It is a painful memory. But when the memory is gone, the evil doer no longer has power over us. We are free.

So here we are, on our day of remembering those we love. I would encourage us to remember and speak their names so that their presence and influence lives among us. I would also encourage us to put things out of our lives that bring us pain. Being able to forget is a gift from God also.

Our text in Revelation today says, "The dwelling of God is with us."

In our Sunday School lesson for today, we learned that if you ask a Hindu "Where is God?" the Hindu would immediately point to their heart. They do this because they believe that God dwells in the depths of their inner being. By contrast, if you ask a Jew, Christian or Moslem "Where is God?" they would invariably point upward or outward because they think of God as external to them. Clearly, the Hindu also understand that God is beyond us, just as Christians know God dwells in our hearts as well as beyond us.

We simply place our emphasis in a different place. I believe this text in Revelation today is calling us to not just think of God as "Out there," but also God dwells among us. I believe that today we remember those whose life touched us because God dwelt in their lives.

I also believe that God dwells in the lives of people among us today – people in this room. Their devotion and dedication touches our very lives.

On this All Saints Sunday, may we feel the presence of God in those whose names we list today and those living among us. Let us remember their goodness and love we shared with them. And may God's enable us to forget those things and evil deeds of others that hold us back. It is in our forgetting many times that we are given new life, a fresh beginning in which we can be born again. Amen