



Liturgies for the Lonely

All Saints Day

prepared by Slat's Toole

Introduction

In the middle of 2020, during a global pandemic, I moved halfway across the country, to live in a city I didn't know well. While I do have connections and friends in my new location, finding a church community is difficult. As an introvert, the idea of showing up at a Zoom coffee hour where I don't know anyone is horrifying, and while I do get a sense of a community through online worship practices (and am grateful for all of the leadership that makes that happen), so many practices have shifted for safety reasons that it's harder to get to know the worship life of a church. There's so much I miss; I miss singing together, passing the peace, moving through the liturgical year moored by a community where I am known and cared for and where I know and care for others.

The last time I felt this kind of disconnection from the church was when I was in undergrad. I was an extraordinarily busy theater major who did not have time to become an active part of a church. During one Holy Week when I was in tech for a show, but longed to be in services throughout the week, I started to come up with rituals I could do at home. It didn't replace communal worship, but did help focus and direct me until I could restructure my life to be active in church again.

As we face closures for longer than any of us hoped, I have been hit hard at the idea of going through the liturgical year without a local church community and without some of the rituals that help me engage in these seasons. I am amazed and uplifted by the creativity and possibility in worshipping online, and at the same time know that part of me will be mourning as we move through the church year. (This will be the first year in my living memory that I will not be in a church, singing "Silent Night", as the day moves from Christmas Eve to Christmas Day. That will be hard.)

So I am creating rituals for myself to help me get through some of the key moments of the church year, starting with All Saints Sunday, Advent, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. I am making them available for others in case they are useful. They are designed for individual use-- feel free to adapt for relationships or families or roommates or whatever configuration you have, but there are so many resources for families out there already and fewer liturgical resources designed to be done alone. (It is less depressing to expand a resource to include more people than to simplify it to work for one!)

Introduction

While I have experience in many Protestant denominations, my theological center is the Reformed tradition as practiced in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). These liturgies are based on a slightly adapted four-fold pattern of worship. A traditional four-fold pattern includes Gathering, Word, Response (or Table), and Sending. I've adapted the Response/Table portion as "Practice". The Practice portion seeks to be an active response, in the same spirit as offering or the Lord's Supper when we gather communally, and will draw on different spiritual practices throughout this series. Some portions of the liturgies will be the same every time to help establish a ritual, and some will change with the week or season. A list of suggested hymns will be included, along with a link to the Spotify playlist I've made for that season or day. The Scriptures (NRSV) are included on separate pages, and the psalm will include a musical setting option.

Every portion of these liturgies is adaptable, from words to hymn selection to scriptures to practices. Use this resource as best benefits you. That could mean going through the liturgy exactly as printed or with minor adjustments. That could be using the liturgy as a scaffold to build your own, or inspiration for how to incorporate worship into your daily life. That could be collaging together this liturgy with other daily prayer resources you know and love. I suspect for many of us, this pandemic is a time of discovery when it comes to how we connect to God, ourselves, and each other, so use this as a tool for curiosity.

If this work is useful to you and you have resources to spare, my Venmo is @callmeslats. More than making a profit, though, I want this to go to those who need it right now, so feel free to share with anyone this might help.

Grace, peace, and safety to you, wherever you are, in whatever season of life you find yourself,

Slats

Preparing the Space

For me, creating a space for a ritual is almost as important as the ritual itself. Entering into a specific space signals us and helps us to engage in the specific activities we are used to performing in that space. In these times of social distancing, many of us have limited the number of spaces we are in, and our house/apartment/room becomes the space for almost all parts of our lives.

When I talk about preparing the space, I don't just mean the physical location where the ritual takes place. As we prepare the space, we use our senses to shift us out of our daily patterns of living and into a space of particular connection with God, like how walking into a sanctuary can refocus us towards worship.

If you have a space where you can permanently set up a worship space, that's great. If you don't (I don't), that's fine too. You don't need a lot of physical space to create this kind of ritual.

Your space will be unique to who you are and what is meaningful to you. Ultimately, you are preparing space that helps you slow down and connect with God. Here's a way to think through the different senses to help you discover what that may be like. If one of these draws you more, focus on that. If one isn't as relevant to you, let it go.

Sight

What do you see as you worship? Are there symbols like a cross, chalice, or pitcher, that help you feel more connected to a worship space? Candles? Are there objects that are connected with faith communities or people who have nurtured you: a Bible received at confirmation, a rock you've carried since one conference or reaffirmation of baptism, a gift from a mentor?

Hearing

What sounds help you focus and reset? What sounds put you in a posture of worship? For many of us, that might be music--creating your own playlist can be one way to think about what a particular day or season really means for you. Sounds of nature might bring you a feeling of peace. Or, perhaps sitting in silence, noticing the sounds of the world around you in a meditative way might be a way in to contemplation.

Preparing the Space

Touch

How does your body feel? Does it help you to wear the clothes you might normally wear to church, or something more comfortable that makes you feel cozy? Where, in your living space, does this ritual take place? At a table so you can easily write or draw? On a couch or bed so you can rest in this time of worship? On a meditation cushion that moves to towards prayer?

Smell

For me, this is the most helpful and powerful sense in creating a ritual. Is there a scented candle, stick of incense, or oil for diffusing that you can associate with this (and only this) time? (Tip: if you want to play around with different scents to find the perfect one, have some coffee grounds on standby to act as a palate cleanser for your nose!) If you can associate a scent with behavior, it tends to be one of the quickest ways to get into the headspace for that ritual.

Taste

Similar to smell, taste is a sense that is often overlooked and is tremendously powerful. While these liturgies do not include sacraments (which according to my tradition are meant to be celebrated in community), we can create a ritual around food or drink that helps us begin our worship. Perhaps it is a special kind of meal, or a specific tea that you only eat or drink before this ritual.

For This Week

All Saints Day is a day when we remember those who have gone before us in the faith. These may be canonized saints, they may be those we love who have passed on, or they may be those who are still with us who have mentored us and helped us know God better. It is often a time to remember those who we have lost specifically within the past year. Ringing bells and lighting candles are traditional ways of remembering those individuals. For people you particularly want to honor today, you could:

- Have a small candle that represents each of them.
- Tie a piece of ribbon onto a small bell and write their name on it.
- Bring an item that reminds you of them.
- Play a song that reminds you of them.

The Liturgy

Hymn Suggestions for this week:

["For All The Saints"](#)

["Blest Be the Tie that Binds"](#)

["They'll Know We Are Christians"](#)

["Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather"](#)

The author's playlist for this week can be found [on Spotify by clicking here](#).

Gathering

While lighting a candle and/or stick of incense:

**Let my prayer rise like incense before You,
And the lifting up of my hands as an offering.**

Opening Hymn

Word

Prayer for Illumination

God of all the ages, You have used these words to speak to generations of us who seek to follow You, know You, and love You. Use these words to speak to me. Use them to connect me to this story that binds us all together, throughout time and space, as Your community. Amen.

Scripture

Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalm 24

For a musical setting, see page 8.

Hebrews 11:(1-31)32-12:2

Contemplation

Spend time in contemplation and prayer after experiencing the Word. Adjust the space to what centers you. If that is silence, cultivate that silence. If that is music, play something that brings you peace. Assume whatever physical posture allows you to open yourself to God. If it helps you to draw or write, do so. If it is better for you to be still, be still. Stay in this practice for at least five minutes--you may want to set a gentle alarm or note the number of songs you'll listen to in this time, to ensure you do not move on from this contemplation too early.

The Liturgy

Practice

Gather the materials you brought to remember those who have been saints in your life. As you light a candle, ring a bell, play a song, hold an object of remembrance close, or simply think about them, remember the qualities in them that you would like to emulate. If it's helpful, write them down in a word cloud of witnesses and traits. After you remember each person, say a brief prayer of thanksgiving for the way that person impacted your life.

Sending

Closing Hymn

While extinguishing the candle and/or incense:

As I continue on, O Christ: be with me, before me, behind me, beneath me, above me, within me, around me. Amen.



Resources used:

The musical setting of Psalm 24 is inspired by setting "24D" in *Psalms for All Seasons: a Complete Psalter for Worship*, copyright © 2012 Faith Alive Christian Resources, Grand Rapids, MI.

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The Sending is adapted from "St. Patrick's Breastplate".

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Scripture

Isaiah 25:6-9

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Psalms 24

For a musical setting, sing the Taizé piece "Nada Te Turbe (Nothing Can Trouble)" before beginning the reading and every time a refrain is indicated.

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers. *[Refrain]*

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?
Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.
They will receive blessing from the Lord,
and vindication from the God of their salvation.

Such is the company of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob. *[Refrain]*

Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.

Who is the King of glory?

The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.

Who is this King of glory?

The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. *[Refrain]*

Scripture

Hebrews 11:(1-31)32-12:2

The full reading is very long, however, it is a powerful reminder of some of the earliest stories of our faith. The full reading is printed here; the beginning of the shortened reading is indicated with an asterisk and begins on page eleven.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks.

By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and "he was not found, because God had taken him." For it was attested before he was taken away that "he had pleased God." And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.

By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

Scripture

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom he had been told, “It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you.” He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead—and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

By faith Isaac invoked blessings for the future on Jacob and Esau.

By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, “bowing in worship over the top of his staff.”

By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions about his burial.

By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months after his birth, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward.

By faith he left Egypt, unafraid of the king’s anger; for he persevered as though he saw him who is invisible.

By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days.

By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace.

Scripture

*And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented— of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.