

*Based on Acts 1:6-14. Jesus Tells the Apostles to Take the Long View.*

*It helps, now and then, goes the prayer (mis-)attributed to Oscar Romero, to step back and take a long view.*

Hence, the celebration of All Saints Sunday, when we humbly acknowledge the very thin veil between all that has come before, and all that will come after, and all that comes in this present moment. Also known as *the eternal now*.

*Taking a long view* means we place our very real and exceedingly urgent current struggles in the context of eternity. Something like that social media meme with an image of the sprawling Milky Way Galaxy superimposed with the words: *Whenever you get too worked up about politics, religion, money or life overall ... just remember ...* and then pointing to a small dot on the outer fringes of the spiral ... *you are here*.

In first century Judaism *taking a long view* is wrapped up in the mythical language of *the coming reign of God*. Also known as *the kingdom of God*. This mythical language, developed by people who are truly oppressed with little hope for liberation in the present day, imagines a mighty warrior descending from the heavens - a *Son of Man*, chosen by God Almighty - with the power to overthrow their oppressors and restore the Kingdom of Israel to its former glory. And when that day comes, according to this mythology, all of the righteous dead will be raised - in the same way as Jesus - and Paradise will be restored.

How's *that* for a long view!

The apostles in our Lesson today are ready for the long view to come now, already, thank you very much. They have struggled aplenty, literally traumatized in the wake of a crucifixion. *This is the time, isn't Jesus?* they demand to know. You are the Son of Man, after all. Can we please get the Kingdom restored, like TODAY!?

To which Jesus replies, *um, no*. The long view is just that: a view from eternity. A long view puts the present moment in perspective. A long view does not just wave a magic wand and fix it. That's your job. So get to work!

The point for the apostles in our Lesson today is that Jesus has done all he can do for them in his earthly form. As of this moment, the ministry of Jesus is finally, final. Now is the time for the apostles to carry it forward. To be clear, the apostles have every reason to despair. Oppression and violence and hatred still reign supreme. Instead, they get to work. Successfully, I might add, given the fact that you and I are here two thousand years later perpetuating the very same message.

In the meantime, Jesus says, God is still with you, equipping you with a Holy Spirit that fills you with a power you never knew you could possess. In the meantime, we say, God is still with all of us, sending us out to the ends of the earth as witnesses to a long view vision of justice and peace, compassion and grace. In the meantime, God is still with us, as we gather together in community, around a table and some prayers, and

devote ourselves for the long haul to working for the common good, no matter what any particular momentary outcomes might be.

The truth is, ours is a generational struggle for that long view vision of justice and peace, compassion and grace, that Jesus came to proclaim and the apostles continued to practice. And the truth is, it is downright exhausting to spend a lifetime working toward that vision, especially in times like ours, when it seems we are losing ground instead of gaining. The truth is, we who are human would very much prefer for the struggle to be over and done in one fell swoop with a mythological Son of Man - or may I say Daughter of Woman? - swooping in to save the day.

But that is not really the point of taking a long view, at least in our Lesson today. The point of today's Lesson is that taking a long view is about moving from despair to action, even if that action feels like *a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work*. The point of today's Lesson is: Hang in there! Be steadfast. And cling to your companions along the way.

Yes, we may have every reason to despair. But we, like the apostles, must get to work instead.