

Annual Candlelight Day of Remembrance - October 31, 2018 S.F. Unity Rev. Eleesabeth Hager

Intro

As summer is far behind us and winter is looming close, many cultures and wisdom traditions believe that the Veil Between The Worlds becomes thin and transparent. Those who have passed beyond life are once again within our reach, if we desire to be near them once more.

Día de los Muertos, Mexico pray for and remember friends and family members who have died

All Souls' Day, Commemoration of All Faithful Departed

Dia de Finados, Brazil celebrate by visiting cemeteries and churches

Dia de los Ñatitas, (Day of the skulls) Bolivia

Araw ng mga Patay, Philippines - People who didn't get to visit the tombs of their dead relatives go on this day.

Bon Festival, Japanese Buddhist custom- honor spirits of one's ancestors.

Chuseok – Ancestor worship Korea - "the great middle (of autumn)"

it is also the Pagan New Year –Samhain– where witches gather to celebrate the beauty and abundance of the harvest season.

At the turning point of the Earth calendar at October 31, it is a natural time to honour what has come before and what we leave behind.

No matter what your beliefs about this, our ceremony tonight will reach Across the Veil into our own hearts...to honor our dearly departed.

By lighting candles, a time honored way of focusing and expressing intentions, a symbolic flame passes from the Mysterious Source of Life to the deceased and through the deceased's flame to candles representing elements of grief, remembrance, and affirmation.

Source candle – White – will be lit – the rest will be passed...

1. Candle of Community is orange
2. Candle of Grief is purple
3. Candle of Memory is green
4. The Mystery of Life & Death – blue – here is the place for telling a story / naming your loved one
5. Candle of Thanksgiving and Love is yellow

Beginning

There is a mysterious power that animates every living thing, a Mysterious Power that sustains Life. We do not know where we come from when we are born. We do not know where we go when we die. But we do know the life we live between the two eternities of being born and having to die.

Between these two eternities is our world – our life.

Some of us call the Source of Life, this Mysterious Power, God.

Some of us prefer another name: Eternal Being, or Creative Force, or Spirit of Life, Goddess or perhaps simply, Love.

Some of us do not know what to call this Mysterious Power, for all names seem somehow inadequate.

Yet we feel this Mysterious Power at the center of our unique beings.
We experience it through the changes of our individual lives.

We sense it at work in the life and in the changes of every other living thing.

Like a flame passing from candle to candle, this Mysterious power passes from being to being and from generation to generation.

This Mysterious Power is the Unity of the whole of creation – past, present and future.

There is a Mysterious Power that animates every living thing: a Mysterious Power that sustains Life through the unending cycle of the generations.

In honor of this Mysterious Power – we light the first candle symbolizing SOURCE.

Candle of Community –

We light this candle to signify the community we create.

It is good to be together at such a time as this. We need one another in our grief and in our love. The deep loss of death and the accompanying emotion of grief are best comforted by our fellow women and men. Friendly faces, kindly touches, warm embraces, halting words, or no words. All convey shared empathy.

We also seek together a meaning in which all things are comprehended. Death has a strange way of sorting out the essentials of life and living, and we see clearly, though through our tears, what really matters. Family and the extended family that includes friends are things that really matter.

It is good, right and fitting in the face of death that we have come together today:

To remember our people that have come before

To mourn their death's while celebrating their lives

To seek a meaning in which all things are comprehended

To find each other to receive comfort and also as each is able to give comfort.

Candle of Grief –

We light this candle to acknowledge we who have loved.

We cannot pretend to that our losses do not cost us.... It is our right to grieve. But together, we give each other the renewing promise that we shall walk with each other. Ram Dass says that...

“We are all just walking each other home...”

We who are still here have the opportunity and honor of companioning each other... we seek to understand loss and grief, while giving encouragement to in time...find a new sprout of life in this bare ground. It may be the season of grief, but seeds have been planted long before, and we are planting them now with each breath we take.

We pray that you receive the healing gifts of courage, wisdom and thanksgiving; courage to accept the reality of death; wisdom that life and death, joy and sorrow are joined; and thanksgiving to celebrate life ...anyway.

We also light this candle to signify that our sorrow and joy are one.

We cannot deny the grief that death brings. We must let it spill from our hearts. We must let our sorrow have its time, because our joy has had its time. James Martineau, wrote:

“We have a human right to our sorrow. To blame the deep grief which bereavement awakens is to censure all strong human attachment. The more intense the delight in their presence, the more poignant the impression of their absence, and you cannot destroy the anguish unless you forbid the joy. A morality which rebukes sorrow rebukes love.”

William Blake declared, “Joy and woe are woven fine...It is right it should be so, we were made for joy and woe.”

It is because we knew, loved, and delighted in each other, that we feel sorrow. Our joy came first. Because of the joy, we feel grief now. Through that sorrow is strong there will be a new day, when once again our joy will be greater than our grief.

The Candle of Memory –

From this candle we light a candle in memory of our loved one's lives. Let this flame symbolize all human life as well as Life. It is a fragile flame, and it can be extinguished by the vagaries of a gust of air – one of the guises of fate. But even if fate does not end a life unexpectedly, the burning flame will eventually consume the candle. A candle has its allotted span to burn. (So a human life has its allotted span of years to live.) Yet while it burns- for a short span or a long span of time – it radiates light and heat. And flame kindles flame; life begets life. The glow and heat, the passion of life, are passed on: so long after the candle is extinguished or consumed, the fire of life and love still burns. A human life also continues in the lives it has both engendered and influenced.

Stare at the flame, then look away (or even shut your eyes.) As the eye remembers the light, so the mind remembers a person who has died.

Through the flames of our loved one's lives has been extinguished, our memory's eye still sees the person; and our mind remembers the power of their personality – how they walked through their time and world; how their lives touched us and shaped our lives.

In remembrance and in honor of them, we light our other candles in this ceremony of remembrance from the one source candle we have lit for them all.

Candle for the Mystery of Life and Death –

We light this candle to honor the mystery of Life.

This is a time for each of us to find the quiet center and meditate:

To gather our individual feelings and thoughts:

we accept the reality of this loss and we remember them...here

To mediate upon the meaning of this occasion

To offer a private farewell and a perhaps a different but a sustaining hello..

Here we is the place we share our personal stories about loved ones – passing the Candle as we do so...

Talk re sharing...

No matter what your beliefs about this, our ceremony tonight will reach Across the Veil into our own hearts... it is a natural time to honor what has come before and what we leave behind.

Each person thus has an opportunity to tell stories of the beloved dead, sharing the memory of them with those of us still living.

you may speak directly to your loved ones, saying anything that they feel called to say, silently or aloud, you can tell a story or not. You have the option and honor to pass on speaking... if you do so, we will hold a moment of silence with you.

Candle of Thanksgiving and love –

We light this candle in thanksgiving.

We are thankful for the gifts of Life. We are glad to have seen their face, to have been influenced by their personalities and ways, to have loved them and been loved by them in return. Their deeds continue to influence those they touched and our larger world, for we are all woven into the tapestry.

We are thankful for the comfort we give one another, which has grown among us this hour.

We are thankful that Life continues, passing from generation to generation. We are thankful for the love that never dies. It is true that “love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never ends.”

Paul, 1 Corinthians 13:7

The love we have for Life and its Mysterious but Sure Source which many of us call God, The love that each of us have for each other, The love we have for them – now gone. The love that has brought us together. In the spirit of this love we let go.

Closing words -

Please stand as we conclude this service of remembrance and celebration – a service of sorrow and joy for the lives of our loved ones.

We extinguish these candles but as we do, we see that the candle of Life still burns, as do the candles of community, thanks giving and love – in us.

William Shakespeare wrote, “We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and our life is rounded with a sleep.” In awe and wonder our thoughts leap from understanding to understanding about a human life and the double mystery of where we come from when we are born and where we go when we die.

There is a mysterious power that animates every living thing, a Mysterious Power that sustains Life. We do not know where we come from when we are born. We do not know where we go when we die. But we do know the life we live between the two eternities of being born and having to die.

Between these two eternities is our world – our life. We affirm the blessing of our lives...here and together tonight.

Like a flame passing from candle to candle, this Mysterious light passes from being to being and from generation to generation. This Mysterious Power is the Unity of the whole of creation –a fabric of light - past, present and future.

This Mysterious Power animates every living thing: this Mysterious Power sustains Life through the unending cycle of the generations.

Spirit of Life be with us....Show us the peace of acceptance and understanding.

And the assurance in those things that never die – the love that passes from person to person and connects us generations ... backwards and forwards into eternity – That power is love.

In the spirit of love we have gathered...and in the spirit of love we depart claiming and seeing anew our connections and support. Thank you for honoring your people and honoring us with their stories and your presence..