

## “Kairos Time”

- I. Introduction: Today, the first Sunday after All Saints Day, we remember and honor all of the saints who have gone before us, the saints who live with us now, and the saints of God who will follow us in future generations. Our lectionary readings and our liturgy reflect the timeless nature of the communion of Saints. Ecclesiasticus speaks of the saints who were our ancestors, those whose names we remember and those whose names have been forgotten, even though they continue to live on in us. The beautiful reading from Revelation describes a future scene when the saints will surround the throne of God and “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” When we consider the entire communion of saints worshipping and praising God forever, we struggle with the enormity of it all. It’s difficult to wrap our human minds around it fully.
- II. It is perhaps easier to comprehend that God calls us to join this vast communion of saints in a particular place and at a particular point in time. I believe what God wants us to do is to grasp the immediacy of our invitation to be saints – right here and now, today.

Scripture helps us grasp this idea of living in the here and now as a saint. In order to understand this, we need to look at how time is presented in the New Testament. Three different Greek words are used for time. The first is the word “aion” which means “an age,” a long period of years. Secondly, there is the word “chronos,” which is the kind of time we are trying to get straight today as we set our clock an hour back -- time measured in minutes and hours and weeks. It is orderly, rhythmic, and predictable. The third Greek word for time, the word “kairos,” is the word I want to focus on today. Kairos does not have an equivalent word in English. It is used in the New Testament to mean “God’s time,” a special time of opportunity, a sacred time when something can come to fruition. In our lives there are times of waiting and there are times of fruition and change. Kairos time usually involves a period of disruption or even crisis, a time when the old ways do not seem to work any more. During such kairos times God can break into existing situations and create new possibilities. Such periods contain both disruption and opportunity and therefore call for a response. In kairos times we can come to know and experience God more fully. I believe on this All Saints Day 2007 we are living in a kairos time at the Church of The Ascension.

III. Kairos time at the Church of The Ascension. When a faith community such as Ascension is living in kairos time, there is an immediate sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit and a quickening, a stirring of events. It is not unlike the point in a pregnancy when a mother becomes more aware of new life within her. Just as there has been an excitement about new life here, we are finding ourselves drawn to undertake new ministries and take new risks rather than opting for the security of going on with life as usual. For these to work at Ascension, the new spirit within us has to be matched by a continuing active expression of the new spirit between us.

Let me provide you with several examples: We are in the midst of our stewardship campaign. This campaign is critical because we need to hire new staff to replace layoffs that have occurred over the past several years. We have been working hard to involve all of our members in this campaign, and many of you have actively participated in this effort. I am very grateful to those who have led this campaign and to those who have opened their homes and invited others to join them for home communion. At the home communions we have had open and fruitful discussions about our life together at Ascension – past, present, and future. We are encouraged by your response, but we need each member of this community to step up with your pledge. This is a kairos time.

At the same time, we have been trying to begin several new ministry initiatives, including outreach to visitors and newcomers, pastoral care, Christian formation, and a third Sunday worship service. I am encouraged by how many of you have responded as leaders and volunteers in these efforts. But at the same time, this fall we have been running at a deficit in our monthly budget. We are very careful in our use of funds, but we cannot continue to move forward in our new initiatives unless we have the financial resources to do so. We need your help to get us back in balance by bringing your current pledge or giving up to date. This is a kairos time.

We also need your gifts of time and talent. We have seventeen folks who have applied to become Stephen Ministers. We are grateful for them and look forward to their ministry among us. But we need additional Stephen Ministers, and we need several additional leaders for this program. In another important ministry, we have had volunteers step forward to work with our young people. We greatly need parents to actively support the participation of youth in these programs. This is a kairos time.

A possible obstacle to achieving the possibilities that God provides for us in kairos time is our own reluctance to change, our fear of the risks associated with change, and sometimes our preference for security and predictability. I believe that God is calling many among us to step out in faith – in our stewardship, in undertaking new ministries, in going deeper in our spiritual discipline and growth. But God will not force us to step out – God leaves the choice to step out with us. But the saints who

have gone before us, who are among us, and who will come after us, have taken, do take, and will take risks to step out in faith. They may wrestle with the call of the Holy Spirit, but then they act.

- IV. Conclusion. My brothers and sisters in Christ, we are in a kairos time at Ascension. We have begun and are moving forward into a new and exciting time in the life of this parish. Later today we are hosting a welcome brunch for more than 50 new and re-connected members of Ascension. In two weeks, twenty women will conclude their preparation to begin a new chapter of the Daughters of the King here at Ascension, a ministry of prayer and service. I am very grateful for the evidence of God's movement among us, for those who are giving generously of their time, stepping out to try new ways of reaching and serving others. But there are choices to be made. Do we hesitate and pull back to business as usual or do we go forward into the new place where God is leading us? Christian saints have been described as those who undertake to respond to the challenge of faith in their time and place. In doing so they can open a path that others might follow for years and generations to come.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, we are grateful for the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit in our parish. We ask for your guidance and grace in this kairos time at the Church of The Ascension. May your Holy Spirit speak to each of us about the steps you are calling us to take. Move us forward to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*