

November is generally the 'month of remembering'. We remember the 'fallen', those who sacrificed themselves for our freedom. We also remember those we have loved and lost in other ways. We have All Souls and All Saints days.

We start to prepare for Christmas (far too early of course), but as lights twinkle in shopping centres and the shelves are stacked with over packaged and over-priced stocking fillers, we remember those we have shared beautiful times with, who are now with the Lord.

A couple of years ago I was 'journeying' with a lady who was coming to the end of her earthly life in the Hospice. She was surrounded by her legacy as she died. A legacy of women. Her two daughters, four granddaughters, and a new-born baby great-grandson. We all have a legacy – whether that is our own children, or children of our heart – those we love who have spoken into our lives as we have spoken into theirs.

She was 87 years old and when I met her, she was drifting in and out of sleep in the last 2 days of her life. Around her Hospice room were paintings and photographs of countryside walks and family picnics. Her family told me how she loved nature, the Peak District, woods and trees, streams and rivers. I was told that as a child she had a gate at the bottom of her garden that took her straight into woodland and she spent many happy hours playing there with her friends, walking her dogs, and picking Bluebells.

I held her hand, and created specific verbal images to speak over her – called 'Journey Work' – a guided meditation, talking to her in her sleepy slumber of birds singing, trees dancing in the wind, gentle moss and bubbling streams. I described as best as I could a walk through a garden to the back gate. I spoke of the 'sounds' of birds and the rustling of leaves. The sun shining through the tall oaks and the stream lapping over stepping stones. I built up the images and as I spoke, I sensed this beautiful soul relaxing into the hands of Jesus.

Her favourite hymn was 'The Lord is My Shepherd- so I, and her girls sang it to her as a lullaby. As we sang her mouth mimed the words perfectly, but silently – there was no need for sound. I was certain the angels were singing as a choir in Heaven calling her, although unheard by me... perhaps loud and clear in perfect harmony to my new friend.

Something happened in that room that brought a sacredness to the space. It became a 'thin place' – a place where heaven and earth touch. The women were vigiling, there was a tiny new born in the same space as someone coming to the end of their physical life, and the generations present represented an allegory to life and its span.

We don't all have the privilege of spending such moments with our loved one as they are 'promoted to glory' – that phrase in itself, seems lacking in what truly takes place when the

Lord Jesus takes our hand and leads us home. Maybe it is not so much about being 'promoted to anything' – just another adventure that we are invited to take, letting go of one hand and reaching out to hold another. Knowing there is something more glorious waiting for us.

We have all experienced loss – grief, and goodbyes which can be heart breaking and horrendous. Goodbyes that have seemed right and in the natural order of things – and also those endings that have been the opposite – too soon, too early and too young.

As Christians we do not have the answers. We must not pretend we have.

The answer is not simply 'Jesus', as old-fashioned Sunday School teachers would lecture – the answer is perhaps simply 'MYSTERY'. Knowing God holds us when we can no longer hold ourselves, in the richness of life, the sadness of goodbye – and the PROMISE to you that He is JUST THERE.

Whatever you are going through, and whoever you are missing – whatever tears may flow and the loveliness of memories remembered.

We remember them. It is a month of remembering.

November says – 'We will remember them'.

And we will.

God bless you

Jo