

Feast of All Saints and All Souls: What it means for you and me

Tears in Heaven

A gospel reflection from Brian Wigger, Pastoral Associate

Can you imagine a four year-old boy falling to his death from the 53rd floor of a New York City Apartment building? Unimaginable as it seems, that is precisely what happened to the son of the British rock star, Eric Clapton. Clapton's life was filled with tears of grief as the result of this shocking event. His son's death haunted him so much that he finally wrote a song about it. He called it, Tears in Heaven. In February of 1993 this song won a Grammy for best song of the year. Clapton would have given up this honor gladly and do it in an instant if he could just have had his son back.

Eric Clapton's song begins with the words: Would you know my name, if I saw you in heaven? His separation from his son is so real. His son is gone forever. As with others who grieve the loss of loved ones, Clapton desperately wants to communicate with his son again.

Clapton's song continues. He envisions heaven for a moment. He knows that heaven is a place that he does not belong. That means that he must somehow find the strength to carry on heaven he knows, "I don't belong here in heaven." The singer gets a glimpse of hope. But in heaven he does not belong.

Verse 2 of "Tears in Heaven" returns to the same theme. He wonders if his son would hold his hand if he saw him in heaven? Clapton does not know the answer to his questions. He just believes that if he could get a glimpse of his son again his grief might be lightened. In his grief he cries out for some kind of contact with his son. But it is not to be. So he sings, I will find my own way because I just can't stay here in heaven." The burden of grief rests squarely on his shoulders. Heaven is of no help. Heaven is beyond his grasp. His son is beyond his grasp. He'll just have to make do as best as he can. He'll have to "find his own way through the night and day." Clapton's song is a very sad song! The grief is so real and the hope so illusory. Clapton knows he doesn't have to carry his own grief and his grief is a terribly heavy load.

Clapton sings of this heavy load in the next verse of his song. Time can bring you down." He sings. Time can be devastating when you are locked in grief. Time can bend your knees; it has you begging please". Such is Eric Clapton's plight. He is reduced to begging. This, perhaps something some of us have found ourselves doing when we had to bury a loved one or face a difficult crisis. Surely, Eric Clapton has begged God to bring his son back again. Surely he has begged God to lighten his load in life. There is a lot of begging going on in the midst of human tears of grief, as many, if not all us have witnessed firsthand.

This weekend the Church celebrates All Saints on Friday and All Souls on Saturday both Feasts offers us a bright hope in the midst of grief, sorrow, pain and anguish. We have faith to know that there are no more tears in heaven. That's the source of Eric Clapton's song title, "Tears in Heaven" Tears are for the earth, and therefore, they are needed, necessary and helpful. Tears are grief's constant companion. Tears are grief's way of showing us the pit of emptiness that tugs so heavily upon us in our time of loss. As we commemorate these important days of the Church, we must know that tears are vital to the healing process. Through the tears, however, Clapton sees a vision of a place where tears shall be no more. There will be no more tears in heaven, he sings.