

There are times and circumstances, such as today, when the veil between worlds is said to be thin and ancestral stories and memories and, thus, their presence mix more notably with our lives. The timeless otherworld reaches into this one with guidance, warning, or affirmation.

Let us allow the darkening of the season to turn us inward, and there find the wizened dead - the miraculous, tragic, and fantastic procession of lives leading to and through us and on over the far horizon.

We live in their story. We carry them forward. Looking in, looking back, we may also become aware that we are ancestors too. As we seek wisdom from those who have made us, we may also hear the petition of those we have made.

They have full hearts for you, as we have full hearts for those who came before us, some of whom we knew well. Some of whom we loved with all our life. We mourn their apparent absence.

And if it is grief you feel, may your tears now come as a blessing. For our grief is but an expression of love and love is connective.

In a moment, I'll invite all of you to bring your *momento mori* to the altar. No need to line up. Just be considerate and quiet as you maneuver around each other as you approach. You may wish to enlist a pew-mate to deliver your memento if that makes sense for you.

Your memento is a beacon. Placing it on an altar sanctified by our communal attention ignites a signal of welcome. Placing it with other momentos doing the same, amplifies their potency, turns a candle into a

bonfire. It is also true that there is safety in numbers, safety enough to be open, to be vulnerable - for both you and your ancestors.

See if you can imagine this brief journey to the altar as a transit between worlds. When you return to your seat, you will be in the otherworld, or it in ours. After the service you can come retrieve your mementos and appreciate those of others.

*But before we approach, I need some help. In days of yore, a tradition associated with Samhain was sweeping the home. Practically, this tidied the home in preparation for a season spent more indoors than out. Ritualistically, this was a sweeping out of negative, adversarial energy. Some say this is one reason why witches are associated with brooms.*

*So we have enlisted some junior witches to sweep clean our path to the altar, to whisk away any cluttering vibes and bad juju. (Kids come forward). Could you please start at the altar here and sweep out a path to it for the congregation to trod?*

And now it is time to observe the otherworld into ours. Please come forward to place your memento mori on the altar.

Though they are never not with us, within us, around us, we are now perhaps more attuned to how we are portals for our ancestors. With that in mind, I invite you to recall in depth the person you are honoring today. Take a deep breath. Your lungs are their lungs.

Holding the image of your loved one in mind, begin to follow your breath. First you will feel it in your chest, shoulders, and perhaps your nostrils. Follow it deeper you will feel a sense of your breath expand and

contract in your head. Once you sense this, wait for your mouth to fill with saliva. As you swallow, invite your loved one to come be with you.

Recall or imagine their smile, their grimace. Recall or imagine their smell, the way they walked. Recall the heart and soul of them. Recall or imagine the particular way they greeted you; a welcoming phrase, maybe with a nick name. Do you remember?

Let that greeting come through you; their hello or some other signature expression. Let that precious moment live in you and, when I say so, as best you can, see if you can mimic it in their voice and way. Invite them by imitation. Are you ready to channel them and hear them say hello? Then on 3, 2, 1: begin.

We'll do it again on 3, 2, 1.

And because 3 is a magic number, one more time right now.

Ah. Welcome.

Now that we have embodied and welcomed our ancestors, I invite you now to search your heart for a question you would like to ask your ancestor or dearly departed.

If you wish, you can cup your hands before you and gently blow your question into your hands. Gently blow your need into your hands and bring your hands over your eyes. In that darkness, I invite you to conjure again the face of the one the question is for.

If this is an ancestor beyond your recollection, allow an imagined face to appear in your mind's eye. As their face takes form, find there a warm

smile; a smile that now knows all the secrets of the otherworld and is free from any pain or fear that may have, in life, compelled a different expression.

They are wise now. And it is this contented wisdom that they wish to impart to you through your heart and imagination. Ask them your question. Ask from your soul.

Watch as the question soaks into them. They may not answer right away. They may answer later this week. It may or may not be in words; but in events or bodily sensations. Or maybe the answer came already. Ours is to tune in and listen.

Ask and listen. What do they say?

From the otherworld they have graced us with wisdom. Offer them your thanks. Offer them your profound thanks. And now offer them a blessing in return.

And... in blessing them, also bid them a fond farewell; knowing you have exchanged blessings and let them know they may now return to that timeless place where they reside. Be assured you will be present to each other again.

Let us enable their transit home with three deep, enlivening breaths.

Let us bid them farewell with a song.