

## Service of Remembrance

Jamaica Plain, September 11, 2003, Rev. Terry Burke

### Lighting of Chalice

Hymn #20 Be Thou My Vision

### Bond of Fellowship

Minister: It is right and fitting that we affirm together those religious purposes for which we gather, as stated in our church bond of fellowship.

Congregation: In the love of truth, and in the spirit of Jesus, we unite for the worship of God and the service of humanity.

Responsive Reading #718 All Souls - May Sarton

### Readings

From Psalm 44

Anna Akhmatova, "Knock with your little fist"

Homily - All Souls

### Prayer

Hymn #281 O God Our Help In Ages Past

### Benediction

Anna Akhmatova, "Knock with your little fist"

Knock with your little fist - I will open.

I always opened the door to you.  
I am beyond the high mountain now,  
Beyond the desert, beyond the wind and the heat,  
But I will never abandon you...  
I didn't hear your groans,  
You never asked me for bread.  
Bring me a twig from the maple tree  
Or simply a little green grass,  
As you did last spring.  
Bring me in your cupped palms  
Some of our cool, pure Neva water,  
And I will wash the bloody traces  
From your golden hair.

Last week, I was listening to a tape that a friend loaned me on the religious meaning of work. The tapes were recorded at a conference in 1994. I was shocked to hear the speaker say that, even if the twin towers were destroyed by terrorists and fell down, their work would remain in the Kingdom of God, the Reign of God. I later remembered the earlier terrorist attack on the towers in 1993. However, I like the idea that good work somehow survives loss in the spiritual realm.

Likewise, our Universalist tradition preached that all souls would survive and ultimately be reconciled to a loving God; All Souls Day was a major holiday for the Universalists. Somehow, no one will be lost forever. Love is not futile, but remains part of God.

Our reading today from the great Russian poet Anna Akhmatova sounds like God talking to a human child. "Knock with your little fist..." Akhmatova had befriended a young, abused child in her Leningrad apartment building. After the poet was evacuated from the city during its World War II 1000 day siege by the Nazi army, the boy was killed in a German bombing raid. I saw the mass graves in Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, for hundreds of thousands of Russian civilians who died in the siege. People

say of the siege and the dead, "Nothing is forgotten, no one is forgotten, " or, "vechniya pamiat," "memory eternal." The dead remain part of God's memory and our memory.

When we celebrate the Universalist holiday of All Souls in our church in November, we sing an African song with the words, "the dead have a pact with the living." We the living have a pact with the dead of September 11th. The meaning of their lives continues to enfold in our lives and memory as we try to create a more loving and just world, a world worthy of their lives.

O Loving God, we thank you for the gift of the lives of those who died on September 11th. We pray for their loved ones who grieve their loss. We pray that our nation responds to this terrible loss by seeking to become spiritually stronger, to renew our commitment to our highest ideals of justice and freedom. Help us to give meaning to the lives lost by how we live our lives, and through our work in the world.