

Looking out at the amazing costumes many of you have brought tonight, I am reminded that I associate the celebration of this night, above anything else, with a spirit of creativity. For those who were here this morning, we were blessed with the fabulous costumes that both children and adults alike brought to service. Or, if you've gone anywhere in the past month, you've almost surely had the pleasure of passing by elaborately, and creepily, decorated homes. And the readings that we just heard are brimming with creative energy as well, from the rattling of skeletons in Ezekiel, to the sun-clad woman and the seven-headed dragon crowned with diadems in Revelation.

God's creative power, likewise, is on display in today's reading. Out of nowhere, Ezekiel is plopped down by God in the middle of a valley filled with bones. Ezekiel knows God is about to do something unbelievable, but he can't imagine what it would be. When God asks him, "Mortal, can these bones live?" Ezekiel is rendered speechless. While he knows the answer can't be no, he simply cannot fathom what God is about to do. All he can say is "Lord, you know," which, I have to say, feels remarkably modern, you know?

And then Ezekiel is witness to a process of creation that mirrors the better-known creation story in Genesis 2. God gathers bone and sinew and flesh together to create the form of a body, just as God formed Adam's body from the dust of the ground. From the wind, God breathes breath, or as it

could also be translated, spirit, into these lifeless bodies, just as God breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils. Through this process, God creates, because God is creative.

But that's not where this creation story stops. The climax of the story is not, as you might initially think, this wild process by which God puts flesh on dry bones and breathes breath into dry lungs. While I love what this story tells us about the resurrection of the body, that's not where this story ends. God's next, most astonishing creative act, is that God listens to these bones petitioning God. They say to God, what is life to them, what hope do they have, if they have been cut off from their people? And what does God do in response? God restores them to their land, places them back on their own soil, and thereby brings them back into the community of God's chosen people. They may have died, but they are not cut off from the presence of God, nor are they cut off from the living who remain.

Tomorrow is All Saints Day, which we will observe next Sunday, and will celebrate the communion of saints. This story invites us to take this next week to remember those who have died, whose stories continue to inspire and instruct us. And, as God continues to create, we can continue to experience God's creative power which is manifested in the community that we share with one another. Thanks be to God.