

Homily for the Autumn Equinox

Walkley & Crookes Forest Church

Look around at these trees—they already know what's happening. Twice a year, the Earth does something incredible: we call it the equinox, a moment of equality. Over the course of a year our planet circles the sun, leaning first towards and then away from its source of heat and light. But on the day of the equinox, the earth isn't leaning at all, it is perfectly straight.

That means that whether you're standing right here in this woods, on a beach in Australia, or at the freezing South Pole, we all see the exact same thing: the Sun rising exactly in the East and setting exactly in the West. No exceptions, no matter who or where you are. For twenty-four hours, the whole planet shares the sky equally.

And on the equinox nature gives us a special bonus gift, too. Earth's atmosphere acts like a giant glass lens. Even after the Sun technically drops below the horizon, the air actually bends the light rays around the curve of the planet to reach us. So even as night approaches, the sky itself holds onto the light for a few minutes longer, just for us.

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Listen to what the Apostle John wrote about light:

"The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever loves his brother and sister lives in the light, and in them there is no cause for stumbling."

— 1 John 2:8–10

John isn't talking about the length of days here; he's talking about our hearts. The physical night might be getting longer as winter approaches, but spiritual darkness recedes whenever we choose love. Living in the light is a choice we make every day in how we treat one another.

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This week also marks **Michaelmas**—the Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels.

In old paintings, Saint Michael is shown standing between the light and the darkness, his sword or staff glowing, our protector against evil. The feast of Michaelmas falls right at the Autumn equinox where the nights grow longer, serving as an annual promise: **we never enter the dark season defenceless**. Saint Michael stands as a reminder of John's promise—that God's love guards us through every shadow: *Whoever loves his brother and sister lives in the light*.

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For many of us—especially those who feel low or tired as the days shorten—winter can feel hard. But these trees around us know a secret: every living system needs a pause, a winter reset, so it can return in full bloom half a year later.

As the days grow cold, and you perhaps feel sad, remember the bending light after sunset: **even when the sun is hidden, light is still reaching you**. God's love, through Saint Michael's strength, is with you throughout the long winter months. Every day we can rise in hope.

We share one sky, one light, and put our trust in one God, manifested through Jesus Christ, in whose name we say,

Amen.