

November 12, 2016

Dear Ones,

At this time of year, when the veils between the worlds grow thin, we've always done ceremonies for the beloved dead. These ceremonies include the powerful work of turning ghosts into ancestors. The ancient Chinese believed that a death creates a ghost, and ghosts are a collaboration : they're made up of who the dead person was and what the living felt about that person. The living do a ceremony that reveals their contribution to the ghost, which can then be released. When that's done, the ghost becomes an ancestor, a presence capable of blessing the living, bringing in the goodness of eternity.

Some have said that they felt as though something died with the election. If that's true for you, you could do a ceremony of turning that ghost into an ancestor. For awhile I felt that America died that night, by which I meant the painfully imperfect but steadily progressing struggle to extend the promise of this country to all its inhabitants, and to welcome newcomers from other places into that promise. Over the last few days it feels as though the ghost of the loss I mourn is becoming an ancestor, made up of all the outrageously valiant people who've challenged America to live up to its promise. And now I can feel a force, a momentum that might be slowed or temporarily halted but I suddenly know cannot be stopped – not with these ancestors in the field. They are awfully busy right now, what with one thing and another, but still they pause just for a moment to bless me with a new peace.

What ghosts are stirring? What ancestors have arrived to stand at our backs? Who are the companions, seen and unseen, who accompany us? For whom will

we sweep the gravesites and prepare a feast of welcome this autumn? We might be humans dealing with a very human calamity right now, but we are not alone.

With my love,

*Jean Sutherland* 