

All Souls Day - A
Wisdom 3:1-9;
Romans 6:3-9;
John 6:37-40
Little Flower - 11/2/14

My Brothers and Sisters,

Yesterday we celebrated the Solemnity of All Saints. This year, because November 1st fell on Saturday, it was not a holyday of obligation. Today we celebrate All Souls Day. All Saints Day and All Souls Day complement each other.

In recent years, it has been difficult to distinguish All Saints Day and All Souls Day because the readings are so similar and many priests wear white vestments on both days. When I was growing up, the readings were similar, but the priests always wore white vestments on All Saints Day and black vestments on All Souls Day.

All Saints Day celebrates all those who have preceded us in death and who now live with God in heaven. We especially remember our deceased family members and friends. At the same time, when we celebrate All Saints Day, we thank God for all God's gifts to them throughout their lifetime and for the gift they were to us.

We believe in the communion of saints, i.e., we believe that there is an unbreakable bond of love between the saints in heaven and the church on earth, between all those in heaven and us. Therefore, All Saints Day also reminds us to pray to the saints. When we pray to the saints, we ask them to join their prayers to ours. Just as we pray for one another, we ask the saints to pray with and for us. On a personal level, we believe that when our loved ones die, their love for us does not die with them. Rather, it is made eternal and perfect. They remain eternally present to us in their spirit. Therefore, it is quite okay to continue to talk to our deceased husbands, wives, parents, children, or friends.

On All Souls Day, on the other hand, the Church calls us to pray for all the faithful departed, especially for our own deceased family members and friends. We believe that when we die, if our love is still tainted by sin, our love must be purified before we can experience full intimacy with God and the communion of saints in heaven. This is our Catholic doctrine of Purgatory.

If All Saints Day reminds us that all that we are and have are God's gifts to us, All Souls Day reminds us that God will hold us accountable for how we have chosen to live our lives and for how we have chosen to use the gifts God has given us. St. Paul wrote to the Romans, "*For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; ...So then each of us shall give an accounting of himself to God*" [14:10c & 12].

My brothers and sisters, today's readings are full of hope. Today's reading from Wisdom proclaims, "*...The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them...As gold in the furnace, he proved them, and as sacrificial offerings he took them to himself...The faithful shall abide with him in love.*" Jesus promises that he will not reject anyone who comes to him because it is the will of his Father that he not lose anything of what the Father gave him: "*For this is the will of my Father that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him (on) the last day.*" According to St. Paul, we have been baptized into Christ's death. "*If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.*" At a time when we are overly focused on this life, today's readings powerfully proclaim that there is indeed life after death or, better, that there is indeed life after life.