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Tuesday 2 November 2021

All Souls Day (The Commemoration of the Faithful Departed)

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction

Today's commemoration allows us to focus especially on those close to us who have parted this life. As much as we love those dear departed who have gone before us, we remain confident in an even greater love. God's love is eternal and his mercy endures forever, so our focus is not simply on the departed themselves, but on the departed held in the eternal love of God.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you are the tree of life. Lord, have mercy.
You call us to a new life. Christ, have mercy.
You enable us to share in your resurrection. Lord, have mercy.

Note regarding readings: Readings can be taken from any of those listed for 'Masses for the Dead' and are shown here along with those from the 'Lectionary for the Mass'. The latter are indicated below by being underlined.

First Reading

Wis 3:1–9 or Wis 4:7–15 or Isa 25:6–9

Second Reading

Rom 5:5–11 or Rom 5:17–21 or Rom 6:3–9 or Rom 8:14–23 or Rom 8:31b–35, 37–39 or Rom 14:7–9, 10c–12 or 1 Cor 15:20–28 or 1 Cor 15:51–57 or 2 Cor 4:14–5:1 or 2 Cor 5:1, 6–10 or Phil 3:20–21 or 1 Thess 4:13–18 or 2 Tim 2:8–13

Gospel Reading

Matt 5:1–12a or Matt 11:25–30 or Matt 25:31–46 or Mark 15:33–37, 16:1–6 or Luke 7:11–17 or Luke 23:44–46, 50, 52–53, 24:1–6a or Luke 24:13–16, 28–35 or John 5:24–29 or John 6:37–40 or John 6:51–58 or John 11:17–27 or John 11:32–45 or John 14:1–6

Reflection

Today's commemorative liturgy is known by two names. Like many, I would more commonly use the moniker 'All Souls Day'. However, when I have used (or thought I was using) the formal name of the solemnity celebrated today, I used to call it 'Commemoration of the Faithfully Departed' – the actual name is 'Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed'. I'm not sure where I picked it up, but I only recognised the error many years after first coming familiar with it. On the face of it, it is not a major difference. I used 'faithfully' instead of 'faithful' and the word 'all' was omitted in my erroneous version. On the other hand, those two words say much.

The word 'all' is important, it captures the totality of God's life giving mercy; no one is left out and all can be rightly considered in our prayers. The other, 'faithful' versus 'faithfully' is more subtle in difference but, nonetheless, worthy of reflection. Firstly my original understanding of faithfully is an adjective, not a noun. It describes something. Faithful can be read as an adjective too, however, it is technically a noun. It does not describe the departed, it is a more definitive term of what they actually are – they are full of faith. This distinction is a bit technical and can well be seen as splitting hairs. But the word faithful does give those we are focussing on a more nuanced concept in our mind.

In one sense, the word refers to baptised Christians. Technically speaking, 'the faithful' in ecclesiological and liturgical settings typically refers to baptised Christians; those initiated into the Christian body. Hence the Liturgy of the Eucharist once used to be called Mass of the Faithful referring to the practice of earlier times where catechumens (those preparing for but not yet baptised) would leave the service before the second part of the mass. Certainly the word faithful understood as such makes some sense. Part of the giftedness of baptism is the promise of eternal life found in the death and resurrection of Christ. This notion is spelled out in one of the readings available for today's liturgy:

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. (Rom 6:4-5)

There is another definition of faithful which is more generic in nature. It simply refers to those who are loyal, devoted and constant. In terms of faith in God, we might say that 'faithful' in this context refers to those who are committed to their belief in God and remain true to it. As such, we can acknowledge today how such faithfulness is rewarded by God with eternal salvation. Especially where faithfulness brings difficulty and trial, we recognise that the suffering endured in this life is entirely eclipsed "by the glory to be revealed to us" (Rom 8:18).

Faithful understood in this mode is a noble notion. However, what if we struggle to accord to this definition in our lives? Further, what if those we have in mind on this

All Souls' Day have not always been loyal, devoted and committed all of the time? In other words, what of basically everyone who has ever attempted to live the Christian life whom, by virtue of our human nature, would be described as imperfect and, at times at least, unfaithful?

Here we can turn to a fuller definition of 'faithful' captured in many of the readings that can be drawn on from the 'Masses for the Dead' as well as those specifically allocated for today's commemoration. It rests on the earlier definition tied to baptism and it is not surprising that many of the readings refer to our joining with Christ such that, while necessarily experiencing death (and human limitation that death represents), we will also experience eternal life with the Risen Christ.

The opening verse of the reading from Isaiah 25:6-9 says it plainly enough; "the Lord of hosts will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food ... God will destroy the mourning veil covering all peoples and the shroud enwrapping all nations". The veil and shrouds referred to here are those used in ritual mourning of the dead, they will be removed and done away with because God will "destroy death forever" because, as the reading from Wisdom states, "the souls of the upright are in the hands of God" (3:1). In short, the readings are full of what God is and what God does, not on what we are or do. Salvation and the immortality is tied to God's very nature and being. Thus, it is not surprising that the same reading from Wisdom points out that what might look like disastrous death is an incomplete picture, one that does not recognise the fullness of truth (Wis 3:2).

With this all said, the word 'faithful' is perhaps best understood as 'full of faith'; and faith in this sense is not simply a human function but, rather, in keeping with the classic Christian understanding, faith is a gift from God; a form of grace that allows all humans to seek and connect with their loving God. It relies not on our perfection, but on God's mercy. Certainly we do have some say in this giftedness. We can utilise the gift of faith to turn ever deeper toward God or we can lay it aside and ignore it, but we can never remain outside of God's mercy entirely. God's mercy, witnessed most clearly in the life of Christ, will always outweigh human limitation. As Paul's writings testify in another reading available for today's liturgy,

... by the transgression of one person, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ.

(Rom 5:17)

So we commemorate and pray for the 'faithful departed' – those who are now gone from us and whose parting might rightly grieve us, especially if such parting is recent. However, we do so knowing that they are 'faithful' in the fullest sense; never abandoned by God who is not only the object of our faith, but the source of it as well, and whose very will is to draw all men and women to Godself.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As Children of God, adopted as heirs of the Kingdom, we come in confidence with all our needs.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and all the bishops and clergy. May they continue to shepherd our pilgrim church by exemplifying unconditional love in the world.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for leaders of the nations, that they may seek first the kingdom of God to work in harmony and bring peace to the world especially with the challenges of the pandemic and climate change.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who work in our hospitals, as paramedic officers and other health care professionals. May their spirit be strengthened daily as they help to preserve the lives of others.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are sick and suffering, and especially those who are near death. May they experience a peaceful transition free of pain and loneliness.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray in thanksgiving for all those of our parish, friends and family members who have gone before us. Since they touched many lives around them, may their memory always live on.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those gathered here today that we will work towards holiness in the hope and knowledge of the unfathomable love that God has for us.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

As we live a resurrected life daily in the hope given through faith, we make these prayers through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Amazing grace. J. Newton. 437
Be not afraid. B. Dufford SJ. 449
Centre of my life. P. Inwood. 444
Crimond. J. Irvine. 473
Eye has not seen. M. Haugen. 466
I have loved you. M. Joncas. 402
I am the bread of life. S. Toolan RSM. 204
I heard the voice of Jesus say. H. Bonar. 468
In faith and hope and love. J. P. McAuley/ R. Connolly. 442
Keep in mind. L. Deiss. 391
My soul is longing for your peace. L. Deiss. 519
Now the green blade rises. J. Crum. 364
O God, our help in ages past. I. Watts. 459
On eagle's wings. M. Joncas. 452
Nunc dimittis. J. Wood. 301
Restless is the heart. B. Farrell. 239
The Lord is my shepherd. B. Boniwell. 506
We walk by faith. M. Haugen. 447

AOV1

Amazing grace. J. Newton. 29
Be not afraid. B. Dufford SJ. 114
Because the Lord is my shepherd. C. Walker. 66
Crimond. J. Irvine. 144
Eye has not seen. M. Haugen. 146
I have loved you. M. Joncas. 126
I am the bread of life. S. Toolan RSM. 49
I heard the voice of Jesus say. H. Bonar. 54
Keep in mind. L. Deiss. 180
O God, our help in ages past. I. Watts. 175
On eagle's wings. M. Joncas. 153
The Lord is my shepherd. B. Boniwell. 26
We walk by faith. M. Haugen. 63
You are near. D. Schutte. 112

AOV2

Abide with me. W. Monk/ H. Lyte. 128
Centre of my life. P. Inwood. 170
I Know that my redeemer lives. S. Soper. 34
Nearer, my God to thee. S. Adams/ L. Mason. 154

AOV4Kids

Turn our sadness upside down. L. Newton. 125

CWB

Psalm 26 (27). Christopher Willcock SJ. 594
The Lord is my light and salvation. Marty Haugen. 828

CWBII

Lord of the living. Fred Kaan. 440

Remember those, O Lord. James Quinn SJ. 441

Do not be afraid, I am with you/The Lord is my light. The Grail/ Christopher Willcock SJ/ICEL. 481

S&S1

The Lord is my light. Christopher Walker. 61

S&S2

The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation. Jesse Manibusan. 253

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 26: *The Lord is my light and my salvation./I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.*

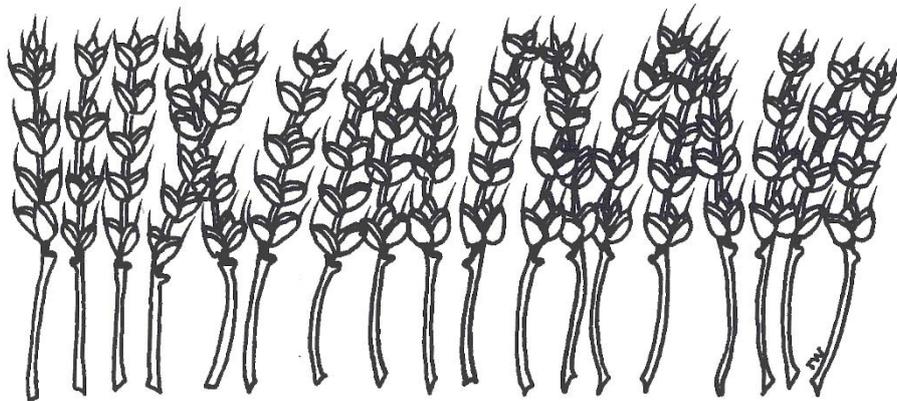
Psalm 26: Richard Proulx/Ingrid Brustle/J. B. Gwillim/Joseph Gelineau SJ. CWB 469/470

The Lord is my light and my salvation: Tony Alonso. LPSF pg. 110

Music selections by Michael Mangan

You are my shepherd (FWS based on Ps 23) [Gifts]

The Lord is my light (LCC – Ps 27 Children’s Lectionary) [Psalm]



***They rejoice as at
harvest time.*** Isa 9:2