

Commemoration of the Faithful Departed - All Souls Day

Excerpts from Pope Francis' Homily – 2 Nov 2019, 2 Nov 2018,

Excerpts from Pope Francis' Angelus – 2 November 2014

(Wisdom 3:1-9; Revelation 21.1-5a, 6b-7; Luke 7.11-17)

by Father Charles Fillion, pastor

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Brothers and sisters, 25 years ago, I was in Rome as a volunteer at Vatican Radio. One of my duties was to visit important sites and speak about it on the radio so visitors may go to them. One of the places was the catacombs primarily used as underground burial places. It was also where the persecuted Christians had to hide, and celebrated the Eucharist. The *identity* of those people who gathered there to celebrate the Eucharist and to praise the Lord is the same as that of our brothers and sisters of today in many countries where being Christian is a crime; it is forbidden; they have no rights. Those people came to the catacomb to hide, to be safe, to bury their dead; and to celebrate the Eucharist.

The place of Christians is a bit everywhere. We do not have a privileged place in life. What is the place of Christians? The “souls of the righteous are in the hand of God” (Wis 3:1). The place of Christians *is in the hand of God* where he wants them to be. God’s hands which are wounded, that are the hands of his Son who wanted to take the wounds with him to show them to the Father and intercede for us. The place of the Christian is in the intercession of Jesus before the Father. In God’s hands. And there we are safe. Our identity tells us that, even though we will be persecuted, we are in God’s hands, wounded by love, we are safe. This is our place. Today we can ask ourselves: Where do I feel safest? In God’s hands or in other things, with other securities that we “rent” but which in the end will fail? These Christians with this identity card who lived and live in God’s hand are men and women of *hope*.

We heard it in the second Reading: that final vision where everything is “re-done”, where everything is recreated, that homeland we will all go to. And in order to enter it, there is no need for strange things, there is no need for attitudes that are somewhat sophisticated. All that is required is to show the identity card: “It is fine, go ahead”. Our hope is in Heaven, our hope is anchored there, we steady ourselves by looking at the shore of the river that we must reach.

Today’s liturgy is realistic; it is tangible. It shows us the three-dimensional framework of life, three dimensions that even children understand: the past, the future, the present. Today is a day to *commemorate the past*, a day to remember those who have walked before us, who have also accompanied us, have given us life. To remember is what makes people strong, because it feels rooted in a journey, rooted in a history, rooted in a people. To remember helps us understand that we are not alone, we are a people: a people with a history, with a past, with a life. Remembering so many who have shared a journey with us, and they are here in our cemeteries. It is not easy to remember. We often struggle to turn our thoughts back to what has happened in our life, in our family.

But today is a day of remembrance, the remembrance that takes us to the roots: to our roots, to the roots of who we are. During this Jubilee year, many people are visiting pilgrimage sites like churches and shrines. It is a reminder of our faith, our roots, and a time of renewal. One of the things people do on this All Souls Day, is visiting cemeteries, which, as the word itself implies, is the “place of rest”, as we wait for the final awakening. It is lovely to think that it will be Jesus himself to awaken us. Jesus himself revealed that the death of the body is like a sleep from which He awakens us. With this faith we pause — even spiritually — at the graves of our loved ones, of those who loved us and did us good.

But today we are called to remember everyone, even those who no one remembers. We remember the victims of war and violence; the many “little ones” of the world, crushed by hunger and poverty; we remember the anonymous, killed by abortion. We remember our brothers and sisters killed because they were Christian; and those who sacrificed their lives to serve others. We especially entrust to the Lord, those who have left us during this past year. Church Tradition has always urged prayer for the deceased, in particular by offering the Eucharistic Celebration for them: it is the best spiritual help that we can give to their souls, particularly to those who are the most forsaken.

We now turn to Our Lady, Mary, the Mother of God who suffered the tragedy of Christ’s death beneath the Cross and took part in the joy of his Resurrection. May She, the *Gate of Heaven*, help us to understand more and more the value of prayer for the souls of the dead. They are close to us! May She support us on our daily pilgrimage on earth and help us to never lose sight of life’s ultimate goal which is Heaven. And may we go forth with this hope that never disappoints!