

## *All Souls Day*

We Catholics have always remembered the faithful departed. We remember them every time we celebrate Mass, and today we remember them on this day we call All Souls' Day. By praying for the faithful departed, we do something they can no longer do for themselves: we pray they will be brought into the fullness of God's presence; we pray they will enter into the glory of resurrection life. By praying for the faithful departed, we proclaim our faith that life is changed, not ended, at death. We proclaim our faith in the communion of saints: that the church is a living communion of the living and dead because nothing, not even death, can separate us from God's love for us that was revealed Christ.

The Book of Wisdom says that in the view of the foolish the faithful departed no longer enjoy life. But for those who believe in God, the faithful departed are at peace, and their hope is full of immortality. Today many people no longer believe the promise of resurrection life. For some people this is the only life, the only life for which we can hope. And so they live without hope of eternal life; they live for this life only.

But St. Paul reminds us that if we have grown into union with Christ by uniting ourselves with him in this life, we will be united with Christ in his resurrection life. And in today's Gospel, Jesus promises us that he will raise us up on the last day.

Does it make any sense to pray for the dead? Does it make any difference whether or not we pray for the faithful departed? Is this life the only life we will enjoy? Are we destined for eternal destruction? The answers we give to these questions depends upon whether or not we believe in God's gracious gift and promise of eternal life. If we do not believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, it makes no sense to pray for the dead. If we do not believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, we have no hope for resurrection life. If we believe that this is the only life, then we live for this life alone.

But I believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Every week, when we celebrate this Eucharist, we proclaim our faith in eternal life. Every time we receive the Eucharist, we receive the seed and promise of eternal life. We pray for the faithful departed who are still in the process of being purified so that they can enter into the fullness of life. We hope for eternal life because we believe that what God has done for Jesus, God will do for us. We believe in eternal life, and this makes all of the difference.

Catholicism is a world of grace filled with many beautiful feasts, this day being one of the most beautiful. Pray for your beloved dead and for all of the dead with the firm assurance that you will see them again. Pray with full confidence and hope that resurrection life is God's gift to those who live their lives in with Christ.