



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

The Commemoration of All Souls

May they rest in peace and rise in glory

Readings: Isaiah 25: 6-9, Ps 26, Romans 5: 5-11, Mark 5: 33-39; 16: 1-6

There were many tragedies engendered by the Reformation but perhaps one of the most telling and emotionally and spiritually profound was the wholesale rejection of prayers for the souls of the faithful departed.

The intercession of the Saints was rejected, the great powerhouse of Heaven no longer called into aid, the departed left bereft of the loving benison of their nearest and dearest's prayers.

The companionship of those in Christ – on earth, in the purification and in Heaven was sundered by a single cataclysmic shift in Protestant theology. That theology is strangely lacking in mercy for all its talk of grace. It is also wilfully ignorant of the reality of relationship for all its talk of personal relationship with God.

'As a tree falls, so it lies'. That is there can be no change post-mortem. We cannot change God's mind about the person who has died. That is the Reformation claim.

But Catholic teaching does not teach that we are in this to change God's mind. We are not here to know better than God or to heretically contact spirits. We are here because, in love with Christ, we can do no other.

We know that a man must choose for God in this life. We know that man does not die perfect. So we understand that, though he cling to the lowest rung of the ladder of Purgatory, yet he shall find his eternal destiny in Christ and not be disappointed. There is no magic 'oofle dust' that transforms us into saints. Sanctification is a process, a relationship of growing into the likeness of Christ.

So when we pray for the departed we do so, not because we know better than God or that He needs our advice, but because we love. Because that love cannot be ended by death. Because we are part of the Body of Christ with those who have gone before in Faith. Because that relationship has not been fractured by death. Because the Risen Christ has overcome both sin and death.

The place our love can be truly offered is the Calvary of Sacrifice, the place where God's love reaches out to us, the heart of the Mass. It is the place where Heaven and Earth meet and the Church militant on earth joins the Church Triumphant in Heaven and The Church moving through the purifying fire of God's love.

Those we love but see no longer do not cease to concern us or draw upon our affection. When we have deeply loved we often feel incomplete until the longed for and eternal reunion – a part of our heart is always somewhere else.

Then there are those who have died with no-one to pray for them, the abandoned of the centuries, often the 'unhouseled, disappointed unaneled' – (not received communion, died unprepared, not received extreme unction) to quote the ghost of Hamlet's father. The unction of our love is given in these prayers, for the known and the unknown, every time we come to the Mass and never more so than on this precious day of ALL SOULS which reminds of that beautiful duty of love. It reminds of our own destiny and future need. It gives an urgency to our mission. So we pray also for the generation that will love us through the purification and love us in prayer at the holy mysteries in the time beyond this, our own mortal span.

For all who have gone before us and reached out for the hand of Christ
May they rest in peace
And rise in glory.
Amen.

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