



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

## **The Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed (All Souls)**

***Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord***

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

Some pagan cultures celebrate festivals of the dead as a superstitious way of propitiating the ghosts of the departed and stopping them interfering in the present – a sort of spiritualistic insurance policy. Some Christian groupings never remember the dead at their tables, making exception only for great pageantry at war memorials.

The Catholic Church is different. The dead are neither to be feared nor ignored. We continue to love them. We continue to pray for them. We believe that they, who have entrusted themselves to God in Christ, are a little further on the journey into the heart of God than we are. We believe we remain part of the same eternal family and bound for glory. The Church Militant here on Earth is in solidarity with the Church in the Purification and assisted by the prayers of the Church Triumphant in Heaven. Death may separate us but, in Christ Jesus the Risen One, it can never divide us. We continue to work with and for one another.

Two great errors currently overshadow the practice of the Faith in modern times. The first emanates from the Reformation faultline. The belief that we cannot, must not and should not pray for the dead is a denial of the Risen Life in

Christ. It is fracturing of the community of Faith. It also ends in the absurdity of the belief that, at death, our relationship with God ceases to be a real organic relationship and becomes a form of magic. God, like some celestial Sooty, sprinkles some 'oofle dust' over the departed soul and he is instantly like Jesus in every particular and ready for the Eternal Presence.

That is neither a real relationship nor an example of true love. Catholics understand that the post mortem Purgatory, not as punishment but as a necessary process of purification. It is God loving us into shape by the purging fire of His love. We would no more want to enter Heaven bemerded with sin than pitch up at our child's wedding in a bin liner and manure. We are in the process of becoming holy, like the saints, so we can dwell eternally in the Presence. That process of purification is spoken of by both St. Peter and St. Paul.

The second great error that looms over the ghastly disposal plants of the crematoria, is universalism. Everybody goes to Heaven. You will hear endless eulogies of the deceased that laud their supposed virtues and never pray for the soul. The deceased is pictured as mysteriously and remarkably already in Heaven – more often than not a Heaven they did not believe in presided over by a God to whom they did not pray. While such false belief is the logical end of liberal Protestantism it denies both the concepts of love and free will – the most determined atheist is condemned to Heaven – it rejects the idea of the justice or mercy of God – nothing has consequence and God does not care - and locks people into a ridiculous fairy tale evasion of reality.

Most heretical of all it proclaims that Jesus did not need to come at all and that His Passion and Death on the Cross was a piece of spectacular, grisly and unnecessary theatre.

For Catholics the choice is clear – indeed for all orthodox Christians. We reject the division of the Church which is united in Christ. We reject the deceit that tells men they do not need to repent and turn back to God. We do so because we believe in Jesus. We believe in the Word of God.

We love God and we long for salvation for all. Because of this we preach the Gospel. Because of this we pray for each other – living and departed.

Our festival of the dead, All Souls, is not a feast of the dead at all but a feast of the Resurrection, a celebration of those alive in Christ Jesus, a solidarity with those who have gone before us on the pilgrim way and with whom, in the Presence, we hope, purified and sanctified, to spend eternity. Our prayers for the departed are a declaration of that faith and hope and love.....Eternal rest grant unto them.....

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