



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

All Souls-November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022

***Readings: Isaiah 25: 6-9, Psalm 26, Romans 5: 5-11,***

***Luke 7: 11-17***

Last week I stopped at a garden centre for a quick restorative coffee only to find it rammed with hundreds of young families enjoying a Pumpkin Festival. The night before last I wended my way home from Boxing Class through streets filled with feral children dressed as agents of Satan and performing their annual doorstep blackmail of 'trick or treat'.

I realise that this is a product of clever marketing but I do sometimes wonder what is going on in people's brains. While the churches are half empty(if you are lucky), the temples of Mammon overflow. The very places where the struggle against evil and the preparation for the future of Man are worked out are abandoned by those who, by their inactivity, collaborate with the dark and raise a generation of children unaware of their eternal destiny.

All Souls brings us up hard against that very consideration. It is the Day of the Dead. It is the day par excellence when Christian believers remember acutely those that they love but see no longer and offer their prayers of love and thanksgiving for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. It is also a day when we, who are in the waiting room of mortality, consider our position in the light of eternity.

Our prayers for the dead are not, as in Protestant eyes, the vain acts of those who seek to change God's mind, but rather the inevitable consequence of our love for those who have gone on and it is a love that death cannot break for those in the Risen Christ. We believe that, unlike the ridiculous crematorium sermons which frequently place the departed in a Heaven that bears a remarkable resemblance to a continental holiday resort, work remains to be done. We are not the finished product. We die imperfect and the work of the Purgatory is to finish the job of

making us fit for the eternal presence of God. We do not stumble into Heaven bemerded with sin any more than we would turn up at a Royal Garden Party fresh from emptying a tank of slurry. The Purgatory, the purification, the place of purging and preparation is a vital part of our journey home. There we will suffer. We will suffer the pain of loss of those things which we mistakenly cling to so tightly, the parts of us that have held out against the loving mercy of God. We will see the burning of the things we built lovingly in wood and straw until only the gold remains.

When we read the Divine Comedy it is perhaps not surprising that the Purgatory is the most interesting for, in Hell and in Heaven there is relative stasis. Only in Purgatory is there real movement and change. It is the place of both suffering and supreme hope. If I have my hand on the lowest rung of the ladder of the Purgatory, when I die, I shall rejoice because I shall know that I am truly Heaven Bound. All that remains is purgation and that is an act, however painful, of the Love of God in Jesus Christ, my Lord. So we pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory for, in their trials and struggles we see our own future and its challenges and we know, beyond peradventure, how precious to us is the gift of accompanying love that is the prayer of those who love us. The role of

suffering in our redemption is to be seen in the centrality of the Cross. The sacrifice denotes the value of what is redeemed. So, in this life, we offer our sufferings against the days of purification. They remind us of what is gold and what is straw, what will remain and what we need to let go of and thus let the fire of God's love enlighten, energise, purify and forge anew our hearts and fit us for Heaven. Let us pray in confidence and joy for the Holy Souls in Purgatory – and for one another on the pilgrim way.