

The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed Jesus Promises to Raise Us on the Last Day

Wisdom 3:1-9; Psalm 23:1-3a,3b-4,5,6; Romans 5:5-11; John 6:37-40

Dear brothers and sisters,

Let us hold on to the promise of our Lord Jesus, "I shall raise him on the last day" (Jn 6:40).

It is a profound promise for all baptized Christians. As we observe All Souls Day, we hold firmly to this promise, turning our hearts toward all the faithful departed and recognizing the importance of praying for them. They need our prayers and sacrifices more than the flowers we buy for them because flowers wither away, but prayers and sacrifices reach heaven.

It is a privilege to pray and offer sacrifices on their behalf in union with the entire Church. Such prayers and sacrifices are made perfect through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Through our prayers and sacrifices for the dead, we express our hope in the resurrection. We affirm this each time we celebrate the Holy Mass. We call it the Memorial Acclamation — Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

In our Catholic tradition, praying for the dead is an act of faith, hope, and love — deeply rooted in Scripture, tradition, and the belief in the communion of saints.

First, it affirms our faith in eternal life. We believe that death is not the end, but the start of a new life with God. The Book of Wisdom reassures us: "The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them" (Wis 3:1). Although the world may see death as a tragedy or an end, we understand that for the faithful, it is a transition into eternal life with God. When we pray for the dead, we reaffirm our belief that those who die in God's grace continue to live, and that our prayers can help them attain the fullness of heaven.

Secondly, praying for the faithful departed reflects our hope in God's mercy. The Church teaches that some souls, although saved, go through purification before entering heaven. This process, called Purgatory, involves cleansing the souls of any remaining faults. As the Book of Revelation states, 'Nothing unclean enters heaven, nor anyone who does abominable things or lies' (Rev 21:27). Our prayers can help reduce this purification by asking God to forgive their remaining faults and bring them into His presence. It also grants us the hope offered by our Lord Jesus; we actively enter into this hope. As St. Paul reminds us, this hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (cf. Rom 5:5). We anchor our prayers in this hope. Our hope is Jesus, the source, the life, and the way of our prayers, who can turn our sorrow into hope and keep our connection with the faithful departed alive — not just through memory but through faith in the Lord.

Thirdly, praying is an act of mercy and love. Praying for the souls of the departed is one of the spiritual works of mercy. Just as we help the living through charity, we support the dead through prayer. Our love does not end with death — it continues through prayerful intercession for the dead, and it is regarded as a good and holy act. As the Book of Maccabees states, 'It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins' (2 Macc 12:45). When we offer Mass intentions for our loved ones, we engage in spiritual acts of mercy, and the monetary offering we give for the dead is used for charity to help others in need. We take part in this great network of love, a mystical unity that connects the entire Church—the unity of the faithful on earth, the souls in purgatory, and the saints in heaven. We bear witness to the Church's belief in the communion of saints—the living aiding the dead, and the saints helping all of us, the living.

As we pray for the dead, we are also reminded that our time on earth is limited, and each moment is a chance to love God and our neighbors. Just as we entrust the faithful departed to God's mercy, we also trust in His grace, for we are still on our journey—pilgrims of hope, a people set apart, a holy people of God, destined to share in His glory (cf. 1 Pt 2:9; 1 Pt 1:16).

We hope we don't lose sight of this dignity and purpose. We should not be ashamed to say that I wanted to become a saint. That doesn't mean we all have to perform miracles. To be a saint means to be close to God, to be filled with His love, and to share that love every day with others.

The greatest loss isn't death—it's a wasted life, a life continually chasing things that aren't of God, a life that never learns to love and forgive unconditionally, missing the opportunity to serve and love like Jesus. Let us remember that God called us to be saints, not someday, but today!

May this All Souls Day renew our faith in Christ's promise
and inspire us to live each day as his faithful disciples
who await the moment when He will fulfill His word:
"I shall raise him on the last day."

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor