

NOVEMBER 2 - FEAST OF ALL SOULS

Wisdom 3:1-9; Romans 5:5-11; John 6:37-40
11-2-2025 Homily

I. Introduction

Once there was a couple, Walter and Helen, who were married for over sixty years before death separated them from each other. They met for the first time on the opening day of school in their seventh-grade year, back when they were both twelve years old. Walter took an immediate liking to Helen, and he acted quickly: he passed her a note in the classroom, in which he asked permission to walk her home from school that day. However, there was a problem: he had been assigned to clean the erasers after class, so would Helen wait until he was finished? Making sure no one was looking, Helen wrote a response and slipped it back to Walter. Her note read: “My mom insisted I leave immediately after school and walk directly home, so I can’t wait for you—but I’ll walk slowly.” In other words, she hoped Walter would catch up with her, and he did.

The two quickly became friends, then very close friends, then sweethearts, and they dated all through high school—and after Walter returned home from serving overseas during the war, they were married. Walter and Helen had sixty wonderful years together, along with many loving children and grandchildren—and that made their inevitable separation by death very hard. Helen was the first to grow ill and weak, and she hated the thought of having to leave behind the love of her life. As she lay dying, however, she told Walter, “I’m going home to be with Jesus—but I’ll walk slowly.” Our deceased loved ones, while they are called to the joys of eternity, also miss us, and are waiting for us to catch up with them—and we know that, through Jesus, this will one day happen.

II. Development

If we were to name the one experience that every human being in history will share, regardless of age, race, nationality, social status, personal sinfulness or holiness, or religion, that experience would be death. Everyone dies, sooner or later, and that’s why questions regarding death, and about what awaits us on the other side, have been a constant preoccupation for humanity. Even a technological society such as ours, which tries to deny, control, or delay death as much as possible, isn’t exempt from such speculation. In particular, we wonder about those who’ve gone before us, and we yearn to see our loved ones again. Sacred Scripture is very reassuring in this regard; the Judeo-Christian tradition insists that God’s love is stronger than death, and that those who trust in Him will therefore never be disappointed. The Book of Wisdom, from which today’s 1st Reading is taken, tells us that “the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them . . . [for] grace and mercy are with His holy ones, and His care is with His elect.” This passage shows that the Old Testament began developing an understanding of a divine love that transcends or surpasses the limits of earthly life, and the New Testament presents Jesus Christ as the embodiment or fulfillment of that love. St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans reminds us that Jesus fulfilled God’s plan by dying for us sinners, reconciling us to our heavenly Father, and in the Gospel Jesus insists that He will not reject anyone who comes to Him. As He says, “This is

the will of My Father, that *everyone* who sees the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life. . . .” This means that, as much as we desire to be reunited with our deceased loved ones in the joy of Heaven, God our Father wants this infinitely more.

III. Conclusion

Theologians sometimes speak of God’s universal will to save—that is, His desire that somehow every single person who’s ever lived end up in His Kingdom. This won’t happen, of course, for those who reject God’s love thereby choose eternal damnation for themselves—but the Lord somehow offers the possibility of salvation to all humanity. The number of people who’ve lived in the past, who are alive on earth right now, and who will exist in the future, is far too vast for us to comprehend in any personal way, and so we find it much easier to think about those whose lives touch our own, directly or indirectly: our families, relatives, friends, neighbors, companions, fellow parishioners, ancestors, descendants, and so on. If we all love God, we are all journeying toward His Kingdom—but at our own unique speed and pace, traveling a path that might be relatively straight or, because of our sins, filled with many obstacles and detours. Some of our loved ones may ignore or even reject God for much of their lives; that’s why we pray for them personally, along with the conversion of all sinners and the return to the Church of those no longer practicing their faith. Some of our deceased loved ones may not have finished their process of spiritual growth and purification by the end of their earthly lives; that’s why we continue praying for them, and for all the souls in purgatory—especially during this month of November. Some of us may be responding to God’s grace less completely and generously than we should; that’s why we perform acts of penance, sacrifice, and self-denial, and make use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

We are all journeying toward God’s Kingdom—and because we are all unique, no two of us are traveling exactly the same path or growing in grace at exactly the same rate. That doesn’t matter, however, as long as we share in the same destination and the same desire to arrive there safely. If it’s true that in some sense our deceased loved ones are walking slowly so that we might catch up with them, it’s infinitely more true of Jesus. He now reigns in Heaven, and He has gone ahead of us to prepare a place for us—and yet He is also beside us every step of the way, matching His pace to ours, giving us the strength we need to go on even in times of difficulty and grief, and holding us close to His Heart. Our Lord promises that on the last day He will raise to eternal life all who believe in Him—and whether we spend many years on earth together with our loved ones, as did Walter and Helen, or only a relatively short time, the day will come when all the children of God are reunited in Heaven, and filled with a joy, freedom, and unity that cannot be fully imagined and will never end.

