

The Solemnity of All Saints and the Feast of All Souls November 1 & 2

INTRODUCTION & PRAYER

Theologian and Sister of St. Joseph Elizabeth Johnson uses the metaphor that the communion of saints can be imagined as a great stadium of people who have run, or are running a great race. While we each independently approach the starting line, we are lifted up by the love, encouragement, support and accompaniment of those who have gone before us, and who know well the challenges we are to face. Likewise, those loved ones who have returned to God ahead of us are members of that communion and with us in spirit. They lift us up in love, encouragement, and support.

In the face of loss and mourning, it can be tempting to let the depth of our sorrow remain the focus of our energy. The feasts which we celebrate these first days of November—the Solemnity of All Saints and the Feast of All Souls—are important reminders that we are called to celebrate with joy the fact that the faithful departed have been reunited with their Creator and that, while they no longer inhabit their physical forms, we are united to them in faith through the Communion of Saints: all those holy men and women, the officially recognized or not, who have passed from this life into the next and walk with us in faith, guiding us ever closer to God.

As you prepare to pray, spend some time reflecting on a relationship with a loved one who has passed, but with whom you still feel close. With this loved one in mind, does the metaphor of a great stadium speak true to your experience? In these days of remembrance, celebration, sadness, and joy, we call on the communion of saints—all the faithful departed—to accompany us as we continue our own journeys to holiness.

Let us pray:

*God of all,
You have built up your Church through the love and devotion of your saints—all those faithful departed who share union in your glory and whom we commemorate today.
Inspire us to follow in their example, that we may rejoice with them in the vision of your glory, through Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.
Amen.*

SCRIPTURE

Reading I:
Wisdom 3:1-3;9

The souls of the just are in the hand of God,
and no torment shall touch them.
They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead;
and their passing away was thought an affliction
and their going forth from us, utter destruction.
But they are in peace.
Those who trust in the Lord shall understand truth,
and the faithful shall abide with him in love:
because grace and mercy are with his holy ones,
and his care is with his elect.

Reading II:
1 Jn 3:1-3

Beloved:
See what love the Father has bestowed on us
that we may be called the children of God.
Yet so we are.
The reason the world does not know us
is that it did not know him.
Beloved, we are God's children now;
what we shall be has not yet been revealed.
We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him,
for we shall see him as he is.
Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure,
as he is pure.

REFLECTION

Being created in God's image and likeness, our faith reminds us that our physical form is not our ultimate purpose. Rather, the earthly life is part of a journey much larger than we can fathom, and one that leads us ultimately back to perfect union and perfect joy with God. Because we believe that it is only a loved one's physical form which expires in death, we can hold close that our connection to them has not ended, simply changed. Consider again a loved one who has passed but with whom you still feel a connection.

While you no longer speak or visit with them in person, do you experience your relationship with them differently? Perhaps you experience them in the form of a beautiful sunset or a song on the radio that makes you think fondly of them.

The Days of the Dead, *Dias de los Muertos*, offer a helpful approach for understanding the change in relationship that occurs with a loved one who has passed. While celebrated specifically in Mexico, it is celebrated in distinct but similar ways in other parts of Central and South America, the Philippines, and parts of Europe. The traditions that surround these occasions bring to life in a quite joyful and celebratory way that which the hope of our faith also reminds: one day we join again with our loved ones in the presence of God. Then, in the meantime, we celebrate with joy our memory of them, and invite their memory and spirit into all we do. Indeed, they are days dedicated to honoring and remembering the richness of our relationships with those who have passed, and finding new ways to continue to connect with them. Families share special meals, tell stories, and build altars or *ofrendas* to honor the memory of the dead. Truly, it is a celebration of the love that remains, and binds us all together.

Importantly, we do not ignore feelings of sadness that our loved ones are no longer with us in their physical form. Of course, we miss being able to call them and visit with them in person. However, the spirit of celebration of life, continued relationship, and participation in the communion of saints that Dia de los Muertos offers the opportunity to soften and change our grief. It helps us put it in its place as an expression of love and continued relationship. Like so many other aspects of our faith, it is an opportunity to embrace both/and.

How can you incorporate a spirit of joyful remembrance into this season? What tangible practice can you commit to in this season that will serve as a reminder of the love that remains and binds us together?

[OPTIONAL MUSICAL INTERLUDE—Included find a few musical choices which might be appropriate for your community]

We Belong to You, Trevor Thomson
We are Many Parts, Marty Haugen

INTERCESSIONS

Leader:

When we pray for those who have died, when we celebrate their life and their death, we strengthen our communion with them in anticipation of the perfect unity we will receive



PRAYER SERVICE

upon our own entry into heaven. Therefore, we bring our prayers to God in a special way today as we remember those who have gone before us to eternal life.

We pray for victims of violence, natural disaster, and covid-19, may they be brought to rest in God's loving arms and the comfort of God's peace. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who died suddenly or unexpectedly May they be comforted with the eternal happiness of God's tender gaze. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those children who have died. May God relish and delight in them, and may God comfort those who feel the loss. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the those who mourn. May God grant them courage to continue to work through their grief, and may they feel deeply the love and support of their communities. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray in gratitude for front-line caregivers and others in Catholic health care who passed away in service this past year. May we remember and emulate their commitment to those who are ill and may those who mourn their loss be comforted. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those who care for the sick and dying. May they see the face of God in each person they care for, and may they be granted the grace to accompany them with courage. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

LITANY OF THE SAINTS

Together with all the saints, we pray for those who have gone before us in the service of Catholic health care, especially those whose names are kept in this year's memorial book.

[As you are able, sing, recite, or play your favorite rendition of the Litany of the Saints, including and perhaps naming those in your community who have passed in the last year]



PRAYER SERVICE

CLOSING & PRAYER

Having reflected together on what this season of All Saints and All Souls calls us to, let us close together in prayer:

Merciful God,

Through your glorious cloud of witnesses, the communion of saints, we have borne witness to glimpses of your glory. We feel your love and accompaniment in our loss, and feel also your desire for us to be united with you and with all the faithful departed.

Shine your light upon them, Lord, that they may rest in your peace. And shine your light upon us, that we might remember their lives well lived; that we might celebrate together the love that remains and binds us together.

May all the saints continue to intercede for us in prayer, and may we continue to pray with and for all those who have passed on into eternal life.

In your name we pray: AMEN.

[OPTIONAL CLOSING SONG]

How Can I Keep From Singing?
For All the Saints