

Homily For All Souls - Year I

St. Peter's 8:30 AM/7:00 PM Masses for Tuesday, November 2, 2021

Job 19:1,23-27 "I know that my redeemer lives ... Then in my flesh I shall see God."

Psalm 103 "The Lord does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities."

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 "Christ is the first fruits, then those who belong to him."

John 12:23-26 "Those who love their life, lose it, and those who hate their life in this world keep it for eternity."

The Faithful Departed

Introduction

You've got to really love being Catholic today, don't you? This is the day that the Lord has made, in a way that no other day is so, except Easter Sunday, when our Lord conquered death. On that day, Jesus was not just raised to life, only to die again. He became the eternal king of heaven, a heaven filled but never full, of the saints of all time.

There are many options for readings today. Any passages offered for the dead can be used. When I heard commentary on the ones being used in the US, I wondered why we hadn't used those. They seemed so perfect. Yet, Sacred Scripture is always perfect for expressing our deepest longings of our hearts and for bringing to us God's deepest longing for you and me.

Job

Job has lost everything. His friends try to tell him that it is his own fault and that he must be guilty of some great sins to have been so utterly taken down. Job himself goes through all the human rationalizing and justifying that we do. Finally, though, he has nothing left but the hope that God is redeemer, the one who will ransom him from the consequences of bondage to sin and the worst of human suffering. What an amazing foreshadowing, told so early in the great story of salvation, of the Messiah who will redeem the world by bearing a suffering much greater even than Job's.

Psalm

The psalmist seems to echo an aspect of this same sentiment. If God repaid us according to our sins, we would be lost. But, his mercy reaches into those places where we go to run away from him. We can refuse that mercy of course. We have absolute freedom in that regard.

Corinthians

In 1 Corinthians, St. Paul explains that Christ is the first and perfect offering to God, which opens the door to our redemption. He doesn't just cover over our sins as some Christians believe. He allows us to join our inadequate sacrifice to his sacrifice. This is what makes heaven possible.

John

John's gospel furthers this understanding of Christ who is the seed willing to go into the ground and die, to be sacrificed so that earthly life might give way to the heavenly. Loving versus hating this life is a reminder that this life always ends in death. Only by preparing ourselves to let go of this life can we ready ourselves to love the life that is to come.

The Meaning of Purgative Suffering

We are in a time when we have had stolen from us the opportunity to be at the bedside of those who are making their final journey from this life to the next. I resent that a friend who died recently could not receive Anointing of the Sick. I believe in that sacrament's redemptive power. My hope for him is also that, while he was denied that beautiful sacrament which Christ gave the Church to administer. But we know that God is not bound even by those sacraments and can save, through his abounding mercy and steadfast love, all who turn to him at the time of their judgment and plead with him.

The first person I ever really walked along with during the final months and days of his life was with a young man named Scott. He had a wife and two young children and had been an athlete until cancer slowly robbed him. His greatest

anxiety was not for himself but for that family he would have to leave on their own. This caused him tremendous sorrow for him. At the time, I had no idea how to help him with this. However, one day another man, older and wiser in faith, came with me to visit at the hospice. I listened to him talk to Scott about the souls in purgatory receiving the offerings of those still on earth, and how his physical and emotional pain could be offered for their entry into the eternal joy of heaven. That part wasn't new to me. From my earliest childhood, I remember praying the rosary for the souls in purgatory. I remember being at the church in almost darkness except for what seemed like a million candles. This memory was a big part of my return to faith after having drifted away as an adult. I could feel the presence of those for whom we prayed.

But on that day in the hospice I heard another friend say to my dying friend: Do you know who will be the first to greet you when you enter into heaven? With your wife and sons will be those who received your offering of purgative suffering. For nothing is lost in the kingdom. No prayer, no offering, no suffering offered up will be lost but will be added to the treasury which God adds to his own great mercy. God doesn't need our purgative suffering, but he does make it possible for our suffering here on earth to have great power and meaning in the eternal state of joy that all are called to.

Call To Action

Where else can you go where everyone is praying for those who have died, where at a million masses everyone is lifting up our loved ones to the God who is abounding in love and mercy. Can you imagine how amazing it will be to receive the prayers of those million masses when we need them most after our deaths?

Yesterday we honoured the multitude that cannot be counted. They are gathered before the throne singing with the angels: Holy, Holy, Holy. They wear white robes made so by being washed in the blood of the lamb. They are the great crowd of witnesses cheering for us in the arena, that we may fight with fidelity and valor. Part of our fight is to not lose hope for ourselves but, on this day especially, not to lose hope for those who have gone before us.

Pray for the dead. Pray for family and for friends. Pray for your loved ones and pray for those who were hard to love. Pray for those whose lives appeared to us already holy, but also for those who did seem to struggle to be good. Pray for those who have others to pray for them, but also for those who may have no one to pray for them. Pray for final victory of those who are ready to receive it but aren't quite there yet. Don't stop praying for health and success and victory in this life. On this day, remember that we are called to a life of health and success and victory that is far beyond our wildest dreams for this life. Imagine that.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.*

Collect: *O God, look mercifully on your departed servants, that they may merit the joys of eternal happiness.*

Job: *I know that my redeemer lives ... Then in my flesh I shall see God*

Psalm: *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.*

1 Corinthians: *Christ has been raised from the dead ... so all will be made alive in Christ. He is the first fruits, then those who belong to him.*

John: *Jesus said to his disciples: Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain. But, if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*