

All Souls Day - November 2

Note: Where a Scripture text is underlined in the body of this discussion, it is recommended that the reader look up and read that passage.

Note: The readings for the Masses said on this day come from the readings designated for use in the Masses for the Dead. As such, the readings represented here may not reflect the readings presented in a particular parish on this day.

Opening Prayer

Good Jesus, Your loving Heart was ever moved by the sorrows of others. Look with pity on the souls of our dear ones in purgatory. Hear our cry for mercy, and grant that those whom You called from our home and hearts may soon enjoy everlasting rest in the home of Your love in heaven. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Introduction

All souls day commemorates all the Faithful Departed. Solemn commemorations of the dead have been made from the seventh century on, but at different times. Adilo of Cluny (a town in southern France in which a Benedictine abbey was established in 910) is generally credited with the fixing of November 2 as the day for the commemoration in the West. He ordered ca.1030 that the commemoration be celebrated on that day at Cluny and at all its dependent houses. From Cluny the practice spread to many dioceses and was adopted in Rome in the 14th century.

Three Masses are celebrated; one must be for the intention of all the Poor Souls, and another for the Pope's intention. This permission was granted by Benedict XV during World War I because of the great slaughter of that war, and because, since the time of the Reformation and the confiscation of church property, obligations for anniversary Masses which had come as gifts and legacies were almost impossible to continue in the intended manner.

FIRST MASS

1st Reading - Daniel 12:1-3

As we read the Book of Daniel, we most often remember his being taken from prison to interpret King Nebuchadnezzar's dream and his being thrown into the lion's den. These narratives are in the first 6 chapters of the book. Chapters 7 through 12 recount 4 apocalyptic visions which Daniel had (and to which Jesus refers when He calls Himself "Son of Man"). The final two chapters of this book do not appear in Protestant editions of the Bible or do they appear in the Hebrew canon of scripture as, unlike the remainder of this book, they were originally written in Greek rather than Hebrew. They do appear in the Septuagint form of the Jewish scriptures which were used by Jesus and the apostles. Our reading for today comes from the fourth apocalyptic vision of Daniel.

^{12:1} At that time there shall arise Michael, the great prince, guardian of your people; It shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began until that time.

He is talking about the end times, the "day of the Lord."

At that time your people shall escape, everyone who is found written in the book. ² Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth

A euphemism for the dead.

shall awake;

Come back to life. This passage is the earliest enunciation of belief in the resurrection of the dead.

some shall live forever,

Literally "some unto life everlasting". The first occurrence of this term in the Bible.

others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace. ³ But the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, And those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever.

Alternate 1st Reading – Wisdom 3:1-9

The just seem to have died, but they are really alive with God. Their sufferings in this life appear to be punishments, but their sufferings are not punishments at all but a discipline, correction, and testing of fidelity in which God recognizes those worthy of Him. The just are full of hope for a blessed immortality, and at the Judgment the just shall enjoy the kingdom of God. The wicked, however, have no hope for the future and their punishments begin even in this life.

¹ But the souls of the just are in the hand of God,

Under His protection.

and no torment shall touch them.

After death.

² They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away was thought an affliction ³ and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace.

The author is (deliberately?) vague on the state of the souls of the just immediately after death. Some suggest that Wisdom, like Enoch, places them in Sheol with the souls of the wicked until the Judgment, when they will be brought out to be with God. Recall Jesus' story of Lazarus and the rich man where both souls are in Sheol, but only the rich man is in torment.

⁴ For if before men, indeed, they be punished, yet is their hope full of immortality;

During their earthly life.

⁵ Chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because God tried them and found them worthy of himself. ⁶ As gold in the furnace, he proved them, and as sacrificial offerings he took them to himself. ⁷ In the time of their visitation

A biblical term meaning a divine intervention, here referring to the definitive intervention of the last Judgment.

they shall shine, and shall dart about as sparks through stubble;

Images of triumph.

⁸ They shall judge nations and rule over peoples, and the LORD shall be their King forever.

Many Jews hoped for the rule of Israel over the rest of the nations in the messianic age. Perhaps this image is used here to express the triumph of the just over the wicked.

⁹ Those who trust in him shall understand truth,

The knowledge of God and heavenly wisdom.

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.

2nd Reading - Romans 6:3-9

Romans is a letter written by Saint Paul to a church which he did not establish; and at the time of its writing, had not even visited. This letter is not a summary of Christian doctrine but rather it is a presentation of Paul's missionary reflections on the historic possibility of salvation now offered to all men in the good news of Jesus Christ. In our reading today Saint Paul tells of how the reconciled Christian will be saved, sharing with hope in the risen life of Christ.

³ Or are you unaware

He is reminding the Roman Christians, who have been instructed by the apostles, with the sublime effects of baptism.

that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

This does not talk about the method of baptism (immersion, pouring, sprinkling) nor does it refer to some sort of accounting process where the individual is now posted to "Christ's account". Rather, this describes the relationship of the individual with Christ as a family member. The rite of Christian initiation introduces man into union with Christ suffering and dying; not just the resurrected Christ. Saint Paul is bringing out that the Christian is not merely identified with the "dying Christ" who has won a victory over sin, but is introduced into the very act by which Christ

dies to sin. As a result the Christian himself must be "dead to sin".

⁴ We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death,

The baptismal rite symbolically represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; the convert descends into the baptismal pool, is covered by its waters, and emerges to a new life. In that act he goes through the experience of dying to sin, being buried, and rising, just as Christ did.

so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,

The efficiency of the resurrection is ascribed to the Father, specifically to His glory.

we too might live in newness of life.

Literally "may walk in a newness of life". Baptism brings about an identification of the Christian with the glorified Lord and enables him actually to live with the life of Christ. A new creation is involved (2 Corinthians 5:17). To "walk" designates the conscious ethical conduct of Christian life.

If the Christian is identified with Christ through baptism, he is enabled by Him to lead a new conscious life that can know no sin.

⁵ For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his,

Baptism is the means by which Christians grow together with Christ, who died and rose once for all.

we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.

We shall be through the resurrection also. Since this whole context describes the present experience of Christians, the future tense is probably logical, expressing a sequel to the first part of the verse (we went through a death like His, so we will also experience a resurrection). The Christian can look forward to the resurrection of the dead.

⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him,

The self dominated by sin and exposed to divine wrath, as opposed to the "new man" who lives in union with Christ and is liberated through him from sin, and from any consideration of it.

so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin

Not only the material part of man, as opposed to his soul, but the whole of earthly man dominated by a proneness to sin.

⁷ For a dead person has been absolved from sin.

Once the body dies, sin has no more effect. A dead man can not be tried for his crimes.

⁸ If, then, we have died with Christ,

Through baptism.

we believe that we shall also live with him.

Although we died to sin in baptism, we are alive in Christ. The old condition has been brought to an end and a new one begun. This is what is called "baptismal regeneration". Upon baptism, all previous sins are forgiven and one begins life anew.

⁹ We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him.

The resurrection of Christ has brought Him into the sphere of "glory" and has withdrawn Him completely from the sphere of sin and death. Although Christ appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), He broke sin's dominion by His death and resurrection. This victory is the foundation of the liberation of the baptized Christian. Christ was not raised from the dead merely to publicize His good news or to confirm His messianic character, but to introduce men into a new mode of life and give them a new principle of vital activity, the Spirit. He is the "first fruits" of the new humanity created at the resurrection.

Note: Paul is a sacramentalist. He is pointing out here that the ritual in the New Covenant is more powerful than in the old. Baptism in the Old Covenant was a ritual washing which prefigured the inner cleansing which was to come with the new.

Gospel - John 6:37-40

Our Gospel reading today comes from Jesus' Bread of Life Discourse. This is the point in the discourse where Jesus stresses the importance of accepting Him as the one sent by the Father to bring about the salvation of the world.

³⁷ Everything that the Father gives me will come to me,

To come to Christ, it is necessary that one be brought by the grace of God.

and I will not reject anyone who comes to me,

Christ will not reject from the Kingdom of God those who accept His grace.

³⁸ because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me.

This is because He does the work of the Father (John 5:19).

³⁹ And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it (on) the last day.

Not only will those who believe be safe in the Kingdom of God, they shall possess it for all eternity in the final resurrection. Belief, for the Jew, is not acceptance of a concept, but total and complete

commitment to an individual.

40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him

This refers back to verses 29 and 35. If they truly believe that He has been sent by God, then they will believe and do whatever He tells them; no matter how bizarre it may seem.

may have eternal life, and I shall raise him (on) the last day."

The reward for complete and unquestioning obedience is eternal life in the heavenly kingdom.

SECOND MASS

1st Reading - Job 19:1, 23-27

Job's friends' criticisms have compelled him to analyze his situation in order to seek an alternative to their unacceptable verdict (his friend Bildad has insinuated that suffering as punishment for sin is a universal law from which Job cannot claim exemption). The problem as Job sees it is the apparent change in God's attitude toward him; He was Job's friend but now He seems to be his enemy. Job's solution is an affirmation of faith -- God will eventually, in His own good time, remember him and pronounce his vindication.

19:1 Then Job answered and said: ²³ Oh, would that my words were written down! Would that they were inscribed in a record:

The Hebrew word is usually understood as a scroll of leather or papyrus, but it can mean anything written as is seen in the next verse.

24 That with an iron chisel and with lead they were cut in the rock forever!

Here, the writings are literally inscribed into rock. The word "lead" refers to the Persian practice where "the wedges...cut into rock were themselves filled in with lead."

25 But as for me, I know that my Vindicator lives,

The word translated here as "Vindicator" is the Hebrew word *gô'ël* means "kinsman-redeemer," the next of kin whose family responsibility it is to rescue one from poverty, redeem from slavery, or avenge a death. Job is secure in his knowledge that God is his *gô'ël* who will come to his aid.

and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust;

On the earth. God formed Adam from the *adama* (the dust of the earth).

27 Whom I myself shall see: my own eyes, not another's, shall behold him,

It is not clear whether this is a vision which Job will experience from beyond the grave or before he dies. The most likely interpretation is from beyond the grave given that "no one can look upon God's face and live"(Exodus 33:20)

²⁶ And from my flesh I shall see God; my inmost being is consumed with longing.

Job looks forward to his judgement when he believes he will be pronounced redeemed.

2nd Reading - Romans 8:31-35, 37-39

Unlike most epistles, the Letter to the Romans does not address problems or misunderstandings within the local community. Instead, Saint Paul presents to them the possibility of salvation for all who put their faith in Jesus Christ, the Son whom the Father's love did not spare. In "putting their faith in" and "believing in" Jesus, the individual surrenders his will and does the will of Him in whom he has put faith. In our reading today Saint Paul has taught how through the Spirit the Christian becomes a child of God and is destined for glory. We hear the conclusion of this teaching where he presents a triumphant hymn to the love of God that is made manifest in Christ Jesus.

³¹ What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

God's plan of salvation makes it clear to the Christian that God is on his side.

³² He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?

Possibly an allusion to Genesis 22:16 where Abraham was willing not to spare Isaac as a precursor of greater things to come. God the judge has already pronounced sentence in our favor and there is no reason to expect anything different.

³³ Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us. ³⁴ Who will condemn?

" The questions are rhetorical in nature; the implied answer is "no one"

It is Christ (Jesus) who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

Note the significant shift of emphasis to the resurrection of Christ to which Paul immediately adds a rare reference to the exaltation of Christ.

³⁵ What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

The love which Christ has for us all. None of the dangers and troubles of life can make the true

Christian forget the love of Christ made known to men in His death and resurrection.

³⁷ No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul enumerates a series of forces that the ancients apparently thought of as hostile to men. In mentioning height and depth, Saint Paul may be using the ancient terms of astrology for the greatest proximity and the remoteness of a star from the zenith; these were factors which determined its influence. The love of God is an unshakable foundation of Christian life and hope.

Gospel - John 17:24-26

Our Gospel reading for today takes place at the Last Supper just prior to His leaving for the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus prayed what has been called the "high priestly prayer". Jesus has prayed for Himself, for His disciples, and now is praying for all believers.

²⁴ Father, they are your gift to me.

The "they" is the Church itself, which has been continually spoken of as a united thing.

I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

We can see only a little of the glory which the Father has given Jesus. When we reach heaven we will be able to see and share in all the glory which has been bestowed upon Him.

²⁵ Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. ²⁶ I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them."

The life that Christ has shared with His Church the Father will permit Him to share continually through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The departure of Jesus for His glorification means that He will be forever with His Church in the divine presence and love.

THIRD MASS

1st Reading - Lamentations 3:17-26

The Talmud and rabbinical writings refer to this book as "dirges" or "lamentations" and the Vulgate and modern translations have kept this designation. Lamentations dwells entirely on disasters occurring from 597 BC on, and as such, bewails their occurrence. The time and author are uncertain although the early Hebrews saw that in 2 Chronicles 35:25 a reference is made to the

preservation of dirges composed by Jeremiah on the death of King Josiah in 609 and thus concluded that Jeremiah was their author (hence their placement in the Bible immediately following Jeremiah). Our reading today refers to the destruction of the temple and the suffering which has resulted.

¹⁷ My soul is deprived of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is; ¹⁸ I tell myself my future is lost, all that I hoped for from the LORD. ¹⁹ The thought of my homeless poverty is wormwood

The plant Artemisia. Because of its bitter taste it is used as a metaphor for divine punishment. Oil of wormwood is poisonous.

and gall;

Also something bitter.

²⁰ Remembering it over and over leaves my soul downcast within me. ²¹ But I will call this to mind, as my reason to have hope:

His despair is not great enough to obscure certain theological bases for hope. The author is using himself as a model for the city; he has suffered, but he has reason to hope--reasons that the suffering city has every right to share

²² The favors of the LORD are not exhausted, his mercies are not spent;

His suffering has been so great that he could only dwell on one attribute of God, His wrath. For the moment, it seemed his only attribute, his final nature, and in that context the author almost despaired. So might the city. But the author knows that God's wrath is not final, and it might be seen within the greater and truly final context of God's graciousness.

²³ They are renewed each morning, so great is his faithfulness. ²⁴ My portion is the LORD, says my soul; therefore will I hope in him. ²⁵ Good is the LORD to one who waits for him, to the soul that seeks him; ²⁶ It is good to hope in silence for the saving help of the LORD.

As an Israelite, he has confidence that Yahweh's eternal covenant with Israel applies to him individually and since Yahweh is the God of all Israelites this confidence is something every responsible Israelite may experience.

2nd Reading - 1 John 3:1-2

The tradition of the ancient Church is virtually unanimous in ascribing 1 John to the authorship of John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee. 1 John is believed to have been written before the Gospel, but when is unclear. 1 John is an epistle to a defined group, prompted by the spread of erroneous teachings. What we hear today is from his exhortations to live as children of God.

^{3:1} See what love the Father has bestowed on us

In the truest and most absolute sense, God's gift of love has been the gift of His only Son as Savior of the world.

that we may be called the children of God.

It is this gift that has made it possible "that we be called the children of God".

Yet so we are.

Sonship with God can be considered both an eschatological fulfillment (Romans 5:2; 8:23) and also, as shown here, a present reality.

The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

This relation to God is shown in the attitude of the world which accords the same treatment to the disciples that it accorded to the Master

² 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.

The Christian is a child of God now, yet there is another fulfillment toward which he looks, in which his configuration to God will be completed. When it is completed we will be like God (not gods ourselves, but like Him). We will join our eldest brother Jesus in heaven; giving glory to God the Father.

Gospel - John 12:23-28

According to Saint Irenaeus (AD 180) tells us that Saint John wrote his Gospel in Ephesus. Irenaeus appears to have based his testimony upon the recollection of the teaching of Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, whom he (Irenaeus) had heard as a young man; and Polycarp, according to Irenaeus, had known the apostle John himself.

Our reading for today takes place in Jerusalem, at the beginning of Passion Week; Jesus having made His triumphal entry into the city.

²³ Jesus answered them,

Jesus is addressing Philip and Andrew who have just brought a request for an audience with some Greeks (who may have come to Jerusalem for the Passover but are considered to be Gentiles). It is not yet time for the Gentile mission, though its principle is even now being revealed.

"The hour has come

Now that the week of His passion has begun (v1), Jesus can say at last that his "hour" has come.

for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Glory was an Old Testament term for the presence of God visibly manifested; especially in connection with the Tent of Meeting and the Temple.

²⁴ **Amen, amen,**

The doubled amen is a signal of a solemn pronouncement; one with life and death considerations.

I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.

Jesus then begins to elucidate the mystery of His atoning death. He relates his own sacrifice to the agricultural motif; something they can understand. It seems paradoxical, but only after grain has been buried does it produce more fruit -- in far greater abundance than itself.

²⁵ **Whoever loves his life loses it,**

The true meaning of life often eludes him who thinks he is living it to the hilt. Selfishness, man's false love for himself that will not permit him to sacrifice himself, ends in destroying him.

and whoever hates his life in this world

"Hates" is a semantism for "loves less". In John, "the world" means the world of men and their affairs, which concretely is a world subject to sin and darkness.

will preserve it for eternal life.

Only by treating his life as worthless from a this-worldly view does man gain the only life that really counts.

²⁶ **Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me.**

The principle of sacrifice--the explanation of Christ's life--also holds for anyone who will count himself a true follower of Christ. If you are a servant, you minister to another. Imitation of Christ is inescapably the standard of Christian perfection.

²⁷ **"I am troubled now.**

In the face of an imminent and cruel death, Jesus can and does feel anguish.

Yet what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'?

A rhetorical question with the implied answer of "no".

But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour.

The value of Christ's sacrifice consists in the readiness with which he submitted to it.

²⁸ Father, glorify your name."

This is Jesus' final answer from his crisis of spirit, and it is a wholehearted acceptance of the Father's will. The glorification of the Son is also that of the Father.

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again."

The reference is to no single event, but to the entire lifework and teaching of Jesus, all of which have been "signs" of the ultimate glorification that is to come.