

A Pastor's Perspective

November 07, 2021 Bulletin



Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

On Tuesday, November 2, in accordance with the Church's liturgical calendar, we observed All Souls Day at our usual daily Masses. On Saturday morning, November 6, we commemorated our loved ones who died this past year with a special Mass. On both occasions, we prayed for "all the faithful departed" – both our deceased parishioners as well as all who have been given a final resting place at Mt. Pleasant Catholic Cemetery.

As Catholics, praying for the deceased is a pious, spiritual practice that we should take seriously (and which we do at every Mass), and not simply on All Souls Day. Just as burying the dead is a corporal work of mercy, praying for the eternal rest of the dead is one of the spiritual works of mercy. When we offer prayers, sacrifices and acts of charity on behalf of those who have gone before us, we join in Christ's work of redemption, which purifies their souls for eventual entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

From earliest days, Christians have prayed for the dead, which is a "radical" religious practice with roots in Judaism. For example, in the Old Testament, Judas Maccabeus discovers that some of his soldiers died in a state of sin. Because he believed firmly in the afterlife, he took up a collection among the surviving troops and offered it at the Temple in Jerusalem, where he requested prayers to make "atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin." The author of this inspired book writes, "In [providing for an expiatory sacrifice], he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection of the dead in view; for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought"

(2 Maccabees 12:43-46).

Our personal prayers and devotions (the Rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, reading and meditating on Sacred Scripture, etc.) can be offered on behalf of our deceased loved ones. Of course, the most efficacious prayer we can offer is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in which we are intimately united to Jesus Christ on the altar of the cross, where he re-presents his saving passion, death and resurrection. Like Judas Maccabeus, Catholics act "in a very excellent and noble way" whenever we make a loving and sacrificial offering, requesting prayers for deceased family members or friends through our local parish.

Peace and blessings,

Msgr. Andrew