

Scripture Study

The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls) - Cycle A



Opening prayer

Note: there are several optional readings for this day. You may hear different readings proclaimed at your parish.

Wisdom 3:1-9

(Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6)

Romans 6:3-9

John 6:37-40

Overview of the Gospel:

- Today's Gospel is part of the Bread of Life discourse delivered in the synagogue at Capernaum right before the Passover, and a year before the Lord's death and resurrection.
- This early part of Jesus' discourse is an invitation to faith in him based on God's mercy and the reliability of his promises to all who come to him. He stresses the importance of accepting him as the one sent by the Father for the salvation of the world.
- He tells his listeners that those drawn by the Father through grace will not be rejected (verse 37). This is an allusion to the mystery of predestination (Romans 8:29-38). This is not the same thing as "once saved, always saved" as Scripture elsewhere makes it clear that we can lose our salvation through our own free will (see CCC 1037). If anyone is lost, it is not a lack in the mercy or power of God. Those who persevere in faith and obedience cannot be lost.
- As the Gospel reading for All Soul's Day, the Church invites us to contemplate on how much God wants us share eternal life with him (see second reading, Romans 6:3-9) and that death is not a reason for despair, but for hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

Questions:

- The first reading from Wisdom was written near the end of the Old Testament period. Compared with the predominant opinion of the afterlife held by most OT Jews (see Psalm 6:5), can you see a gradual revelation of God's plan for the resurrection of the just?
- What are the principal effects of Baptism? What is Paul alluding to in the second reading when he describes this mystery?
- In today's Gospel, what claims did Jesus make (verses 37-40)? What do these claims emphasize about the Father? About his will (verse 39)? What did Jesus come to do?
- How is the statement, "everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life" (verse 40), reminiscent of an earlier dialogue in John (John 3:14) and an Old Testament story (Numbers 21:9)? *Who* will raise believers on the Last Day (verse 40; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:14)?
- God desires that all men be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Knowing this, what does it tell you about God's mercy? What sort of hope does it give you for your loved ones who have left this world? Can you see how Purgatory is a sign of God's mercy?
- Jesus promises eternal life to those who believe in him (John 3:16) *and* persevere in obeying him (John 3:36; Romans 2:6-8): Do you have faith and trust that God can and will fulfill his promises to his faithful children?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 161, 475, 606, 989, 994, 1030-32

Closing prayer

Those who have a sure hope that they will rise again lay hold of what lies in the future as though it were already present. —St. Cyril of Alexandria

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"Everyone who believes in him will be raised up at the last day"

Scripture: John 6:37-40

37 All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; 39 and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Meditation: Is your hope in this present life only? What about the life to come after our death? God puts in the heart of every living person the desire for unending life and happiness. While death claims each of us at the appointed time, God gives us something which death cannot touch – his own divine life and sustaining power. In the Old Testament, one of the greatest testimonies of faith and hope in the midst of great suffering and pain is that of Job: *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another"* (Job 19:25-27).

Jesus made an incredible promise to his disciples and a



claim which only God can make and deliver:

Whoever sees and believes in Jesus, the Son of God, shall have everlasting life and be resurrected! How can we see Jesus? He is present in his word, in the breaking of the bread, and in the church, the body of Christ. Jesus reveals himself in many countless ways to those who seek him with eyes of faith. When we read the word of God in the bible Jesus speaks to us and reveals to us the mind and heart of the Father. When we approach the table of the Lord, Jesus offers himself as spiritual food which produces the very life of God within us (*I am the bread of life*, John 6:35). He promises unbroken fellowship and freedom from the fear of being forsaken or cut off from everlasting life with God. And he offers us the hope of sharing in his resurrection. Is your hope and desire to see God face to face?

What is faith and how do we grow in it? Faith is an entirely free gift which God makes to us. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals who Jesus is. We can believe in Jesus Christ because

he is himself God, *the Word made flesh*. Faith is a personal adherence to God and the free assent to the whole truth which God has revealed. Faith is active submission to the One who created us in love and who sustains us by his grace and power. To obey in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its truth has been guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself. We can entrust ourselves wholly to God and believe absolutely what he says. To live, grow, and persevere in faith to the end we must nourish it with the word of God. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) said: *I believe, in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe*. Jesus promises that those who accept him as their Lord and Savior and submit to his word will be raised up to immortal life with him in the Day of Judgment. Do you know the inexpressible joy of belief and hope in the resurrection (see 1 Peter 1:3-9)?

"Lord Jesus Christ, your death brought life and hope where there was once only despair and defeat. Give me the unshakeable hope of everlasting life, the inexpressible joy of knowing your unfailing love, and the unquestioning faith and zeal in doing the will of the Father in heaven."

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