

All Souls Day

John 11:17-27

Today is “All Souls Day”.

It is significant that it follow “All Saints Day”.

This is an expression of the wisdom of Christian Tradition,
arrived at through prayer and reflection.

The practice of praying for the faithful departed is a practice

- that began as early as 2nd century
- was more formally made communal celebration in 988 by the abbot of Cluny (France)
- was made a celebration for the whole Church in the 13th century

Let us try to situate all of this. It is, in fact, very simple:

We will one day die.

Upon death, we will encounter our Maker, our God, Who is pure love.

Only that which/those who are pure love,

can enter God’s presence.

can be fully joined to the mystery of God.

If one is not pure love, then one must be *purified* by love

...so that there only be love.

On “All Saints Day” (November 1),

we thank God for all those who are fully in His presence,

who intercede for us (are instruments of God), be they

- *publicly* recognized as such (e.g. Mother Teresa), thanks to
 1. certain signs, such as their manifestations of pure love
 2. the inner sense the believing community has through prayer (we are indeed mysteriously, invisibly bound, forming a mystical body...)
- *secretly* so, only known to God.

On “All Saints Day”, we ask the Saints to intercede for us, i.e.

- to draw us into the mystery of God
- to participate actively in the purification of our hearts

On “All *Souls Day*”, we pray for the dead not yet fully joined to God which presupposes a very particular understanding of

- divine mercy
- the Mystical Body, the Church
- the encounter with God upon death
- of further, post-death, purification

How does one know in which “camp” a deceased loved one is?

One does not!

Consequently, we pray *to* them and pray *for* them.

It is important to note:

- We cannot *believe* for another person.
- We cannot *love* for another person.
- We **can** *hope* for another person (because of the bond with him/her, and because God *is* love, and, therefore, *all-merciful*)

Thomas Aquinas says:

“Divine love is the bond uniting the members of the Church, extends not only to the living, but also to the dead who die in love. For divine love which is the life of the soul, even as the soul is the life of the body, has no end: ‘Love never ends’.” (1 Cor. 13:8)

And what occurs when we hope?

We cling to God, very concretely, in the here and now.

We cling to God, with Whom we wish to be fully joined, forever,
and Who alone can (and promises to) make that happen.

And in that clinging, we welcome God – particularly in our brokenness...

When we intercede for someone,

- we beseech God’s mercy
- we “call God” to that person

When we intercede for someone *dead*

- we beseech God’s mercy
- we “call God” to that person
- we ask God’s love to purify in a special way
... that there only be love

This ultimate purification by divine love is what we call “Purgatory”.

How can there be further purification?
Upon death, have not all the cards been played?

Let me answer with a question:
How is God a “just judge”, as the psalmist says?
What does this mean?
God necessarily judges *according to who He is*.
Who has He revealed Himself to be?
He has revealed Himself to be *light and love*.
Upon death, we *encounter* (not just, stand before) God
Encountering Him will be

- *luminous* (which entails the illumination of things as they are)
- *loving* (which means being newly invited)

This is how He is “just judge”.
His judgment is not the giving of a sentence.
His judgment is an encounter.
Those who, upon this encounter, choose to enter into the final Embrace
(during that “moment” between clinical death and actual death)
may not be fully ready for the presence of God.
For them, divine love must labour still.

Now, God lovingly intervenes largely upon request.
But the dead, although alive (in their souls), cannot act (i.e. request) without their bodies.
Consequently, they know a dependence on us, upon our prayer.

Today’s gospel (John 11:17-27) is an example of interceding for the dead.

Martha and Mary’s brother, Lazarus, has died.
Sadness reigns.
Hope supercedes.
Martha’s request is an expression of hope for her brother.
What does she mean by, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died”?
Jesus’ presence would have magically prevented death?
Jesus knew the remedy for Lazarus’ illness?

Jesus proceeds very mysteriously.
He did not come immediately upon hearing of Lazarus' illness...
Was he being uncaring?
Jesus proceeds so as to reveal the powerlessness of death.
If He is the God-man, then His real death enables God
to take hold of death in such a way that it become (mysteriously, indeed)
an instrument for Life.
Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life."
In Jesus, humanity is joined to God,
and therefore in /through Him, divine life is communicated.
Deep inside, we live God's life. "Who? Me?" **Yes, you, and me!!**
How much we cooperate with that life and let it transform us is another story...

That divine life will one day even take hold of our body
Such is the resurrection of body.
(It hasn't yet. You would know it: the wrinkles are the sign
...no wrinkles in heaven!)
God loves my body.
He loves my toes, and my hair, and my elbows: *seriously!*
God loves all that I am,
and so wishes to introduce all that I am into His mystery.

Let us welcome Life.
Let us yearn to be fully alive, everlastingly alive, as of today.