
A MONTH OF MEMORIES



If because of World Mission Day the month of October has become for the Church a "missionary month," the November 2 Commemoration of the Faithful Departed and the November 11 Remembrance Day invite us to make of this month a "Month of Memories" or "Month of Remembrance." In my childhood I quickly learned that St. Odilo, abbot of Cluny (962-1049) had a particular devotion to the dead. He it was who started the tradition of celebrating three masses for the dead, on November 2, 1999 will mark the 950th year of Odilo's death.

A PROFOUND HOPE

With you I commemorate all those who have died in our diocese, since it was erected. Let us be grateful to them. We who believe in the communion of saints and in eternal life are united to one another on earth. We who are of the same race as Jesus are united to all our brothers and sisters through the bonds of baptism, faith, hope, and charity, but we are also united to all those brothers and sisters of ours who have gone before us to the Lord and who are resting in eternal peace, joy, and light. That is our profound hope.

ENTERING INTO LIFE EVERLASTING

We read the following, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: [Pages 218-219] *"The Christian who unites his own death to that of Jesus views it as a step towards him and an entrance into everlasting life. When the Church for the last time speaks Christ's words of pardon and absolution over the dying Christian, seals him for the last time with a strengthening anointing and gives him Christ in viaticum as nourishment for the journey, she speaks with gentle assurance: Go forth, Christian soul, from this world in the name of God the almighty Father, who created you, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered for you, in the name of the Holy Spirit, who was poured out upon you. Go forth, faithful Christian! May you live in peace this day, may your home be with God in Zion, with Mary, the virgin Mother of God, with Joseph, and all the angels and saints... May you return to [your Creator] who formed you from the dust of the earth. May holy Mary, the angels, and all the saints come to meet you as you go forth from this life... May you see your Redeemer face to face..."*

COMING HOME TO GOD

At the moment of burying the deceased, the Church leads the body in a procession as if it were leading it to God himself, to find its place in the house of God. Words are addressed to the deceased: *"May the angels lead you into paradise; may the martyrs come to welcome you and take you to the holy city, the new and eternal Jerusalem. May choirs of angels welcome you and lead you to the bosom of Abraham; and where Lazarus is poor no longer may you find eternal rest."* [Rite of Commendation, in *Order of Christian Funerals*. Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1990. Page 300] It is good to read over these texts from the liturgy of the dead, it is so filled with hope. *"The sadness of death gives place to the bright promise of immortality. Lord, for your faithful people life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death, we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven."* [Preface for Christian Death, 1]

PRAYING FOR THE DEAD

If that is the case, why then do we pray that God our Father will welcome our deceased into His Kingdom? We would have cause for a whole eternity of thanksgiving for only one person to have a taste of everlasting life, there. To pray is to give thanks, it is to give thanks for all the benefits God never ceases to shower upon our deceased brothers and sisters. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* exhorts us to pray for the dead so as to obtain for them the holiness they need to enter into the joy of heaven. This Church teaching is based on the practice of praying for the dead, which Scripture mentions; and from the very beginning, the Church has honoured the memory of its dead and has offered prayers for them, especially the eucharistic sacrifice so that, once purified, they may come into the heavenly vision of God. St. John Chrysostom wrote: *"Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them."* [*Catechism*, p. 221]

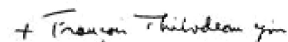
POWER OF INTERCESSION

How I wish we would remain in deep communion with all those who have gone before us and who contribute in building up our country and our Church: May all that was holy and great in them be honoured by those who carry on their work. I pray the fathers and mothers who have died to continue to watch over their families; I ask the young who have died to be a great inspiration to our youth today; I pray the elders who have died to remain the faithful companions filled with wisdom and serenity; I ask those members of our armed forces who gave up their lives for our country to stir up our courage and devotion to duty; I ask those religious who are now with the Lord to be a source of courage and hope for those who are still with us; I pray the deceased priests to keep on watching over all those who had been in their care, to continue to watch over their fellow-priests, and to intercede before God, that He continue to send numerous and holy Gospel workers.

DECEASED BISHOPS

I ask my three predecessors who have died to continue watching over the Church of Edmundston. It was a day of mourning for the Church of Edmundston in 1948 when, after only three years as bishop, young Bishop Marie-Antoine Roy died suddenly, so soon after the birth of the Diocese of Edmundston. His desire had been that the grace of God be announced to all his brothers and sisters. It was also a day of mourning when in 1970 Bishop Roméo Gagnon passed away after 21 years of episcopal service; he is certainly praying that we let Jesus live and reign in us. And then there is Bishop Fernand Lacroix who died in February, 1994, so that Christ might be everything in all things... All three are carrying on their role of intercession before God. They are contemplating the face of God without cease (such at least is our hope), and they lift us up in a prayer of thanksgiving and petition. This mystery of communion with God and with those who are in Christ surpasses our understanding and imagining. Holy Scripture uses images in presenting it to us: life, light, peace, wedding feast, Kingdom wine, Father's house, heavenly Jerusalem, paradise; what eye has not seen nor ear heard, what has not come into the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him. Yes, the love of God is truly from age to age. Our departed brothers and sisters welcomed it; it is up to us now to receive it with gratitude and hope.

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau

Bishop of Edmundston

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