



**Message of His Grace Most Reverend Francis Leo
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto
All Souls Day – 2 November 2024
Praying for the Souls of the Faithful Departed**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

May Jesus and Mary be in your souls.

November 2nd is the annual *Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed*, commonly known as “All Souls Day”. As a family of believers, we pray in a very special way and intensity for those who have died and are awaiting entrance into heaven. Indeed, holy Mother Church recommends and encourages that we intercede for the eternal salvation of the faithful departed during the entire month of November. Praying for the deceased should never be seen as something morbid, or as a failure to “move on” with our own life from the death of a loved one. When we pray for those who have passed away before us, we contemplate the mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Christ; we acknowledge with personal and ecclesial faith that for Christ’s faithful *“life is changed not ended, and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven”* (Preface I For the Dead, *The Roman Missal*, 2011); and finally, as members of the communion of saints, we petition the Lord for mercy and forgiveness on behalf of those who have died in the peace of Christ.

In many ways we live in a culture that seeks to cancel or deny death. However, as Christians we understand that death is really a part of living, indeed a most important dimension and aspect of it. There is a natural movement from this world into the next which is facilitated by the reality of death, the separation of our soul from our body. The tragedy of death that was associated with the Fall of Adam and Eve, has been radically and gracefully transformed by Jesus Christ who has obtained eternal life for us through his own life, death and resurrection. This is why during the Easter season we proclaim: *“For he is the true Lamb who has taken away the sins of the world; by dying he has destroyed our death, and by rising, restored our life”* (Preface I of Easter, *The Roman Missal*, 2011). Our prayers for the dead are not a refusal to accept the loss of a loved one, but an affirmation of the life they live in Christ. Our God is a God of the living, who has called us to be with him in eternal life (cf. Matt. 22:32).

As we know, All Saints Day, November 1st, recalls all those who are in heaven, who have reached the port of salvation and who are eternally in the glory of God. All Souls Day remembers all those souls in Purgatory and who need and ask for our prayers as they are being cleansed and prepared for Heaven. The **Catechism of the Catholic Church** teaches: *“All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned”* (CCC 1030-1031). The entirety of the Church is thus brought into focus during these two days; those who are still journeying as pilgrims - here on earth,



those who have died and are being purified - purgatory, and those who abide eternally in the fulness of God's glory - heaven.

All Souls Day, and the entire month of November, is also a blessed opportunity for us to reflect on our faith in Christ the Saviour and how we heed the exhortation of St. Paul: "*continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*" (Phil. 2:12-13). It is a moment of generous and living intercessory prayer for those members of our family, friends, parishioners, ancestors and others we do not know but who need the charity of our prayer as they are being purified - but who are assured of their salvation. Furthermore, it is a month for us to think about our own journey here on earth and how we are preparing to meet our Lord when the time will come to leave all behind and enter eternal life after the Particular Judgement. We pray in the holy Eucharist: "*To our departed brothers and sisters, too, and to all who were pleasing to you at their passing from this life, give kind admittance to your Kingdom*" (*The Roman Missal*, EP III, 2011). The communion of saints we celebrate on November 1st, offers us timeless examples of sanctity and holiness of life which we seek to follow or imitate. All Souls Day provides us with an eternal perspective reminding us that this world is passing and that our true home is found with Our Lord in Paradise. It is a salutary thing this month to **read up** on the Church's teaching on the *Four Last Things* as spiritual nourishment and faith enrichment.

Often, I am asked: What can we do to help those brothers and sisters "*who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection, and all who have died in your mercy*" (*The Roman Missal*, EP II 2011). Allow me to suggest the following, stemming from the rich Tradition of Holy Mother Church: (i) have **holy Mass** offered for them; (ii) **visit** a cemetery and pray for all the Poor Souls; (iii) offer up a **rosary** for the most forgotten Souls in Purgatory; (iv) **obtain** an indulgence applicable to the faithfully departed.

Finally, when we gather to bury our loved ones or visit their graves praying for their eternal salvation, several truths come to the fore: the reality of death, what happens to our body and soul after death, the judgement of God, the salvation offered by Christ the Redeemer, our hope of eternal life in heaven, and most importantly God's mercy and love. While death is inevitable, God gives us something which death cannot touch - His divine life and sustaining power. During the month of November, I invite everyone in the Archdiocese of Toronto to earnestly pray for the dead, to be attuned to God's mercy benefitting from the sacrament of Confession, and to be attentive and rejoice in the great inheritance given us by our loving Father.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.