

LITURGY BYTES

November 2, 2021



All Souls' Day is celebrated every year on November 2nd when we remember those who have gone before us, not only in the past year but in our lifetime. This day is observed principally in the Catholic Church, although some Anglican churches celebrate it. The Eastern Orthodox churches observe several All Souls' Days during the year.

Our tradition, as Roman Catholics, associates this day by praying for all our dead that they reach their eternal reward in heaven. Many have Masses said for the same purpose for their family members and friends throughout the year marking special days like anniversaries and birthdays.

The Church has always taught us to pray for those who have gone into eternity. Even in the Old Testament prayers and alms were offered for the souls of the dead. It was believed that "they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid upon them" and that "it is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." Purgatory is what we are told is necessary for souls to be cleansed before entering heaven. There is scriptural basis for this belief. The primary reference appears in 2 Maccabees (12:26 and 12:32) which reads: "Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out... Thus made atonement for the dead that they might be free from sin." Additional references appear in Zechariah, Sirach and in the Gospel of Matthew. Jewish tradition also reinforces this belief as well as the tradition and teaching of the Church, which has been affirmed throughout history. Consistent with these teachings and traditions, Catholics believe that through the prayers of the faithful on earth, the dead are cleansed of their sins so they may enter heaven.

Many cultures also mark the day differently. In North America, Americans may say extra prayers or light candles for the departed. In parts of Latin America, families visit the graves of their family members. Here at our parish, we have a Remembrance Mass in the evening on this day for those who have died during the past year.

Have a blessed, safe, and healthy week! ~~~ *Michele Hahn*