

All Soul's Day

From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead.⁸ (CCC 1032) There are indulgences attached to a number of devotions such as the rosary, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and the stations of the cross.¹¹

Wisdom 3:1-9

The book of Wisdom is a Jewish text probably composed during the first century AD in Alexandria, Egypt.¹ The first eight verses are frequently applied to the martyrs.⁴

¹The souls of the just are in the hand of God, This means under God's protection.² **and no torment shall touch them.** No torment shall touch them after death.²

²They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead, and their passing away was thought an affliction

³and their going forth from us, utter destruction. The just seem to have died, but they are really alive with God. Their sufferings in this life appear to be punishments, but their sufferings are not punishments at all but a discipline, correction, and testing of fidelity in which God recognizes those worthy of him.² **But they are in peace.** This refers to the state of the souls of the just immediately after death.²

⁴For if in the sight of others, indeed they be punished, yet is their hope full of immortality, Like many of the early Christian writers, the author of Wisdom relates "hope" to the immortality of the soul.¹ This is the first time that the term "immortality" appears in the Bible. The just died in the hope of continuing life, marking them off from the foolish, who expected nothing (2:1-5).³

⁵chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because God tried them and found them worthy of himself. Chastisement of the just is not denied; its briefness is emphasized. Suffering is purifying, removing what little dross remains. The finished products then are in a condition that makes them ready to be assimilated in some way to God.³

⁶As gold in the furnace, he proved them, and as sacrificial offerings he took them to himself. Even gold can be purified, but purification demands a furnace. Sacrificial offerings, too, are good in themselves but acquire a special significance when dedicated and consumed in some way, mainly through fire.³

⁷In the time of their visitation they shall shine, Christians traditionally refer to this visitation as the final judgment.³ **and shall dart about as sparks through stubble;** This would be a common experience for farmers who burned off the grain stubble yearly, and would be particularly captivating at night. The just, though fire-tried, stand out from the stubble of the wicked, dark and lifeless.³

⁸they shall judge nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord shall be their King forever. Many Jews hoped for the rule of Israel over the rest of the nations in the messianic age. Perhaps this image is used here to express the triumph of the just over the wicked.²

⁹Those who trust in him shall understand truth, "truth" here probably refers to the knowledge of God and of heavenly wisdom.² **and the faithful shall abide with him in love: because grace and mercy are with his holy ones, and his care is with his elect.**

Romans 6:3-9

Brothers and sisters:

³Are you unaware Paul is reminding the Roman Christians, who have been instructed by the apostles, of the sublime effects of baptism.⁵ that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? The rite of Christian initiation introduces man into union with Christ suffering and dying; not just the resurrected Christ.⁵

⁴We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, The baptismal rite symbolically represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; the convert descends into the baptismal pool, is covered by its waters, and emerges to a new life. In that act he goes through the experience of dying to sin, being buried, and rising, just as Christ did.⁵ so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, The resurrection is ascribed to the Father, specifically to His glory.⁵ we too might live in newness of life. Literally “may walk in a newness of life”. To “walk” designates the conscious ethical conduct of Christian life. Baptism brings about an identification of the Christian with the glorified Lord and enables him actually to live with the life of Christ. A *new creation* is involved (2 Corinthians 5:17).⁵

⁵For if we have grown into union Just as the ingraft and the plant form a single thing and make a single principle of life, Christians by being grafted onto or incorporated into Christ through Baptism form one single thing with him and begin to draw on his divine life.¹⁰ with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. The Christian can look forward to the resurrection of the dead!⁵

⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him, The “old self” was dominated by sin and exposed to divine wrath and that is opposed to the “new man” who lives in union with Christ and is liberated through him from sin, and from any consideration of it.⁵ so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.

⁷For a dead person has been absolved from sin. Through Baptism grace reaches each of us and frees us from the control of sin. When we receive this sacrament we die: that is to say, our blameworthiness is destroyed, we renounce sin once and for all, and are born again into a new life.¹⁰

⁸If, then, we have died with Christ, This refers to baptism.⁵ we believe that we shall also live with him. The old condition has been brought to an end and a new one begun. This is what is called “baptismal regeneration.” Upon baptism, all previous sins are forgiven and one begins life anew.⁵

⁹We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. Jesus raised people from the dead as did Elijah and Elisha, but they all died again. Jesus’ resurrection is the firstfruits of a new creation in which believers have a share. Jesus conquered death so that death has no authority over him or over those united with him.⁶

John 6:37-40

Our Gospel reading today comes from Jesus’ Bread of Life Discourse. This is the point in the discourse where Jesus stresses the importance of accepting Him as the one sent by the Father to bring about the salvation of the world.⁵

Jesus said to the crowds:

³⁷“Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, To come to Christ, it is necessary that one be brought by the grace of God.⁵ and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, Christ will not reject from the Kingdom of God those who accept His grace.⁵

38because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. The human will of Jesus and the divine will of the Father are in such perfect harmony that there is never any tension or competition between them.⁷

39And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day. We firmly believe, and hence we hope that just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives for ever, so after death the righteous will live for ever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day.⁸ (CCC 989) This “last day” refers to the end of the world.⁸ (CCC 1001)

40For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him If they truly believe that He has been sent by God, then they will believe and do whatever He tells them.⁵ may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day.” The reward for complete and unquestioning obedience is eternal life in the heavenly kingdom.⁵ It is the will of the Father in heaven that all men be saved. These solemn words of our Lord fill the believer with hope.⁹

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) “Workbook for lectors and gospel readers Year A” by James L. Weaver, (2) “The Jerome Biblical Commentary,” (3) “Collegeville Bible Commentary: WISDOM” by John E. Rybolt, (4) “Saint Joseph Edition The New American Bible,” (5) The St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology Online founded by Dr. Scott Hahn, (6) “Jewish New Testament Commentary” by David H. Stern, (7) “Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of John” With Commentary, Notes, & Study Questions by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (8) “Catechism Of The Catholic Church,” (9) “The Navarre Bible: St. John”, (10) “The Navarre Bible: Romans And Galatians”, and (11) “The Handbook Of Indulgences Norms And Grants: 1991”.

From the “The Handbook of Indulgences:” A PLENARY indulgence which is applicable only to the souls in purgatory, is granted the Christian faithful who devoutly VISIT A CHURCH OR AN ORATORY on ALL SOULS DAY. The visit is to include the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed and the other usual requirements which are: besides the exclusion of all attachment to sin, one should have made a sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion and offered prayer for the Pope’s intentions. An indulgence is the remission in the eyes of God of the temporal punishment (purgatory time) due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven. An indulgence is also granted for devoutly VISITING A CEMETERY and praying, if only mentally, for the dead. This indulgence is also applicable only to the souls in purgatory. This is a plenary indulgence from NOVEMBER 1 THROUGH NOVEMBER 8 and can be gained on each one of these days under the usual conditions mentioned above. On the other days of the year this indulgence is a partial one.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.