**Commemoration of All Souls**

November 2, 2019

We struggle with the mystery of life and death at times like today, when we remember those who are deeply loved by us who have suffered and died and now await in purgatory their entrance into eternal glory. We struggle to understand; we ask “Why? Why does a good man or woman die? Why purgatory for so many? Does not God care? Why the pain of such loss?”

Without our faith, we can easily conclude that it is all just terribly unfair, that death has had the last word after all and is the final destination for everyone. Yet, that is not the Christian message. What is?

Perhaps we can recall that:

God is Love. The apostle John tells us this.

God’s mercy is infinite. The apostle Paul teaches us this.

God wants all men and women to be perfect like him in eternal glory. Jesus himself told us this.

We cannot change who God is, or what he wills for us. He is faithful. He remains true to himself and to his promise of eternal life for all who accept him. Life is given by God, and will remain with us forever.

The gift of life, once given by God, is not taken back. God is not the author of death. He transforms death into life. Indeed, though life may seem snatched from our very midst, taken from us and taken from those we love, we believe that the mortality of human flesh is only a veil, a portal, through which we must pass. Death, with all its imperfections, is only the onset and promise of renewed life in heaven for those whose hearts remain faithful to the Lord’s call, accepting of his grace, and attentive to his presence in the world.

We all long see God face to face. We long to see his beauty, his glory and to be fully embraced by him in heaven. God made us this way. It is our destiny to be with him and perfect like him. God’s desire to fully embrace us in love is so great that he understands that few of us are spiritually perfect at the moment of death, even if we cling to him as best we can. You see, for us to be admitted to heaven, we must depart this world in a state of grace, a state where God’s Spirit in living within us. Without that grace, we will be separated from God in hell. But God’s mercy is such that he provides us the opportunity to reach spiritual perfection after death and before we enter heaven in what we call purgatory where his love and mercy will burn away anything that would keep us from fully seeing him and from the perfect happiness which he promises. Purgatory is an expression of God’s mercy, his love, and his desire that we be with him.

God never takes back his gifts or his call. He does not take our lives for once given, God makes permanent that life which he wills and gives. God’s call and his gifts are irrevocable. Not only irrevocable, but he sustains those gifts, especially the gift of life. He always, without ceasing, holds our lives in his hands, conceiving us over and over again by his will, over and over again saying, “I give you my Spirit. Live in my love. I desire you, I will you to live. I will you into life” over and over again, without ceasing. This is God’s original plan, his ultimate desire for us, i.e., for us to live with him, be in relationship with him, see him. God wills it.

Yes, the imperfections of sin and the deception of Satan undoubtedly have brought sickness and death into our lives and into all of creation. It is a stain on God’s original plan, and this stain’s effects are experienced by each of us, all of humanity, indeed the whole of creation, but God has broken the back of Satan, shattered the chains of death, and destroyed the grip of evil. God says to Satan, “You will never have the last word, for I have given all men and women the freedom to choose, to speak, and to live. They have the last say. I offer them life and happiness and peace. I offer them joy. You, O Satan, offer only darkness, despair, loneliness, selfishness, and separation.”

We struggle with the mystery of life and death at times like today, yet

we know that we live! We know that from nothing we became living breathing human beings. We witness the death of others but we live life and experience it directly. We cannot deny our life, that it exists, that it is ours and we cannot deny others their lives. This is a great temptation in our world today, i.e., to deny someone their life, to take life from them rather than giving and sustaining life in them.

The choice is ours when faced with the mystery. God gives us life and he will not take it from us even when we experience the mortality of hour human flesh in this world.

The people we honor today, I truly hope and believe, chose well, and may God in his mercy bless them abundantly and grant them quick admittance into heaven.

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.