

Month of Remembering

Traditionally, throughout the month of November, the Church remembers those who have died and prays for their souls. The month begins with All Saints' Day in which we remember the official saints of the Church that serve as models of Christian living. On November 2nd, All Soul's Day is celebrated as we remember not only our deceased loved ones, but all who have died. These two days remind us that we belong to the Communion of Saints. In our worship, we join in that "great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9). We are reminded that we are in communion with those that have gone before us in faith – saint and sinner. Our love and prayers on earth can be a blessing to those who have died, just as their love is a blessing for the living.

During November, many churches set aside special places to remember and pray for our deceased loved ones. With a sense of gratitude for the love and care they have given us in life, we come to these places to pray for them, perhaps inscribing their name in a special *Book of Remembrance* or lighting a candle in their memory. The special area may include photos of our deceased loved ones, a visual reminder of our hope that they join us now in the Communion of Saints. We remember them, too, at every Mass by praying for the dead both in the Universal Prayer (the General Intercessions) and in the Eucharistic Prayer.

November is also a time to remember our own mortality. The readings at Mass in the weeks leading up to Advent serve as a reminder that "heaven and earth will pass away" and "of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:31a, 32; Gospel for the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time). It is a time to remember the corporal work of mercy to bury the dead and the spiritual works of mercy to both comfort the sorrowful and pray for the living and the dead. How might you engage in the Church's ministry to the dead and to those who mourn? Perhaps you may consider attending a funeral in your parish of someone you did not know well or at all. Attend not as a family member or close friend of the deceased, but as a member of the Body of Christ. As the Church reminds us: the faith of the Christian community in the resurrection of the dead brings support and strength to those who suffer the loss of those whom they love. To put it simply: when someone can't pray because of grief and loss, the Church – you and I – pray for and with them.

These days remind us that it is good to speak about the dead, to remember them, and to pray for them. This month, let us ask God to bring us the light of his kingdom where justice will flourish, life will be lived in its fullness, and death itself will die.

For more information about and reflection on the Church's ministry surrounding death – especially on the Funeral Rites of the Church – please visit the Liturgy and Worship webpage at <http://www.vermontcatholic.org/worship>.