



Archdiocese of Vancouver
ARCHBISHOP'S OFFICE

October 22, 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As we approach the month of November and All Souls' Day, Sunday, November 2, I invite you to reflect on this time in the liturgical year when the Church especially reminds us of the importance of praying for our faithful departed.

Pray not only *to* the dead – to the Saints whose victory we celebrate throughout the year – but also *for* the dead:

- Our traditional prayer for the souls in purgatory is: “May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.”
- In the Eucharistic Prayer of every Mass we ask that the Sacrifice being offered on earth help those who have died. We ask the Lord to give “kind admittance” into his Kingdom or to “remember” them.

What all this means, quite simply, is that the Church teaches that we should pray for those who are deceased: that we cannot presume that any particular person already enjoys the vision of God in Heaven.

Christians began praying for the dead at a very early date. The ancient Church did not believe that everyone “made it to heaven right away.” That privilege was reserved for the apostles and martyrs.

Other Christians were not thought to be with Christ immediately after the particular judgment. Why? Because no one can enter the Kingdom of God who is tarnished with any stain of sin – anything impeding the experience of God’s glory.

Consequently, our early forebears thought that most of the faithful departed were in need of purification on their journey to heaven. They were also convinced that the Church on earth could intercede for those in purgatory.

Praying for the dead does more than retain their presence in our thoughts. It is also an act of mercy.

A ministry of consolation falls to each of us when a fellow member of Christ's Body dies. We are called to comfort the bereaved, but also, and more importantly, to pray for the deceased. Our prayers for the faithful departed help them to purify their love, so that every trace of sin and its remnants will be erased.

Sustained by this supernatural solidarity of the Communion of Saints, those in purgatory will receive their citizenship in heaven, from where they await the resurrection of the body.

On All Souls' Day, and throughout the month of November, the month of Holy Souls, I ask all the faithful to continue the Church's practice of praying for the faithful departed.

The Archdiocese of Vancouver's own Catholic Cemeteries have a number of events and resources planned at the Gardens of Gethsemani for this season of remembrance:

- A candlelight vigil on All Hallows' Eve, Friday, October 31, at 7 p.m.
- All Souls' Vigil Mass on All Saints' Day, Saturday, November 1, at 7 p.m.
- Mass on All Souls' Day, Sunday, November 2, at 2 p.m.

I urge you to visit the cemetery's website to find more information about these events and the Church's rich tradition. The cemetery's website is www.rccav.org

In the same way that we remind our culture that Jesus is the meaning behind the Christmas season, I pray that we will share with others the true meaning of this season of remembrance by fostering ever more intensely the practice of praying for our beloved dead.

“Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. Amen.”

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Michael Miller CSB". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross symbol at the beginning.

✠ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver