

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

THE JOURNEY IN LOVE CONTINUES



SUNDAY READINGS:

WISDOM 3: 1-9

PSALM 23: 3-6

ROMANS 5:5-11

JOHN 6:37-40

COMMENTARY

I would like to begin this reflection with some specific information about All Souls' Day according to our Catholic faith, so let us begin with the following: "Every year on November 2, Catholics around the world pause to remember those who have passed away. Known as All Souls' Day, this special day isn't just about sadness for our losses—

it's a chance to reflect, pray, and celebrate the lives of our loved ones." (from [CatholicWorldMission.org](https://www.CatholicWorldMission.org)). The important point here is not to just remember the loved ones we have lost, but the loved ones for whom we pray, whom we celebrate and reflect upon the influences that they have had on our lives.

When and where did this practice originate? Again, from Catholic World Mission: "The tradition of praying for the dead goes back to the early Church. From the very beginning, Christians believed in the communion of saints, the spiritual bond between the living and the departed. By the 10th–11th century, St. Odilo of Cluny, a French abbot, officially established November 2 as a day to pray for all the faithful departed."

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This date was chosen to follow All Saints' Day, which celebrates those who are already in heaven, whereas All Souls' Day focuses on those souls still on the journey to heaven. "All Souls' Day reminds us that death doesn't break the bonds of love—we can still care for those who have gone before us."

In Brazil, All Souls' Day is a national holiday. No businesses are open; all schools are closed and many of the markets only open for just a few hours in the morning. The people pack their lunches and buy boxes of candles and spend the day at the cemeteries at the grave site of their loved ones. Each cemetery has an area where a huge cross is displayed for those people who want to honor their loved ones, but they are buried in a different city. At the foot of the cross, they light boxes of candles and remain there for hours to honor their dead.

I always remember Deusimar, a young lady who participated in Youth Ministry with me in Brazil. She was expecting her first child, and the date of the birth was to be November 1st. The baby didn't come on that day. The contractions began on the evening of Nov. 2, but Deusimar told all of us that she would hold the baby in her womb and would not let him be born on that day. And that's what she did! Her little boy was quickly born at 12:30am on November 3rd. Deusimar was so happy that he waited and her newborn son, Jefferson, was so happy that he could be born! Many other countries have similar customs, Mexico for instance, as well as other customs which commemorate this special day.

All Souls' Day serves as a poignant reminder of our faith in the afterlife, the importance of prayer for the deceased, and the enduring connection between ourselves and the loved ones who meant so much to us when they were alive. Frequently in Brazil I would lead the service at the home of the person who died, where the wake was held or at the cemetery. One thought I would encourage in all those present was to remember that person's virtues and good acts and seek to imitate the positive influences that she/he had on their lives. The poet and mystic Rumi once wrote: "We're all just walking each other home." Our final destination, complete union with God, gives significant meaning to our prayers for all those souls still on the journey. Amen.

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading – Wisdom 3: 1-9: This is a very powerful reading that we often hear at funeral Masses. So many of the verses are comforting because they try to explain the reality of death and what it means to us. “They seemed, in the view of the foolish to be dead.” As our faith teaches us, we are immortal after we have completed our journey here on earth. God’s love and mercy continue to guide and comfort us in the next life. “God tried them and found them to be worthy of himself.” And my favorite line, “...they shall dart about as sparks through stubble.” The harvest of this life may be over, but the sparks continue to connect with the leftover stubble.

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm: 23: 3-6: Although most of us have had little experience of being shepherds, the image is very meaningful for us. The psalmist recognizes the comfort received from God who cares and protects her/him. This psalm speaks to us today as we ask for the staff and rod to be courageous in being the person that God wants us to be in a world that is so contrary to divine values.

Second Reading – Romans 5: 5-11: “Hope does not disappoint...” This phrase was the opening line of Pope Francis’ document on the Jubilee Year of 2025. St. Paul’s letter challenges us to remember why hope cannot disappoint us. It is God’s love and mercy that sustains us in all difficult moments. Jesus has given us his all when he gave his life for us. Our hope is in the Lord.

Gospel – John 6: 37-40: The theme of hope continues in the Gospel. We belong to Jesus who saved us because he was sent by the Father whose only desire was to save, to be united with the Triune God for all eternity. None of us can claim a perfect record of never doubting, but we know that we have a God who never tires of forgiving and saving us. God is Love.

Notes and Commentary by Sr. Nancy Schramm, OSF. Sr. Nancy is a past-president of the USCMA and currently serves in a small rural parish. She also serves her religious community on various committees. She is a spiritual director and translates for other groups in Portuguese.

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