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**Homily for the Commemoration of  
All the Faithful Departed (All Souls)  
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Cathedral**

November 2, 2012

Yesterday, on All Saints' Day, we dwelt upon those men and women who have given us an example of heroic virtue and give us clear example of what holiness looks like, offering us encouragement that all of us can get there.

And today we turn to commemorate all the faithful departed, those "who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith and sleep in peace." It's very important for us to look at death and the afterlife in the light of Revelation, what has been revealed to us in Christ Jesus.

I have been to many cemeteries in many different places over the years. While there, I always find myself wondering, as I look out over the many grave sites of peoples' loved ones, what was the faith of these people like? How did they approach their own death? I wonder if they believed in the power of Christ's death and resurrection. Certainly, probably many did. But as a priest I have also buried many people, and wondered the same thing based on what family members shared with me.

In the world today, many people fear death. As human beings, we have a natural fear of death and we rebel against its apparent finality. How often have I heard someone say, when having to suffer with some ailment, "It beats the alternative." Meaning it is better than dying. I would often say in response, "Does it?"

So often people do not share their faith life with others. It remains personal and private. So we don't really know what they believe about death or even more specifically, their own death. But if the whole goal of life is to prepare us to enter into eternity with the Father who has created us in love, why would we not look at our own death with great anticipation if we claim to be people of faith?

But people fear the unknown; they fear leaving all their loved ones behind; they also fear judgment for actions which we often try to remove, forget or remove from our consciousness. This sounds a bit like the author of Lamentations when he says,

*"My life is deprived of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is;  
My enduring hope, I said, has perished before the Lord.  
The thought of my wretched homelessness is wormwood and poison;  
Remembering it over and over, my soul is downcast."*

To believe in the resurrection is to come to realize just how much God loves us in spite of our imperfections; in spite of the ways we don't fully love others.

That in spite of it all, we have a God whose heart's desire is life with us... here and now and in the life to come. To believe in the resurrection is to turn away from lament to a life of hope and promise as we heard from the author of Lamentations.

*“The Lord's acts of mercy are not exhausted, his compassion is not spent;  
The Lord is my portion, I tell myself, therefore I will open him.  
The Lord is good to those who trust in him, to the one that seeks him;  
It is good to hope in silence for the Lord's deliverance.”*

We come together today to pray for the deceased, in the hopes that they no longer hold onto anything of this world... that they can surrender it all and let God complete their journey back to Him... that they can now see clearly what God has created them to be. We come to celebrate with them and for them, the truth of the Paschal mystery... Jesus is **THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE**... and knowing that **“nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.”** This love of God in Christ Jesus was ultimately displayed on the cross. You and I, all of us, have been baptized into his death and have received the promise of eternal life. We have a place, eternal in heaven. **“For we know that if our earthly dwelling should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling made with hands, eternal in heaven,”** St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians. This is the cause for our hope and joy this day in a special way.

Pope John Paul II put it in perspective beautifully: *“If you know the eternal Love who created you, you also know that there is an immortal soul within you. There are various seasons in life; if by chance you feel winter approaching, I want you know that it is not the last season, because the last one will be spring: the springtime of the Resurrection. Your whole life extends infinitely beyond its earthly limits: heaven awaits you.”*

The promise of Jesus brings us here today to pray for our deceased loved ones because we are all linked to one another as members of the Body of Christ. Our Christian hope is never just for ourselves, something merely individual, it is also a hope for others.

We pray that “in Christ, the hope of resurrection has dawned, that those saddened by the certainty of dying might be consoled by the promise of immortality to come, and that God's departed servants may be taken up into glory with Jesus, in whose great mystery of love we are all united.” Amen.