

Reflections

by the
Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy



The Meaning of All Saints Day and All Souls Day

In addition to the rhythm of life which Sunday liturgy celebrates in the Christian community to remember and renew the birth, life, death and resurrection of the Lord, the Church also shares with us the feast days of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. But there are also special days in the course of the liturgical year which have a special significance to us because of their relationship to life and our own human experience. Two such feasts are celebrated this week as we join with the Church universal in the celebration of the Feast of All Saints and the Feast of All Souls.

On November 1st, the Church celebrates what we hope will be our own feast day in the years to come. This is the day when we honor all of those who have achieved the goal which God desires for each of us – to enjoy his presence for all eternity. As a holy day of obligation, it is really an anticipation of our own unions with God in eternity. The feast of All Saints is meant to be our feast and it is really our privilege to join with the Church universal in the Eucharistic celebrations of our parish communities.

November 2nd focuses our attention on a reality that has affected all of our lives – the death of parents, relatives and friends. It is a time to remember and pray for those whom God has called to himself in eternity. The feast of All Souls is really a feast of hope where we are asked to pray for the faithful departed. But it is also a day to remember people who shared life and love with all of us.

For myself, the feast of All Souls is a time to remember my parents in special way. If my Dad were alive here on earth now, he would be in his nineties, but he would project a love of life and people that would be unequalled. And my mother would be running from one group of people to another wondering what she could serve them or do for them. For two people who came from Ireland at the beginning of this century with a dream of a new life, I know for myself, my brother, and sister, they really shared that dream in an incredible way by sharing life, love, and especially faith.

But there will always be the countless other people who shared their gift of life with me that I will remember this week. I think of Joanne, a young vibrant school teacher, as well as Tom, an energetic young salesman, who both died of cancer after a long and painful illness. I think of the priests who shaped and influenced my life in so many ways as well as priest friends and contemporaries with whom I lived and worked whom God has called to new life. I think of Joe and Mary Hickey, the Freys, my aunts and uncles and other relatives as well as countless people who allowed me to enter their lives and who shared their gifts with me. As I remember these people this week, I suddenly realize that they are not a part of the past, but they are very much a part of the present because they have given and shared so much with myself and contributed to who I am.

November 2nd is not only a day to pray for the faithful departed; it is also a day to give thanks for the gifts people have shared with us.

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Congratulations to Donald McCandless, who was raised in St. Mary's Parish in Malta, and whose family and relatives still live in the area. Don was ordained to the permanent diaconate this past week for the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph. May God bless his ministry and service to the Church.