



## CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

*Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation*

November 2, 2014      Commemoration of All the Faithful (All Souls)

### **Gospel reading John 6:37-40** *[To be read aloud]*

Jesus said to the crowds: “Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day.

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day.”

### **Brief commentary:**

The three theological virtues that bind us to God, and which Paul often emphasized, are faith, hope and love. Today, on the feast of ‘All the Faithful’ – more popularly known as “All Souls Day” – all three of these virtues converge in the telling of the Christian good news. It is fortunate that this feast should fall on a Sunday this year, since every Sunday is an echo of Easter Sunday, when Christ rose triumphantly from the grave. At the heart of the Christian Gospel is faith, confidence and trust in the God “who loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten Son...not to condemn the world, but that the world may be saved through him” (John 3:16). Faith in the one true living God involves a radical self-donation to God, an entrustment of one’s whole self, a reorientation of our lives – for love can be trusted, and God is infinite living love. It is in God, who loves us so much, that we place our faith and our hope. Our lives are his. So are the lives of each human person, and those who have gone beyond our reach, but not beyond our hope, our love, our prayers. The Christian is a person of hope, who lives with the inner certainty and the inner light that “whether we live or die, we belong to Christ” and that is what matters; or, as the book of Wisdom so well professes, “The souls of the just are in God’s hands,” the hands of the Good Shepherd. We believe with the Church that in death “life does not end but is transformed.” Indeed, God – who created us out of nothing – can raise us up, now that we have been something. And the first command of love is that we live; as we find so beautifully expressed in the biblical creation story, “God said...let there be!” Paul likewise expresses with confidence that our “hope does not disappoint” for “with God all things are possible.” Today’s feast is a feast of hope that “God who began a good work in us will bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus,” that every human person – without exception – is loved by God and called to holiness of life, and that the Son of God has come to redeem all with his own life, suffering, death, burial, and glorious resurrection. And Christ “rejects no one who comes” to him, and in his hands they are safe, “not one of [his] will be lost.” The Christian lives with the inner certainty, despite all doubts, questions and afflictions, that “the future is all good, because God is the future” (Fr. John O’Grady). All Souls Day is therefore an invitation to remember the faithful departed, from the first humans who responded to God’s loving grace to the last who will. They form a “cloud of witnesses” spurring us on, interceding for us, while we remember them with our prayers and sometimes with our tears. We pray for them, confident in the great grace and mercy of our loving Father. In Christ we are all alive as one family, whether on Earth, in Heaven, or in the final sanctification the Church has traditionally called Purgatory. And here on earth, “we live by faith [and hope] and not by sight,” or by mere human comprehension. We experience here already – through faith, hope and love – the boundless and glorious ‘life of the world to come’. We commend our loved ones and all people to the mercy of God who is love.

### **Today’s reading offers significant messages:**

- All Saints Day and All Souls Day invite us to consider the profound significance of ‘the communion of saints’, as one family alive and brought together in Jesus Christ.
- This day affirms the virtues that bind us to God: faith as radical trust in God, hope in the goodness of God in whose hands are our lives and the future of all things, and love that calls us to give our all to God and real care for our neighbor.
- Like Paul, each Christian has her/his full hope in “God who began a good work in us will bring it to full completion in Christ Jesus our Lord.” As members of the Church, the Body of Christ on Earth, we remember and pray for our faithful departed, confident in God’s great grace and mercy.

### **For our shared or personal reflection:**

*After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.*

- What do All Saints Day and All Souls Day mean in my life as a Christian?
- How are faith, hope and love gifts from God, and how are they also our free response to God?
- Do I remember and pray for the faithful departed? Do I have hope in God’s infinite mercy despite all my doubts and fears?

*Suggested readings:* Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1020-65, 954-962