



## **NOVEMBER REFLECTION**

**TO: THE DIOCESE OF STOCKTON**

**FROM: BISHOP MYRON J. COTTA**

**DATE: NOV. 3, 2020**

**RE: MAY THEY REST IN PEACE**

*Homily given at San Joaquin Catholic Cemetery on November 2, 2020 All Souls' Day*

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we gather to acknowledge All Souls' Day. Traditionally, the month of November is set aside for us to remember and pray for the faithful departed. As we do so, we know that this year has not been a typical one, to say the least! In early spring, the world found itself under siege by a deadly virus. The outbreak of the Coronavirus turned the world upside down and has altered our everyday lives. As a result of the world pandemic, many lives have been lost, and have been seriously impacted by the prevailing virus.

In the midst of it all, because of state and county restrictions, it has been difficult to conduct funerals as we have been accustomed. Creating a sense of closure for families, at the death of a loved one, has been challenging, frustrating and disheartening. Offering Vigils, Masses of Christian Burial and Committal Services have been sadly limited. The desire to offer a sense of consolation, or sharing a gesture of sympathy, has become somewhat awkward and hindered. Funerals, for many families, have consisted of a brief committal - gravesite -service with the hope of a future gathering of family and friends at a celebration of a memorial Mass.

Well, today, with this annual Mass of All Souls, we remember all the faithful departed, including our brothers and sisters who were not honored and remembered at the altar of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass because of the pandemic. Today, we offer this perfect prayer of the Church for them. We offer this perfect prayer of mercy - Jesus' self-offering on the cross and his triumph over sin and death.

In our first reading, Isaiah mentions: "On this mountain...he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all nations, he will destroy death forever. This pandemic is like a veil hovering and threatening to drape itself over us. It is like a web woven over all the nations of the world in order to entrap them. Be it described as a veil or that of a web, death is unescapable, but the scripture says: "He will destroy death forever. The Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces." Also, Isaiah encourages us: "Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us!" "Let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!" (& our loved ones)

Today, Psalm 25 speaks to those who have suffered and died, and also to those who have survived the death of a loved one. We hear the psalmist say: "Relieve the troubles of my heart and bring me out of my distress. Put an end to my affliction and my suffering; and take away all my sins."



Then Jesus, in the Gospel of John tells us: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwellings places. Jesus says: “I go and prepare a place for you. I will take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.

Jesus is speaking of your loved ones, and to us, in regard to our destiny. Our final destiny is to be with him in heaven. As he reminds Thomas, he reminds you and me: “I am the way, the truth and the life.” Even in the dark valley of this pandemic, Jesus wants to reassure us to “fear no evil,” for he is at our side. He wants to assure you of his love, his consolation, his promise - that on this mountain, he has saved us. He has saved us on the mountain known as Mount Calvary and has redeemed and saved your loved ones and us, and has granted to those who are faithful -eternal life!

St. Paul tells us: “Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,...heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us.” We who have the first fruits of the Spirit, wait for the redemption of our bodies; that is the future and destiny we await!

Today, let us offer all the suffering and death, due to this pandemic, in reparation of the sins of the faithful departed and for the conversion of sinners. For many who were not able to be with their loved ones at the end of their lives, separated or isolated from them, know that our prayers are with you. As you continue to mourn for your loved ones, may Our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Consolation, be with you through your time of bereavement.

In gratitude to God, we give thanks for all the healthcare professionals who are working tirelessly for the good of God’s people, and for the dedicated chaplains who offer their pastoral presence of comfort, including the Sacraments, to patients and their families.

November 2 is all about God’s Divine Love and Mercy. We are here, as a sign of hope, as we pray for all the faithful departed, the souls in Purgatory. During this month of November, let us offer acts of charity consisting of prayers, penance and Masses for the repose of the souls of those who have died, especially, during this uncertain time of the pandemic. Together, we await the day of encountering them in heaven, our final destiny.

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord. May they rest in peace. Amen.  
May their souls, and all the souls of the faithful departed, rest in peace.  
Amen.

Our Lady of Consolation, pray for us.

In the Peace of Christ,

Bishop Myron J. Cotta