

[Readings: Deut. 6:2-6; Psalm 18; Romans 6:3-9; Mark 12:28-34]

(From [Lauren Woodrell, the Magis Center](#))

All Souls Day, observed on November 2, is a profound Catholic feast dedicated to honoring and praying for the souls of the dead, particularly those in purgatory. While All Saints Day (also known as All Hallows Day, the day after All Hallows Eve) on November 1 celebrates the Saints in Heaven, All Souls Day focuses on those still undergoing purification, offering a chance for the living to assist through prayers and indulgences. That is what brings us to church today, reflecting the Church's enduring belief in the Communion of Saints and Eternal Life. And the enduring connection between the living and the dead.

All Souls Day is marked by meaningful Catholic traditions such as attending Mass, offering prayers for souls in purgatory, and lighting candles to remember the dead. Many also visit cemeteries to honor loved ones, often-bringing flowers, gifts, and food to gravesites. These customs, deeply rooted in Catholic belief, symbolize hope, prayer, and the ongoing spiritual connection between the living and the departed.

Attending Mass on All Souls Day is one of the most important traditions in Catholic communities. Special prayers, including the Funeral Mass, are offered for the souls of the deceased, especially those believed to be in Purgatory. These prayers are seen as a way to help cleanse the souls of their sins and aid in their journey toward heaven. Catholics also believe that offering prayers and masses can ease the suffering of the souls in Purgatory, which underscores the day's spiritual significance.

That is what brings us here today. To gather in faith and in prayerful support for you who have lost a loved one to death, and for whom we pray for Eternal Life. All Souls Day reminds us of the enduring bond between the living and the dead, grounded in love and spiritual support. All Souls Day offers comfort and hope, reminding us of the eternal peace that awaits in the presence of God.

But All Souls Day is not just about remembering and praying for the dead -- it's also an opportunity for personal spiritual growth and acts of charity. Engaging in reflective acts such as fasting or silent prayer allows the faithful to contemplate life, death, and the Christian hope of Resurrection. Some people choose to read passages from the Bible or meditate on the Four Last Things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell.

Are YOU ready to meet the Lord?

How does this move you to greater charity to those in need, to those in your family? Acts of charity are encouraged to honor the dead while helping the living. Offering alms, volunteering, or supporting those in need reflects the Christian values of love and mercy. In some Catholic communities, it is expected to give food to the poor or make donations in the name of deceased loved ones. These acts of generosity not only commemorate the dead but also demonstrate compassion for others, living out the teachings of Christ.

Jesus calls us to grow, to be challenged in what the deepest meaning of life is. So what does He teach us? He teaches us what it means to be a Disciple until we are called into Eternity. This involves two steps.

Step One is to *Love God first, with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength*. Jesus reveals to us who God is. God's heart is made known to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, as we hear in the Second Reading, “offered himself” for us. God loves us to such a degree that He holds nothing back from us. His love for us is radical and intense.

And because God’s gift to us is limitless – *ALL of Himself* – God can ask for ALL of us: our heart – the place of our decision-making and our soul. Your mind – what you fill your mind with; the study and knowledge of God! And your strength – loving God is a battle against temptation.

Step Two is to *Love your neighbor as yourself*. St. John tells us, “Whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.” (1Jn 4:20). Because Jesus willingly gave Himself up for others, we are called to love them in deed, as well.

And, now, a brief word about Tuesday’s election. How many have already sent in their absentee ballot? How many are planning to vote in person early or on Election Day, November 5, 2024?

The Michigan Catholic Conference continues its voter education efforts to urge the faithful to vote with a conscience informed by the truths of Church teaching. The MCC has been sharing its election edition of Focus magazine directly with Lansing Update readers. This edition was shared as insert in the bulletin a couple of weeks ago. A few copies are still available in the back of the church, along with the current monthly issue of Right to Life.

It can be challenging to compare Catholic teaching with the positions espoused by candidates for office.

Neither of the country’s two major political party platforms adhere to the full range of Catholic teaching. Making these voting decisions is sometimes discouraging. But Catholics are called as Disciples of Christ to be a light in the world and to guide others toward the righteous path.

Pray often, letting faith inform political participation. Keep learning.

The Church cannot and will not tell individuals which presidential or Michigan-based candidate they should vote for. Such decisions are to be made after forming one's conscience based on the teachings of the Church and prayerful reflection of candidate positions.

It is up to all Catholics and people of goodwill to do the best they can to make wise judgments about the candidates and the issues.

I encourage you all to read the entirety of Focus and take advantage of the resources at MCC's election website.

Everything else is in God's hands.

And Moses spoke to the people, saying: "Fear the Lord, your God, and keep throughout the days of your lives, all his statutes and commandments... that you may grow and prosper the more, in keeping with the promise of the Lord... to give you a land flowing with milk and honey." And Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength... And you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

May God keep us faithful to His teachings as we put His Words into action with courageous hearts and lives. May Mary, Queen of All Saints, may our brothers and sisters in Purgatory, and one another here present, pray together that God's will be done on Tuesday. AMEN!