



## THE COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Year A

Wisdom 3:1-9

Psalm:23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

Romans 5:5-11

John 6:37-40

### Gathering

*(An unlit candle, a bible open to this week's gospel and votive candles (one for each member) rest on a table in the gathering place. Small pieces of paper and pencils are kept on reserve.)*

Today's readings commemorate the faithfully departed. We consider God's abiding love for them. We pray for them and ask for their prayers. Last week we reflected upon loving God with our heart, soul and mind and loving our neighbor as ourselves. How did love of God and neighbor show itself in your life this past week?

### Prayer

*(The main candle is lit. The papers and pencils are distributed to members. The leader invites members to write down the name of a loved one who has died. The votive candles are distributed to each. These candles are lit from the main candle. The papers are placed on the table with the votive candle resting on top of each paper. Members dwell in quiet attention to the presence of God and in prayer for the person they have inscribed on the*

*paper. After a time of quiet, the prayer continues as follows.)*

All: Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let your perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Leader: We praise you, Our God, for the love and mercy you give each one of us. Your care is unconditional although our deeds are faulty.

All: Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let your perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Leader: We thank you, Our Loving Father, for the gift of your Son who came to show us the way to eternal life with you. May we find peace in the assurance of your great love that none should be lost.

All: Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let your perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

*(Members join in singing, “The Lord is My Light”. The song may be found on the Internet.)*

## **HEARING THE LORD’S GOSPEL**

*(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.*

*When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: “What draws you to this gospel?” “Where*

*After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)*

## Reflection

I know that God is loving beyond any measure, that his mercy is boundless.

I know that in some mysterious way we are spiritually connected to one another in faith, that God's love is deeply embedded through the Spirit and joins us with others here on earth and that this loving Spirit transcends this world into eternity.

I know the Old Testament reading this Sunday, boasts of those who have passed from this life into the next as being *in the hands of God, in peace, hopeful for full immortality, trusting in truth, and abiding in God's love and care*. In the same way, Paul's letter to the Romans assures us that we are saved by Christ's life. I believe Jesus lays out his basic mission in this week's gospel. Jesus is the visible presence of the invisible God, the source of eternal life.

Being connected with all departed souls is something the earliest believers celebrated as they honored martyrs. Much has been written about purgatory and what one's state is in purgatory, but the fact is that we really do not know exactly what that entails. Different cultures and traditions frame this in varying ways. In any case, what is clear in this week's scriptures, God loves us and desires us to be with him through eternity.

In *Believing in Jesus*, Father Leonard Foley, O.F.M. writes: "We must not make purgatory into a flaming concentration camp on the brink of hell – or even hell for a short time. It is blasphemous to think of it as a place where petty God exacts the last pound or ounce of flesh...." He goes on, "Catherine Genoa, a mystic of the 15<sup>th</sup> century...wrote that the fire of purgatory is God's love burning the soul so that, at last, the soul is wholly aflame. It is the pain of wanting to be totally worthy of 'One' who is seen as infinitely lovable, the pain of desire for union that is absolutely assured, but not fully tasted."

## Questions for Reflections and Conversation

- ◆ How often do you visit the graves of loved ones?
- ◆ How do you remember your beloved dead?
- ◆ How do you experience God purifying your heart these days?

## HEARING THE GOSPEL'S LORD

*(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: "What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?" "How are you/we being called to live in response to God's word?" After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)*

### Response in action

- ◆ Visit the grave of a loved one this week and pray for the person.
- ◆ Be with someone who is bereaved, sit with them and just simply be with that person.
- ◆ Vote in support of gospel values in the week ahead. Offer a ride to the polls to someone who is unable to drive.

### Prayer

*(After a brief pause, the gospel or portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses the questions, "What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now? What do you say to him in response?" The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without comment. Following this sharing, the leader prays as follows on behalf of all):*

## Suscipe of Catherine McAuley

Leader: My God, I am yours for time and eternity. Teach me to cast myself entirely into the loving arms of your Providence with the most lively, unlimited confidence in your compassionate, tender pity.  
Grant me, O most merciful redeemer, that whatever you ordain or permit may be acceptable to me.

Take from my heart all painful anxiety; suffer nothing to sadden me but sin, nothing to delight me but the hope of coming to the possession of you, my God and my all, in your everlasting kingdom.

All: Amen.

*Praying In The Spirit of Catherine McAuley,  
A Collection of Prayers, The Sisters of the  
Americas, Mercy Heritage Center. Belmont,  
North Carolina.*

*(The session concludes with an exchange of a sign of peace. Members take home the votive candle they lit in memory of a loved one.)*

