

Yes, it is November and there has not been an error in printing or writing this encouragement. Within a month we shall be entering the season of Advent leading to the Joy of Christmas. You may be wondering therefore why the topic of resurrection, so often thought of after Lent and at Easter time. It also happens to be the month in which we think of those who have died and preceded us, friends, family and as a result of war and disaster. It is the month that we pray for the Holy Souls. It is a season that we think of death rather than life and what the future holds, consoling ourselves with the prospect of cheerier days to come in December.

Yet how sad this is Saint Pope John Paul II famously said, 'We are Resurrection people, and Alleluia is our song'. These words signify a deeper understanding of life ongoing after our death. Did you know that he said this not at Eastertide, but in November — almost 40 years ago? I myself had forgotten this though recalled the phrase when I decided to write this month on the theme of Resurrection. As it happens, we start November with the feast of All Saints reminding us of the better life ahead and those who had made that journey so well, that we hold them in great esteem knowing that they enjoy the richness of heavenly grace.

For a Christian life does not end with death but continues. Whatever way we have lived our life we know that one day we will be reunited with our resurrected bodies. We do not understand what that means but we know and pray in the Creed for the resurrection of the dead.

We also know that our life continues once we have shed this mortal coil. Now, it is not always easy to grasp this, and many people shy away from ever thinking about it. Today we shun thinking about death while indeed being surrounded by it in reality because of wars, famine, disasters and illness and of course natural progression of age.

This is in fact a great shame because it has a significant effect on the way we live our lives and the manner in which we do so. If we believe that all will end, we may take a path that leads us not to be bothered about how we live and to think of making the most of the good thing without any thought of our neighbour to the consequences of our actions. In some cases, the word 'drink and be merry for tomorrow we die' becomes the sole purpose of our life.

Jesus tells a wonderful story about the rich man who clearly took this mantra to its hilt. Having reached 'Hades' he saw the beggar Lazarus enjoying his place in the kingdom and how far away he was from it and so begged Abraham to let Lazarus go and tell his five brothers what is to come and to change their lives. (Lk.16 19-31) This was refused with the words.. 'But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' I wonder how truly we believe the reality of the resurrection ourselves.

Another time Jesus is questioned in order to trick Him about marriage and remarriage, who will the people be married and to whom in heaven? Jesus roundly scolds them saying there is no more marriage in heaven and that God is not the God of the dead but of the living.

There are many references to resurrection in the Gospels which indicate the importance of thinking about it... and not only of the resurrection of Jesus Himself.

Saint Paul makes the position very clear when speaking to the Corinthians (1. 15; 12-22).

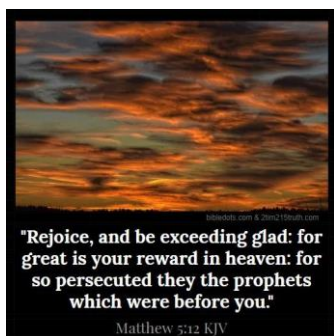
"If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith".

"Glory be to You, who laid your Cross as a bridge over death that souls might pass over it from the dwelling of the dead to dwelling of life." St. Ephrem of Syria

This word should make us ponder very deeply not only about our lives here on earth but on the reality of death and an afterlife. Jesus came to bring life and to bring hope. While we are saddened by the departure of those who have gone before us, we also know that we will be reunited with them at the appointed time. We also know that this hope and faith should make us both truly grateful and also fully alive and joy filled. November is a time indeed of resurrection when we pray with joyful hope for those that we have 'loved long since and lost awhile as St. John Henry Newman famously put it in the hymn, 'Lead kindly light.'

We often pray for a happy death. This is often visible in the lives of saints, canonised or not, as they die in peace. Part of the reason for this is that they have reconciled themselves to God and because they utterly believe in the reality of the resurrection. They believe that they will have an eternity with God and so death itself holds no fear for them That brings great peace... many great Saints indeed look forward to the moment when they are united with God and their families and friends. St. Paul longed for that moment even though he surrendered to the will of God and a continued service.

We can see this hope and trust in the lives of ordinary people too. When Johnny Cash, the country singer, was close to death he was determined to keep making music. Indeed, the last of his albums was made in the last months of his life. He sang one of his favourite hymns almost to the end of his life, his voice proclaiming the truth of the resurrection. His deep voice giving witness to his conviction about the life that was to follow.



So maybe this November we should remember that we are Resurrection people and not be filled with gloom and doom.....

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St. Augustine said: "The bodies of the saints will therefore rise again free from every defect from every deformity, and from every corruption, encumbrance, or hindrance. In this way their freedom of action will be as complete as their happiness." SO... this November sing an everlasting Alleluia.... And smile. Halina Holman©

Pope John Paul II

"We do not pretend that life is all beauty. We are aware of darkness and sin, of poverty and pain. But we know Jesus has conquered sin and passed through His own pain to the glory of the Resurrection. And we live in the light of His Paschal Mystery — the mystery of His Death and Resurrection". 'We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song! We are not looking for a shallow joy but rather a joy that comes from faith that grows through unselfish love that respects the fundamental duty of love of neighbour, without which it would be greatly unbecoming to speak of Joy' 30th Nov, 1986

GENEROUS IMMORTALITY

It is not an easy road to take,
to care, to speak, to listen
and make all beings feel loved and make sorrow depart,
with hope and trust in a better tomorrow,
Filled with tender smile and gentle touch fulfilling the
maker's call.

Streams of grace flow from His eyes,
His touch through us materialised.
His passion exemplified in Eternal Love.
Carry others gently... only so gently,
For then we immortalise.

HH 2016

Feast Days in November

1st All Saints – Holy Day of Obligation

2nd All Souls

3rd Thirty-first Sunday in Ord. Time

4th St. Charles Borromeo

6th All the Saints of Wales

7th St. Willibrord

9th Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

10th Thirty-second Sunday in Ord. Time

11th St. Martin of Tours

12th St. Josaphat 15th St. Albert the Great

16th St. Margaret of Scotland

17th Thirty-third Sunday in Ord. Time

18th Dedication of the Basilica of Sts. Peter & Paul

21st Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

22nd St. Cecilia

23rd Pope St. Clement I

24th Christ King of the Universe

27th St. Catherine Labouré

30th St. Andrew, Apostle, Patron of Scotland