

All Saints' Day

(or All Saints' Sunday, Sunday between 30 October and 5 November inclusive)

Principal Service readings

Wisdom 3.1-9	The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God
or Isaiah 25.6-9	The Lord will wipe away all tears
Psalms 24.1-6	The pure of heart will receive blessings
Revelation 21.1-6a	John's vision of the new Jerusalem
John 11.32-44	Jesus, raised from the dead, reveals himself to Mary

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The resurrection of Lazarus

³²When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' ³⁵Jesus began to weep. ³⁶So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' ³⁷But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?' ³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.' ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said,

'Father, I thank you for having heard me.

⁴²I knew that you always hear me,

but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.”

⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’

John 11.32-44 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Jesus is ‘greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved’ (v.33). Another translation is, ‘he was terribly upset’ (CEV), indicating the depth of his feelings (the Greek word, *enebrimesato*, implies anger). What is he upset about? Is it the loss of friendship, the suffering of others, the struggle against evil, or something else? Why does Jesus weep when he knows that Lazarus will be raised from the dead?

The tomb was probably a hollowed-out recess in the rock, with a stone slab covering the opening (v.38).

Jesus approaches the tomb boldly, as he also approaches his own death boldly.

Jesus looks upward and prays (v.41). He does not act on his own initiative, but carries out the Father’s will (cf 12.44-50).

The ‘loud voice’ of v.43 reminds us of 5.28-29.

The account of the miracle is very brief. It is not the details that matter but the meaning – the power over death that manifests the glory of God (v.40).

Quotations

1

The only difference between the saint and the sinner is that every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future.

Oscar Wilde 1854–1900

2

When I gave food to the poor, they called me a saint. When I asked why the poor were hungry, they called me a communist.

Dom Helder Camara 1909–99

3

God creates out of nothing. Wonderful you say. Yes, to be sure, but he does what is still more wonderful: he makes saints out of sinners.

Søren Kierkegaard 1813–55

4

It frequently happens that the value of a thing lies in the fact that someone has possessed it. A very ordinary thing acquires a new value, if it has been possessed by some famous person. In any museum we will find quite ordinary things--clothes, a walking-stick, a pen, pieces of furniture--which are only of value because they were possessed and used by some great person. It is the ownership which gives them worth. It is so with the Christian. The Christian may be a very ordinary person, but he acquires a new value and dignity and greatness because he belongs to God. The greatness of the Christian lies in the fact that he is God’s.

The Letters of James and Peter / William Barclay

Related topics

For further study:

All Saints; The Church

Closing Prayer

God of abundant life,
in the resurrection of your Son
you have broken the power of death.
We ask you, open the eyes of our faith
towards your new and eternal Jerusalem,
where tears and mourning shall be ended,
and where all who have been faithful to Christ
will share your rich feast of salvation.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect for All Saints’ Day²

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

² *Celebrating the Christian Year : Prayers and Resources for Sundays, Holy Days and Festivals, Years A, B and C / comp. by Alan Griffiths. – Vol, 1 ; Ordinary Time. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004.*