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"Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me" (John 6:37).

All Souls Day

[Wis 3:1-9; John 6:37-40](#)

"The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed" was once for many Catholics of a certain age simply "Poor Souls Day." We dashed in and out of churches to recite prayers and light candles to free souls in purgatory. The two-dollar stipend for a Mass said for a deceased relative (five dollars for a "high" Mass) was a sure-fire way to guarantee their release from the dim shadows of an imagined holding area just outside of heaven.

Behind the quantitative exchange and the theology that supported it was nonetheless a deep sense of solidarity between the living and the dead. We prayed for those we loved and missed who had "gone before us in the sign of faith." We envisioned a time beyond time when we would be reunited with our beloved family members and friends.

We bring this same conviction -- that love is stronger than death and that God keeps every promise -- to today's celebration of the faithful departed who belong to the Mystical Body of Christ. John's Gospel proclaims Jesus as the divine Person who became incarnate as the very template of creation, both old and new. The Word of God, "through whom all things were made," has come to redeem the world like a light illuminating God's original plan for the universe. Anyone who sees (believes) in Jesus and comes to him is incorporated by baptism into his body. Union with Jesus is how we become part of the New Adam, who will live forever. Anyone who comes to him, responding to his love and example, will be accepted. Anyone.

We who are on our way to eternity, living our baptismal lives in this world, can already celebrate the promise fulfilled in those who have gone ahead in death to share this new life in Christ. We can communicate (in both prayer and through the mystery of the Eucharist) with our beloved dead. For they are alive -- and even more alive than we are because they now possess the fullness of the promise we journey toward in time.

The Faithful Departed form the great "cloud of witnesses" described in the Letter to the Hebrews, those who have passed through the veil of suffering that is part of every life, and they now cheer us on: Don't be afraid or lose heart. Trust in God and go forward, enduring whatever life requires of you to remain in solidarity and love with God's people. Someday, sooner than you think, you will stand in the company

of saints, the great chorus of praise and joy reaching from one end of eternity to the other.

Please remember Diane Marrin (d. April 13, 2021) and Sean Stoy (d. May 16, 2022).