

We gather in this month of November to remember our loved ones who have died. Fathers and mothers and daughters and sons, brothers and sisters, and grandparents. We gather to remember them, to honor them, to pray for them. They have all greatly impacted our lives. 27 in number. Among them...

(at all masses) Al Hogrebe: Deacon here for over 30 years. Raised his family not far from here. Preached God's word to us. Carpenter by trade. Built the altar and ambo from a design sketched on a piece of paper. He died hoping in the resurrection of the dead.

(at the 4:00) Anne El Hajj, with her husband, George, here since the 1950's. Could see all the way down to 8 Mile Road because there were no houses between her house and the highway.

(at the 9:00) Glendine Stafford: She and her husband, Luther, were such staunch and long term and generous members of the parish.

(at the 11:00) Connie Rucker: Raised 12 children; always sitting at this one place in church; always willing to serve for coffee and donuts or funeral liturgies.

George Obia: constant father and member of the parish. He was on Parish Council and helped whenever asked. Leader in the African community.

On this day of remembrance we have readings from scripture which, at first glance, do not seem to have anything to do with those who have gone before us. In today's gospel, we see Jesus speaking to the crowds about the religious leaders of his time, the scribes and the Pharisees. He tells the people to listen to what the religious leaders say but do not follow their example. They weigh down people with guilt and go around looking important with their beautiful prayer shawls and sitting at the seats of honor at banquets. Jesus knows his words will infuriate the religious leaders, but he has no fear of them. He is about the work of his Father and tells the crowd, \ and us, \ in his kingdom the humble will be exalted.

Jesus is a fearless person. He is not concerned for himself or his own life. He knows that his life is in the hands of his Father. He has already said that he must suffer die and then rise. He has totally overcome his fear of death.

How about you? How about me? How are we doing with our fear of our own death? St. John Chrysostom says that "the one who does not fear death is free". I don't know about you, but I am still working on that question. Some say that the main reason for Jesus' coming into this world was to free us by helping us overcome our fear of death.

Remember what happened when his friend, Lazarus died? Jesus said quite boldly, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will never die. Then he challenged Lazarus’ sisters (and all of us) with the question, **DO YOU BELIEVE THIS? DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU WILL LIVE IN ME EVEN IF YOU DIE?**

After speaking these words, Jesus calls Lazarus from the grave and says, “Untie him and let him go free!” Jesus came to untie us from the fear of death so that we could live in the freedom of the children of God.

Jesus knew what it would cost him dearly to set Lazarus free. Scripture says that from that time on, the religious leaders sought ways to do away with Jesus because many people were coming to believe in him after he had raised Lazarus. Jesus knew what it would cost him to set us free from the fear of death. That is why Jesus Christ is Lord of both the living and the dead.

Yet the fear of death still haunts us. The early Christians struggled with death just as much as we do. They thought Jesus would return very soon and when many of the original disciples began to die off, they were very confused. Paul wrote to community at Thessalonica these words.

“We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep. Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will sure not precede those who have fallen asleep. Console one another with these words.”

(pause)

Brothers and sisters, in our baptism, we exchange one kingdom for another. Our baptism marks a definite realignment of power. Jesus’ dying and rising sets us free from the fear of death. He calls us to live humble lives of love of God and service of neighbor. We can do radical things because we fear nothing except to be separated from the Lord.

As we remember our loved ones today who have gone on from this life, may our dedication to Jesus Christ free us from the slavery of our fear of death. Then we with St. Paul can proclaim, “O death, where is your sting. O death, where is your victory.” Our victory stands on the power of the risen Lord.