

We celebrate the Communion of Saints for 2 days. Yesterday we celebrated those who have made it; today we celebrate those who are still in process, who need more purifying before they are ready to meet God face-to-face.

St. Paul wrote somewhere that in the end, the only thing that remains is love. That's why we're here today. We're praying for our loved ones who have died. Our prayers for them are a powerful way for us to remain connected with them and to speed them along on their journey to God.

All of today's scriptures tell us how deeply God wants to be a part of our lives, and how much he wants us to share in His eternal life:

The Book of Wisdom said that God holds in His hands those who died in faith. That's a very tender and intimate relationship: they're experiencing God's tenderness and mercy.

John's Letter says that those who believe in Christ are beloved; they are God's children. Believers are safe.

In the Gospel Jesus reminds us that no one is lost to God. He says that it's God's will for each of us who believe in Him that we should have eternal life. Jesus promises that he won't reject any person who believes in Him; he will raise them up for eternal life. He will never let go of us. Jesus quotes His Father as saying that His Father does not reject anyone who is faithful to Him.

Today's celebration gives us tremendous hope and comfort, reminding us of God's gift of eternal life and its possibility for us. Those who have died believing in God's mercy and compassion have a glorious future – in spite of their sins. God isn't the God of death; He continues His care for us even beyond death. He's the God who sustains life into eternity.

None of us dies perfect. The people we remember today were good people who tried to lead good lives. For them, and for all believers, sins don't keep us from eternal life; refusal to seek God's forgiveness and mercy do.

For unbelievers there is also hope. We pray for them, too, reminding God of His faithfulness, His mercy, His forgiveness, His compassion and His love that He gives each human being since they were born. As Jesus said on the cross, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Today is our festival of hope in the promise of eternal Life Jesus offers us, and of the faith and love we express now in our own lives. Our faith and love for others express our hope that one day we, too, will enjoy everlasting life. And our prayers for the dead are wind in the sails for each boat bound for Heaven.

Fr. John Ozella, All Souls, November 2, 2017