

NOVEMBER 11 FATHER TOMAS SKIBINSKI

We began this month of November with the Solemnity of All Saints, then with the Memorial of All the Faithful Departed. And today, the first reading from the Book of Wisdom gives us lots of hope for all those who have departed, who have preceded us on the journey to the Father's house. And indeed, this reading is an assurance for all of us, for all those who believe in God, but also in Christ and in his resurrection, that our life does not end here on Earth, but that our life, from the very beginning, from the moment of conception, has an eternal dimension.

We were created and thought of by God from eternity, and the Lord has already prepared for us, and he desires for us to be with him. The Book of Wisdom says God has created us for incorruption or for immortality, really, because it's true that, even though our body one day will have to die and will be laid in the ground, we believe that we are not just a body, but that we are a body and soul, and that our soul is immortal, is eternal. And yes, there will be a separation for a time, and later on, we will rise again, and we'll be with the Lord for eternity, because this is how he has made us, in his own image, in the image of his own eternity.

God loved us so much that he wanted us to share in his very being. And so, it's true that, as it says here, it was through the devil's envy that death entered the world. The devil knew that he had sinned and he would never be able to go back, to return. But to us, mortals as we are, we have an opportunity and a possibility of returning, of returning to the Lord. This is something that the spirits do not have, the angels do not have, and the devil does not have either, and so he tries to separate us from him. But we know that we experience those moments when there is separation, yet there is also a possibility of returning to the Lord, of being in communion with him.

And so, we know that the souls of those who have died, in the eyes of the foolish, seem to have perished, and that their departure was a disaster. But they are in the hands of God; they are in peace. And today, as we gather here for this celebration, not only do we pray for our loved ones who have passed away, and in this month of November in a special way, but also today, being Remembrance Day, we know that those who made great sacrifices, those who have died fighting for freedom and for a better future, their departure was not useless. By giving their lives, they have left us the possibility of living in a better world.

But also, it's not that they are gone forever. They are not gone forever. That's why we pray, that's why the Church prays for the faithful departed—because we believe that there is life after death. They did us a great service. These are people, men and women of great service to their fellow brothers and sisters.

Today, the Gospel speaks about this service. It speaks about, in a word, a slave—but slave or servant is basically the same thing in the biblical language here used. Throughout the history of the people of Israel, the apostles, and the Church, we know that to be a servant of God is not something diminishing or of lesser value. No, we are the servants of a King, and we should be proud of this. Starting with Abraham, Moses, all the patriarchs and prophets, they called themselves “the servants of the Lord.” Also, the Virgin Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word.”

So yes, we are servants, but it is really a title of honour. To serve is something very honourable. And, of course, we know that this servant par excellence is Jesus Christ. He came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Christ served to the very last breath here on this earth. He came to serve, he came to give us life. He

did this because he came to enter into this service, knowing that it is through this that he gives us true freedom and liberty—freedom from the grasp of the devil, of sin, of all idolatry, of wanting to be someone in this world, of all those false things that the world presents to us.

To be a servant of God, a slave of God, is truly freeing. It is in no way restricting us in any way but gives us true freedom. Saint Paul himself, when he met Christ, understood that to put on this sweet yoke of Christ is to be truly free—free to give your life, free to serve, free to be there for others.

And so, today the Lord gives us this word also, reminding us that we do not merit or deserve anything. We should not say, “Yes, I have done something, so now I deserve.” No—everything is a gift from God, a free gift. We cannot ask or pretend to deserve anything, but everything is being given and offered to us.

And so, this celebration of the Eucharist is a gift—Christ constantly offering himself, coming to serve us so that we may be one with him, and that one day we may pass on, that this Passover may be fulfilled, so that we may be with him for eternity.