

## November 2017

**Proposed Theme: Remembering our beloved dead**

### **The Joy of Love: Pope Francis**

*I can understand the anguish felt by those who have lost a much-loved person, a spouse with whom they have shared so much. Jesus himself was deeply moved and began to weep at the death of his friend (Lazarus). (254)*

*Ordinarily the grieving process takes a fair amount of time. The entire process is filled with questions: about the reasons why a loved one had to die, about all the things that might have been done, about what a person experiences at the moment of death. With a sincere and patient process of prayer and interior liberation, peace returns. (255)*

*It consoles us to know that those who die do not completely pass away, and faith assures us that the risen Lord will never abandon us..... Indeed, "our loved ones are not lost in the shades of nothingness, hope assures us that they are in the good strong hands of God". (256)*

### **Some Thoughts:**

- Every family has people whom they love who have died. November is the month when we deliberately remember them and pray for them
- These memories can be painful because of the loss that is experienced or because of the difficulty of forgiving a loved one.
- These memories are essential because so much of what we are and have has come from these people whom we love and who love us.
- The death of a wife or husband can often be the most traumatic loss. Nothing is ever the same without this person who has been so much part of the hopes and dreams of life and so much part of the love experience of companionship.
- The death of a daughter or son is certainly heart-breaking for parents. This is true whether it is the death of a baby in the womb through miscarriage, or of a small child, or of a daughter or son later in life. Sometimes these deaths can be tragic ones through accident or suicide. Parents are very often heart-broken for the rest of their lives.
- We all experience the trauma of the death of a mother or father. The depth of this pain can surprise us.
- When a sister or brother dies we grieve deeply also, although at times people are shocked or guilty at how quickly they get over it by comparison with other deaths.
- Our grandparents are also very dear to us and when they die we can be devastated. They were so much part of our growing up, of our maturing, of our comfort in life.
- And then there are our aunts and uncles, and our cousins. Depending on how close to these we have been we can feel sadness and even distress.
- These are all the people who make up our family life. It is they who are most likely to cause us real sorrow when they die. Of course we have close friends too that we will never forget. That sorrow is a very personal one that is not experienced in the same way by other family members.

**Questions:**

1. How often do you think about your loved ones who have died? Are these thoughts joyful or morbid?
2. How often do you talk about your loved ones who have died? Do you celebrate their memory?
3. Do you appreciate November as a special time of remembrance of your loved ones who have died?
4. How can you make this month a time of joy, while being willing to experience the pain of their absence?
5. How can you make it a month of prayer for them: prayer of thanksgiving for their goodness; prayer of intercession for their eternal rest?

**Suggested actions:**

1. A lovely custom in most parishes is when people make out a list of their loved ones who have died so that they can be prayed for in the Masses throughout the month or on special days.
2. It would be even more significant if this list was to be drawn up by a family. As they write this list together they can talk about the various people they are naming and what each of these means to the various people of the family.
3. Look at the possibility of creating a sacred space somewhere in your home. In this space make a collage of all the Memoriam cards you have of your family and friends.
4. Commit to at least five minutes a day this month to gather in this sacred space to pray together as a family for your deceased loved ones and to remember them. A good way to pray would be to take a couple of the Memoriam cards each day, talk about those on them, and pray the particular prayers on them.
5. If possible visit the cemetery together as a family and spend some time together at each grave, sharing your memories about each person. Have a celebration as a family either at home or by going out together.
6. As a parish organise a special Mass/service for all those whose names were submitted at the beginning of the month, with special emphasis on those who died in the previous year. Follow this up with a celebration.

*The people who honour their dead are people who believe in eternal life.*