

# THE COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED (ALL SOULS' DAY)

LECTIONARY #668

READING I Wisdom 3:1-9

**A reading from the Book of Wisdom**

The **souls** of the **just** are in the **hand** of **God**,  
and no **torment** shall **touch** them.  
They **seemed**, in the view of the **foolish**, to be **dead**,  
and their passing **away** was thought an **affliction**  
and their going **forth** from us, utter **destruction**.  
But they are in **peace**.  
For if before **men**, indeed, they be **punished**,  
yet is their **hope** full of **immortality**,  
**chastised** a little, they shall be greatly **blessed**,  
because God **tried** them  
and found them **worthy** of **himself**.  
As gold in the furnace, he **proved** them,  
and as sacrificial **offerings** he took them to **himself**.  
In the time of their **visitation** they shall **shine**,  
and shall dart **about** as **sparks** through **stubble**;  
they shall judge **nations** and rule over **peoples**,  
and the **LORD** shall be their King **forever**.  
Those who **trust** in him shall understand **truth**,  
and the **faithful** shall abide with him in **love**:  
because **grace** and **mercy** are with his **holy** ones,  
and his **care** is with his **elect**.

An exhortatory reading, one whose tone is conciliatory and hopeful.

Emphasize "peace."

Emphasize "himself." God gathers all the souls offered to him, transforming them.

Emphasize "grace," "mercy," and "holy."

There are options for today's readings. Contact your parish staff to learn which readings will be used.

**READING I** The readings for today offer the encouragement of hope and trust in God to those who hear them proclaimed, which is why they are chosen for this celebration of the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls). By digging deep into questions of suffering and salvation, these readings show us how God's overwhelming love draws us to himself and is expressed in the paschal mys-

tery of Christ, which we join in through our sacramental participation.

The Wisdom of Solomon, from which our first reading comes, is one of several books known to Catholics as deuterocanonical or belonging to a second canon of the Bible. However, because of theological debates that arose during the Reformation, Protestant reformers decided to count them as apocryphal, meaning, "of doubtful authenticity." Nevertheless, it is included in the Catholic Bible. Its author (not King Solomon, though the attributions to him in the book lend value to the teachings in the

book) writes of many important themes that reveal the nature of God and encourage readers to trust in God.

Today's first reading is part of a longer section of the Book of Wisdom that addresses the question of the vindication of the righteous (Wisdom 3:1-4:19). Briefly, Jewish and Christian theologies express the question this way: if God is sovereign and just, how are the righteous rewarded and the wicked punished? The author of Wisdom addresses the question by commenting on three scenarios in which it might appear that the righteous are being

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 (1)

**R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

or

**R. Though I walk in the valley of darkness, I fear no evil, for you are with me.**

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;  
beside restful waters he leads me;  
he refreshes my soul.

You spread the table before me  
in the sight of my foes;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

He guides me in right paths  
for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk in the dark valley  
I fear no evil; for you are at my side  
with your rod and your staff  
that give me courage.

Only goodness and kindness follow me  
all the days of my life;  
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD  
for years to come.

READING II Romans 5:5-11

**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans**

**Brothers and sisters:**

**Hope** does **not** disappoint,  
because the love of **God** has been poured **out** into our **hearts**  
through the Holy **Spirit** that has been **given** to us.

For **Christ**, while we were still **helpless**,  
**died** at the appointed time for the **ungodly**.

**Indeed**, only with difficulty does one die for a just **person**,  
though **perhaps** for a **good** person  
one might even find **courage** to die.

But **God** proves his **love** for us  
in that while we were still **sinners** **Christ** **died** for us.

How much **more** then, since we are now **justified** by his **Blood**,  
will we be saved **through** him from the **wrath**. >>

A reading in which Paul locates the source of hope in Jesus himself.

Emphasize "Christ."

Emphasize "through." This indicates the direction/tendency of our salvation, sparing us from wrath.

punished: human suffering, childlessness, and early death. This reading focuses on the suffering of the righteous. It begins by asserting that, whatever the foolish might think they perceive, the righteous have immortality or eternal life and peace with God. The beautiful image of being "in the hand of God" is about protection from the forces of evil. Notice, also, the author's belief that suffering can be educative—like a nanny teaching a child to do what is right and good—and that suffering can purify us—like fire can purify and separate precious metal from dross. Suffering can also

be like a sacrificial offering which God accepts to himself. The word "visitation" refers to God's intervention on behalf of the suffering righteous, and their shining and darting around "as sparks through stubble" is a reference to their resurrection or immortality (see Daniel 12:3). Finally, the truth that the faithful ones will come to know is who God is in Godself—something the mystics and saints long to experience!

**READING II** Our second reading is from a long section of Paul's Letter to the Romans on the life of the justifi-

fied, that is, those who have been set in right relationship with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 5:1—8:39). Immediately prior to our reading, Paul says that those who are justified find their peace in God and their hope is in God's glory (Romans 5:1-2). It is through this peace and hope that Christians can endure the afflictions of this life.

This is where our reading begins. Paul notes that this hope is not simply imagined. Rather, it is sure and can be relied upon, because of God's love for us. Paul goes on to give a particularly poignant explanation

**Indeed**, if, while we were **enemies**,  
we were **reconciled** to God through the **death** of his Son,  
how much **more**, once **reconciled**,  
will we be **saved** by his **life**.

Not only **that**,  
but we also boast of God through our Lord Jesus **Christ**,  
through whom we have now **received reconciliation**.

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GOSPEL John 6:37–40

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John**

**Jesus** said to the **crowds**:

**“Everything** that the Father **gives** me will **come** to me,  
and I will not reject **anyone** who **comes** to me,  
because I came **down** from heaven not to do my **own will**  
but the **will** of the **one** who **sent** me.

And this is the **will** of the one who **sent** me,  
that I should not lose **anything** of what he **gave** me,  
but that I should **raise** it on the last **day**.

For this is the **will** of my **Father**,  
that **everyone** who sees the **Son** and **believes** in him  
may have eternal **life**,  
and I shall raise him up on the last **day**.”

A powerful and assertive exhortatory reading that expresses one of John's favorite themes, the will of the Father.

“Will” is the operative word in this reading. It is repeated four times (as a noun). Give it weight each time you say it.

For John, will is connected directly to the Father, toward which Jesus, as Son, is utterly obedient and which clearly empowers him. Emphasize “this,” “will,” and “Father.”

of the state of sinful humanity prior to God's gift of justification. In no way did humanity earn this gift of right relationship with God. Rather, in the enormity of divine love, God gave his Son over to death that we might be justified. Paul is so confident in God's love for humanity that he believes that we can also have hope that we can be saved by Christ's life. For Paul, salvation is different from justification. The Greek word “to save” means “to heal, to make well, or to restore to health.” Notice, also, the interrelatedness of salvation and reconciliation. When one is reconciled to God, he or she is saved.

**GOSPEL**

Today's Gospel is part of the Bread of Life discourse, in which Jesus addresses a challenge made by the crowds who were chasing after him in hope of getting more food to eat, after the multiplication of loaves and fishes near the Sea of Galilee (John 6:1–15). When they caught up to him, they asked for a sign, one like the manna that God sent down from heaven during the time of Moses (John 6:30–31). Thus, Jesus declares that he is the bread from heaven, sent from God to give the world life. Coming to today's reading, we see that Jesus is the agent of God, who

in complete fidelity receives everything he has from the Father and does only what the Father tells him to do. An integral aspect of his mission as the bread of life is described in this reading; that Jesus receives everyone the Father gives and will not lose any one of them. Not even death will separate Christ from the people; they will be raised up “on the last day.” What sweet comfort to all who believe in Jesus' name! They will have everlasting life, that is, the fullness of life now, and be raised up on the last day. C.C.