

Along the track

Staying Mindful

During November, we remember those who have died and those who grieve for them.

When a loved one dies, a part of us dies too. Our life will never be quite the same. They remain part of us not just in our memories; we carry them with us daily in who we are and what we do and hope for. Sometimes we yearn for the day when we will be reunited. We hang onto that hope as it can help us to bear our pain and the fear of death.

We mourn their loss, we are saddened that we will not hear their voice or see them again in this life. While time can go some way in healing the pain of loss, we will always miss them. Our love for them doesn't end at death.

November is the time when we remember past times together, how much we loved them and they us. We take some time to recall how they live on in us and other loved ones - in their habits and memories and expressions and mannerisms, in the lessons they taught us, the expressions they gifted us. And during this month especially we are united in prayer. But it is not all about us.

Death does not sever all connections. It is not the end. The custom of praying for the dead during November reminds us that, at the very least, we connect again in a profound way by our prayers for them before God. Spiritual writers over the centuries have used the expression 'we are always in the mind of God'. God knows us, our thoughts, our desires, our loves, our hates. When we pray for those we love who have died, it is not just that we want God to stay mindful of them, we want to stay mindful of them too and we pray that they will still be mindful of us. Isn't that part of what the Communion of Saints means?

We have not lost those who have died. We still love them and they still love us. They are still with us, still part of us and we them, not just in mind but also in spirit. Pope Benedict wrote:

The belief that love can reach into the afterlife, that reciprocal giving and receiving is possible, in which our affection for one another continues beyond the limits of death—this has been a fundamental conviction of Christianity throughout the ages and it remains a source of comfort today (Spe Salvi #48).

November is a time to remember those special connections, to join together in mind and heart and in prayer. And so we pray:

Gracious and loving God, we come to you with our hearts full of prayers both spoken and those we cannot put into words. You are the light in our darkness, our refuge and strength, and so with confidence we offer our prayers to you.

There is no place where you cannot reach,
God who made all the heavens and the earth, the light and the darkness.

There is no journey which you have not travelled
God who is with us in Jesus the Christ who became one with us. Who suffered death and then rose.

There are no people beyond your care,
God who is the Spirit, the Comforter, the Healer, the One who continues to give life.

Be with us, Lord and be with those we love and those we miss so dearly.

We pray especially today for those who grieve.
Stay close to them, Lord so that they may feel your continued healing presence in their lives
Stay with them, Lord. May they feel the comfort of your love so that they may come to face each new day with hope.

May their memories become joyful, may their days be enriched with friendship and the understanding support of others.

We commend to your loving care all those who have died. Take them into your loving care, loving God. They have always been in your mind and heart, even before they came into being. You wanted each of us to live, to enjoy life forever.

We give thanks to You, loving God who made us, for all those who have been blessings in our lives, and we ask forgiveness for the times when we took them for granted, when we did not show them our love and gratitude.

When the sadness of death touches our lives
it is to You that we turn in faith with our questions and our need for reassurance and comfort.

Lighten our darkness with your love, your consolation;
Stay with us with your love and kindness
We pray in the name of Jesus whose arms were outstretched on the Cross to embrace all people.
Amen.

Regards

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