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## ALL SOULS' DAY

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU  
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault  
(Fontgombault, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024)

*Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine.*  
Eternal rest give them, O Lord.  
(Introit of the Mass)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
My dearly beloved Sons,

**Y**ESTERDAY, THE VISION of the author of the Book of the Apocalypse took us to the foot of the throne of the Lamb. A multitude of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, is standing, forever praising and proclaiming the greatness of God and His wonderful works. United in praise, this crowd is first and foremost united in charity, which is communion with God, vision of peace, the eternal rest we have implored in the chant of the introit.

Such is not the vision presented by the other place that is called to last forever, hell. Evil and sin lead to solitude. No desire for God. No love for one's neighbour. The damned are alone. Each and all of them thrown to the ground, drowned in an inextinguishable hatred that eats them and will endlessly eat them: hatred of the other damned, hatred of all creatures, hatred of God. No rest for the damned, no peace, but an everlasting hatred. Sinners already live this tragedy on earth. That is an invitation for all who are still walking on the way to beseech Christ's help.

Lastly, there is another place, destined to disappear at the end of time, where souls are separated from their bodies, but

are still waiting to rejoin blessedness, and are living a time of purification. These souls are not yet ready for the vision of God. Yet, they desire it. This time of purification is offered to them as a mercy coming from God. The Church strongly invites us to intercede for these souls, so as to shorten their wait and fulfil their desire.

It is not without meaning, in a world torn apart by endless wars, to find the features of the face of the Church, Christ's mystical body, on her so diverse members: the glorious Church, the suffering Church, the pilgrim Church; the one and holy Church, communion of all her members with Christ, and communion of all in Christ. A Church one and synodal, that is to say possessed of holiness, and in her members walking towards holiness.

Let us recall these lines of a Dogmatic Constitution of the Vatican II Council, *Lumen gentium*:

The union of the wayfarers with the brethren who have gone to sleep in the peace of Christ is not in the least weakened or interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the perpetual faith of the Church, is strengthened by communication of spiritual goods.<sup>a</sup>

a. *Lumen gentium*,  
n. 49.

Let us therefore rejoice that the eternal rest of our brothers and sisters in Paradise should be an active rest, and let us remember that we ourselves should also intercede for the souls in pain of Purgatory.

However, this morning's readings invite us to consider a last step in the history of mankind: the Last Judgement and the resurrection of the bodies.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall rise again incorruptible. And we shall be changed. [...] And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. [...] But thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>b</sup>

b. 1 Cor 15:52.54.57.

St. John's teaching isn't different:

For as the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son also to have life in Himself. And He hath given Him

power to do judgment, because He is the Son of man. Wonder not at this: for the hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life: but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.<sup>a</sup>

a. *Jn* 5:26-29.

The mystery of the resurrection of the dead is perhaps one of the less taught mysteries today, and yet, we profess it every Sunday in the Creed: “*Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum et vitam venturi sæculi.* — I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” This mystery is the subject of a double expectation: the resurrection of the body, and eternal life.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church acknowledges it:

From the beginning, Christian faith in the resurrection has met with incomprehension and opposition.<sup>†</sup> “On no point does the Christian faith encounter more opposition than on the resurrection of the body.”<sup>‡</sup> It is very commonly accepted that the life of the human person continues in a spiritual fashion after death. But how can we believe that this body, so clearly mortal, could rise to everlasting life?<sup>b</sup>

† Cf. *Acts* 17:32; *1 Cor* 15:12-13.

‡ St. AUGUSTINE, *En. in Ps.* 88, 5 (PL 37, 1134.)

b. *CEC*, n. 996.

But what does “to rise” mean?

In death, the separation of the soul from the body, the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body. God, in His almighty power, will definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls, through the power of Jesus’ Resurrection.<sup>c</sup>

c. *CEC*, n. 997.

This event will take place at the end of time. As to its ‘how’, it “exceeds our imagination and understanding; it is accessible only to faith.”<sup>d</sup> And despite that, we should await with hope this moment. The Catechism points out that if our body is meant to rise and live forever, it is because it deserves it, because it has a certain beauty. Where does this beauty come from? The Catechism continues with an evocation of the last day, on which the world will end:

d. *CEC*, n. 1000.

In expectation of that day, the believer’s body and soul already participate in the dignity of belonging to Christ. This

dignity entails the demand that he should treat with respect his own body, but also the body of every other person, especially the suffering: “The body [is meant] for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. and God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? .... You are not your own; .... So glorify God in your body.”<sup>a</sup>

§ 1 Cor 6:13-15, 19-20.

a. CEC, n. 1004.

Finally, it may be worthwhile to recall the verse concluding the Apostle’s development on the resurrection of the body:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmoveable: always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.<sup>b</sup>

b. 1 Cor 15:58.

May Our Lady of a Good Death, who is also Our Lady of a good life, glorious Virgin and loving Mother, lead her children who still are in the vale of tears towards the gates of Paradise.

Amen.

