

Resources for November (with thanks to Mary Keating, Robertstown)

In November we feel especially close to our dead friends and relations. It is right and appropriate that we mark this in our parish by any one, or more, of the following:

- A celebration of Eucharist to remember those who died this year, and/or all those who parishioners who have died.
- A Sunday evening blessing of graves at the local graveyard.
- An evening service of remembrance and prayer for those bereaved this year
- A sacred space in the church which honours those who have died (E.g. A display of mortuary cards, or family pictures etc, with a book at the front where people's names can be added. This book could be placed in front of the altar at Sunday Masses.) Personal night lights should not be lit in a sacred space as candles can't be left unattended for safety reasons.

1. Outline of a service to remember those who have died

Creating a Sacred Space. A book placed on a lectern at the entrance, allows people to add the names of those they wish to remember in prayer. Each person also receives a small candle. Paschal candle is placed in front of altar, with a taper so it can be lit. A small table beside the Paschal candle to hold small lit candles during service.

Opening Hymn: Seek ye first (©Karen Lafferty 1972 Maranatha! Music.)

Gathering Prayer: In the name of the Father

The grace and peace of God our Father, who raised Jesus from the dead be with you all.

R: And also with you.

Reflection: My friends in Christ, we come together this November day to remember and to pray.

As we gather we bring to mind the well known phrase: 'Those who die in grace, go no further from us than God. And God is very near.'

(allow a moment of silence for reflection).

We believe that the ties of friendship and affection which knit us as one throughout our lives do not unravel with death. Our Christian faith tells us that Christ has conquered death, and that when we gather in his name; Christ is present with us.

And so confident of his presence with us, we light our Paschal candle.

(one parishioner lights Paschal candle using taper, and remains there for next part of service.)

Christ light of the world, be with us as we mourn, as we remember and as we pray for each other and for our loved ones. **Amen**

Tonight, we remember those who have died, especially those who have passed away this year. We invite you now to bring to mind those you wish to ask God to bless. Remember their face, their friendship and the difference they made in your life.

In honour of their lives, we invite you to come forward now, to light a candle from the Paschal candle and to say their names aloud as you place that in front of the altar.

(soft music plays as people approach

(After candles lit; book of names is brought forward and placed in front of Paschal candle)

Almighty God, from whom all light comes, look with compassion on us who stand in darkness and the shadow of death. Grant our loved ones peace, and mercy. May your all powerful light guide them safely to that kingdom where death no longer casts a shadow.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Alleluia: Let us listen to the words of Jesus. We welcome the Gospel in song - **Sheinn Alleluia**

Gospel reading: John 8:12; 12:35. 46-47 - I am the light of the world

Jesus said; 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but you will have the light of life. The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in darkness, you do not know where you are going.

I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in darkness. I have come not to judge the world, but to save the world.

Prayers

We pray for all who mourn.

May those who mourn know the healing presence of Christ in the midst of their heartache this day. May we, as the Christian community, support all those who grieve.

Let us pray to the Lord **Lord hear our prayer**

We pray for those who have died

May all those who have died know the mercy and love of God who created them.

In Baptism we are given the pledge of eternal life. May all the baptised now be welcomed into the company of the saints and enjoy eternal peace.

Let us pray to the Lord **Lord hear our prayer**

We pray for the whole Church.

May all the baptised know their value in our faith community and know the light of Christ in their lives.

Let us pray to the Lord **Lord hear our prayer**

As one family we pray together '**Our Father ...**'

Concluding prayer

Lord God, whose days are without end and whose mercies are beyond counting,

Keep us mindful that life is short and the hour of death unknown.

Let your Spirit guide our days on earth in the ways of holiness and justice,

That we may serve you in union with the whole Church,

Sure in faith, strong in hope, perfect in love.

And when our earthly journey is ended,

Lead us rejoicing into your kingdom, where you live for ever and ever **Amen.**

Closing Hymn: Be not afraid (Robert Dufford SJ)

2. Outline of a graveyard blessing

The assembled group gathers at one point in the cemetery, moving towards their family graves at the final part of the ceremony. Candles, flowers etc will be blessed during the service, so they should be to hand. A focal point of flowers and holy water could be placed in front of a lectern or similar stand.

Opening Hymn:

*Gathering Prayer: **In the name of the Father***

The grace and peace of God our Father, who raised Jesus from the dead be with you all.

R: And also with you.

Reflection:

With death a light goes out in our midst. Our lives are darker without our loved ones. Their death can cause a darkness to descend on us.

And so, in times of darkness, we turn to the one who is the light of the world. Only Christ – the light of the world – can offer a way forward in our heartache. This is the hour to recognise that we are not alone in our pain.

Now more than ever we need to lift up the lamp of our faith and allow God into our lives.

We listen to Gods Word for us today.

Gospel reading: John 8:12; 12:35. 46-47 - I am the light of the world (see above for text)

Blessing of cemetery candles and lights:

All present invited to hold out any candles or lights that they will place on the graves.

Bless these lights Lord; May they remind us of Jesus who is the light of the world.

By your grace may we always recognise your light in our lives, and may those who have died know your healing embrace.

Blessing of flowers and momentos for graves:

All present invited to hold out any flowers or other momentos that they will place on the graves.

Bless all these gifts which we place on the graves of those we love.

We give thanks today for their lives.

May these gifts serve as reminders of their goodness and generosity to us.

*All are now invited to move in procession towards their family grave and to reverently place candles, flowers etc on the graves. As we process, we are led in the singing of the hymn: **The Lords my shepherd***

Blessing of graves:

Families now stand around their grave, as the presider sprinkles each grave with holy water and leads us in prayer. Some traditional music might be played at this point to maintain a prayerful atmosphere.

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord

And let your perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

Concluding Prayer

The Lord be with you **And also with you**

May God the Father, who created each of us in love, bless all of us gathered and all those we remember today. **Amen**

May God the Son, who wept at the grave of Lazarus, lead us, even in our time of grief, into wholeness and healing. **Amen**

May God the Spirit, who is with us in our pain, console and inspire us as we give thanks for those we love. **Amen**

May the holy and eternal Trinity grant

To the living, grace

To the departed, rest

To the world, peace

And to us, and all the faithful, life everlasting

Let us go from this place in peace, to love and serve the Lord and each other.

Amen

Concluding hymn: I am the bread of life (*Sr Suzanne Toolan SM*)

Sources:

- Circle of Care, Ed Pat O Donoghue. Veritas.
- Martin Browne, Resource Book 5, Gathering In Series.
- Fr P Marron, (PP Fintona, Tyrone), Intercom

- Various parish liturgy leaflets, (Shanagolden and Askeaton parishes, Blakestown community school, etc)