Homily All Saints Day - 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) 2026

My mum and dad and three sisters are buried in the same cemetery in Scotland. I visit their graves every time I go home but when I do go, I am somewhat reassured by the words contained in St Luke's Gospel as the women visit Jesus' tomb, 'Why seek the living amongst the dead? He is not here, he is risen!' My visits have therefore simply become a kind of mini pilgrimage to the final resting place of my family's mortal remains. I personally find my family's living presence more at Mass, in particular The Entrance Rite and The Preface/Sanctus.

Today's First Reading from Revelation describes the heavenly hosts praising and thanking God in The Heavenly Banquet. St John writes, "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'…and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen…Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

The Entrance Rite of The Mass make us part of that great hymn of praise as the priest, deacon and altar servers process into the church to a glorious and joyful entrance hymn of praise and thanksgiving. At that moment we join the heavenly hosts of angels and saints, those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith (our relatives and friends included), in one single act of praise of and thanks of the living God and The Christ who suffered and died for our redemption. Through The Holy Spirit we are united with those who endeavoured to live lives worthy of their calling. These are our family and friends who have tried, in the words of today's Gospel, to be poor in spirit, who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. In that moment I join the LIVING not the dead in the praise of God.

In The Preface of The Mass, the prayer the priest says before the Sanctus, is it not said "…and together with the angels and saints we join in one hymn of praise as we SING, 'Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts heaven and EARTH are filled with your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of The Lord, hosanna in the highest.' We are truly in the presence of the angels and saints, our deceased relatives and friends. It is in The Eucharist that I find the living, not in their empty tombs. So, when you go to Mass do not seek the dead, but encounter the living, your mum, dad, husband, wife, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends…

How stunningly beautiful and hopeful is that?

*Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.” — Luke 24:5–6 (KJV)

What does it mean?

The women came to the tomb expecting to find Jesus’ body, because they believed He was dead. But the angels reminded them that **Jesus was alive—He had risen from the dead.**

The question carries a profound spiritual message:

Stop looking for life in places of death. You cannot find lasting life, peace, or hope in what is spiritually dead.

Stop searching the past for what God is doing in the present. Sometimes we keep returning to old pain, old failures, and closed chapters, expecting them to give us something new.

Remember God's promises. The women had forgotten what Jesus had told them about His death and resurrection. The angels called them back to His words.

Recognise that the story is not over. What looked like defeat was the beginning of victory. The tomb was empty because death had not defeated Jesus.

What does this mean for us today?

Perhaps we are looking for love in relationships that continually destroy us, peace in things that leave us empty, or our identity in mistakes God has called us to move beyond.

The question invites us to examine where we are searching for life.

Why keep looking for hope in despair, purpose in emptiness, or a future in what God is calling you to leave behind?

Christianity's central message here is that Jesus is not a memory confined to a tomb. He is the risen Lord.

The empty tomb declares that death is not the final word, failure is not necessarily the end, and hopelessness does not have to define tomorrow.

The question is not merely, “Where are you looking?” but “Are you looking for life in the right place?”

Because the message of the resurrection is simple:

He is not here. He is risen.