

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

11/06/11 32 A

-- It's the first week of November when we take some time to think about those who have gone before us in death. On Tuesday and Wednesday we celebrated the feasts of All Saints and All Souls.

-- And, this weekend, we remember by name those members of our parish who died over the past year. We believe they are united with us in the Communion of Saints. Many of them, in fact, are the people who nourished our own faith.

-- So the reading we have from St. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is very appropriate. This was the first book of NT scripture written, and Christians had to deal with the fact that some of their number had died.

-- Remember, at this point in time, they thought the Lord would be coming again in their lifetimes. It seems even Paul believed that, at least at the time when this was written. They could not have possibly imagined the Church living on some twenty centuries later.

-- But, let's face it, there's something just a bit bizarre about the imagery St. Paul uses in this reading. He speaks of the survivors being caught up in the air to meet the Lord in the clouds, as if the Lord would whisk us away to paradise.

-- Indeed, beginning in the mid-19th century, a certain group of Christians have used this passage as a basis for their belief in the rapture. They believe that faithful followers of Christ will literally disappear from the face of the earth before the so-called great tribulations come about.

-- Books like Hal Lindsay's *The Late, Great Planet Earth* are based upon this belief, and they've gotten quite a following, especially in the United States.

-- But that is not what this passage from St. Paul is all about. If it were, wise people would have discovered that far before the mid-19th century.

-- This passage is here to give us hope. God has not forgotten us! God doesn't shield us from the troubles of life, like an escape hatch (as the rapture would have it). But God walks with us. And God promises his faithful people that, in the end, *we will be with the Lord always*.

-- So, as we remember our loved ones who have died recently, we can be consoled in the fact that they share God's life fully. All of those names on the sheets on the back wall testify to the hope we hold out for those who have lived faithful lives and have persevered in their faith.

-- I specifically remember my uncle who was also my godfather. He passed on to his eternal reward just two weeks ago. And I'm sure many of you have loved ones you are remembering as well.

-- As we remember them, we are inspired to persevere in living the lives we have been called to live as followers of Christ. Those we remember give us motivation to keep on keeping on when it comes to our faith lives.

-- And I'm reminded of the sign that hangs at the main entrance to Church. It reads:

Celebrate this Mass as if it were your first one.

Celebrate this Mass as if it were you only one.

Celebrate this Mass as if it were your last one.

-- Readiness for the Lord is not a matter of predicting the time of the second coming. It's a matter of daily faithfulness.

-- We would all do well to learn this lesson in regard to all that we do. For, by doing so, we have Jesus' assurance that we will all be with him in heaven.