

Death is such a mystery. Sometimes it comes way too soon, too early. It comes as a tragic injustice cutting short a life yet to be fully lived. It often calls into question all we thought we knew and believed.

Other times death comes too slowly and takes too long. That also is a tragic injustice that seems to only prolong the waiting and suffering. We wonder why but we can't make sense of it. It's not that we want our loved one to die but that we trust that sometimes there is healing and freedom in death, a new beginning. We trust that with death, life has changed, not ended. Death is such a mystery.

One of the hardest things we ever endure is watching a loved one lose connection with themselves, others, and us; not recognize faces; not recall names, stories, and experiences. But here's what I want you to know: your names and faces, your connection to and love of those we remember and honor today, your experiences and relationship with them, your shared stories, are not lost to you, nor are they lost to those souls who have gone to glory before us.

They may not have lived at the forefront of her mind or on the tip of her tongue but they have always been held secure in the treasure chest of her heart. And they still are.

We can lose a lot of things in this life: health, relationships, memories, but in our faith in Christ Jesus we are never truly lost. There is one who always remembers. God suffers no memory loss. Nothing and no one is ever lost to God – not our names, our faces, or our lives. That's true for All the Faithful Departed and it's true for you and me.

When I say that God remembers I'm not talking about simply recalling the past. Remembering is more than recall. I'm speaking about re-membering. Re hyphen membering.

God is always taking the pieces and fragments of our lives, the things we've lost along the way, the parts of ourselves that have been dis-membered, and putting them back together – making whole, making new, re-membering.

This re-membering is at the heart of all God does. It's at the heart of all we do and say here today. It's at the heart of the scriptures we just heard:

- “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end.” God re-members.
- “The Lord is good to those who wait for him.” God re-members
- The Lord is our keeper, neither slumbering nor sleeping, but keeping our life. God re-members.

- “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God.” God re-members.

We too have the power and grace to re-member. It's one of the ways God shares God's life with us. It's one of the ways we participate in God's work of re-membering. So, I want to take a moment and ask you to re-member those faithful departed whose names we offer to God today. I'm not asking you to simply recall something about them from the past but to re-member them as a present reality. Feel their touch and presence. Hear their voice. See their face. Taste the sweetness of their life and love. Re-member them.

In what ways did they make space and place for you in their lives? What words did they speak that you'll never forget? What are the things they did that made a difference and changed your life? What do you love most about them? What wisdom or advice did they give you? What are your favorite experiences with them? What's the best gift they ever gave you? In what ways did they care for you and invest in your life? What is it about the Faithful Departed for which you will be forever grateful? In what ways did they touch and impact your life? How did they show you that you were loved and important to them? What fills your heart when you re-member All the Souls who have gone to glory? What do you need from them today?

In all the things you just named, the beloved souls who have entered everlasting glory are re-membering you. We do that for one another. Re-membering prevents the past from having the final word. It keeps the present moment from closing in on itself. It opens the door to the future. I think that's why Jesus tells us, "Do this in re-membrance of me."

So let me ask you this – what do you need to do with your re-membering? What are your re-membrances asking of or calling from you? To celebrate our friends and family who have died in the past year or so? To thank them? To forgive them or ask for their forgiveness? To wish them well? To embody and live there best qualities? To tell them that you love him or her? Tell them what they mean to you? To bless them?

On days like this I think, more than anything else, we want to re-member those we love and we want to be re-membered. It's the only thing to do. Every act of re-membering, whether God's or ours, is a passage from death to life. Re-membering is why even on this day, "even at the grave we make our song: "Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia."