Celebrating on All Souls' Day

By Archbishop William E. Lori

On its face, the feast of All Souls is a pretty somber day in the life of the church. It is the day when Catholics throughout the world pray for the sanctification of the souls of those who have died so that they might enjoy life everlasting with God in Heaven, the reward for a life well lived.

When we set Nov. 2 as the date for our principal liturgical celebration of the 225th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, many (including a certain archbishop) questioned the inherent challenge of holding a Mass of thanksgiving on a day in which the church remembers the dead. We immediately felt for the homilist, who would have the daunting task of incorporating the readings of the feast of All Souls into a message appropriate for such a celebratory occasion.

Then I remembered I was the poor homilist!

But the more I thought about it, the more I thought All Souls' Day is a wholly appropriate setting for this particular celebration. After all, so many of those who laid the foundation of our archdiocese and of the church in the United States have gone before us.

Many had names familiar to us, such as Carroll, Curley, Gibbons, Lange and Seton. But so many others, people by the thousands, had names remembered today by far fewer. Their contributions, though less celebrated, are no less important to the building up of this storied archdiocese. And much of their faithful work lives on in our midst, even if we don't know its authors.

From Oakland to Havre de Grace, church buildings, schools, statues and other monuments of faith stand as living reminders of the sacrifice and steadfast faith of our forebears.

Collectively, our forebears – the well-known and not-so-well-known – braved new ground and overcame tremendous obstacles to build a church that is ours to cherish, to be proud of, and to preserve for future generations of Catholics. And just like the many other souls for whom we pray this weekend, may we ask God's blessing on them and offer up prayers of thanksgiving for their good and the gift of their lives and their faithful service.

Please join us for the special Mass Sunday, Nov. 2 at 3 p.m. at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland.

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