

GRIEVING WITH CHRISTIAN HOPE

The practice of offering prayers for the souls of our deceased has been around in the Catholic Church since the very beginning. It is based on the Bible, in the Old Testament (2Maccabees 12:41-45) and throughout the New Testament.

It is also based on the truth that for those who have died, their life continues in the spiritual dimension, in the spiritual world where they await the resurrection of the body, according to Jesus' promise: "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN ME, EVEN THOUGH THEY DIE, WILL LIVE" (John 11:25-26).

The belief in eternal life does not remove the emotional suffering and grief that we experience when someone dear to us dies. GRIEF IS A SIGN OF OUR LOVE. We grieve because we love, and we know that with the death of a loved one, life will never be the same.

Because of our faith in the resurrection and eternal life, as Christians we do not grieve the same way as those who do not believe in the resurrection.

WE GRIEVE WITH HOPE.

Some Christians of our time are no different than some Christians living in the time of the apostle Paul. Their faith formation was incomplete and lacking in the essentials; they had serious doubts about what happens after death and about the resurrection of the body and eternal life.

This is why in his letter to the Thessalonians, St. Paul explains: "We do not want you to be uninformed about those who have died, SO THAT YOU MAY NOT GRIEVE AS OTHERS DO WHO HAVE NO HOPE" (1Thess. 4:13).

He also wrote to the Corinthians "If Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, HOW CAN SOME OF YOU SAY THERE IS NO RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD? If it is so, then our preaching and our faith has been in vain!" (1Cor.15:12-14).

And he continues: "But in fact CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD..." (v.20). "The One who raised the Lord Jesus will RAISE US ALSO WITH JESUS" (2Cor.4:14).

CHRISTIAN HOPE does not fill in the hole left by the loss of a loved one, but it eases its sadness with the knowledge that death does not have the last word for us who believe in the Lord.

OUR SEPARATION BY DEATH WITH THOSE WE LOVE does not last forever, and as the preface prayer at Mass says, "LIFE IS CHANGED, NOT ENDED".