Vatican

Francis, the comic strip



Pope Francis celebrates Mass on the feast of All Souls Nov. 2 at Laurentino Cemetery in Rome. (CNS/Paul Haring)

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The Mass for the feast of All Souls is "realistic, concrete" in calling Catholics to remember the people and events of their past, to consider how they live today and to hope for eternal life with God and their loved ones who preceded them, Pope Francis said.

Celebrating an outdoor Mass Nov. 2, the feast of All Souls, in Rome's Laurentino cemetery, the pope said remembering "those who walked before us" is not only about the beloved dead, but also about remembering that each person has a history, a family and is part of something larger than themselves.

"Remembering is what strengthens a people because they feel rooted," they have an identity and history, he said. "Memory reminds us that we are not alone. We are part of a people."

With hundreds of people gathered at the windy cemetery where their loved ones are buried, Francis pointed to the tombstones and the mausoleum behind the crowd, noting that they represent "the many people who have shared part of our journey."

"It is not easy to remember," the pope said. "Often we tire at the thought of looking back, of asking 'What happened in my life, my family, my people,' but today is a day for remembering."

Obviously, the feast day is more difficult for some people, including a weeping young couple the pope met before Mass when he visited the children's section of the cemetery and the "Garden of Angels," an adjoining section for the unborn; parents who have experienced a miscarriage can opt to have their children buried there rather than having a hospital dispose of the remains.

Francis walked slowly between the small tombstones decorated with stuffed animals, pinwheels and balloons, and he left flowers on several of the graves.

But, the pope said in his homily, the feast day is also "a day of hope," and the day's second reading from the Book of Revelation "describes what awaits us: a new heaven and a new earth."

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The image of the new, heavenly Jerusalem, he said, tells believers that "beauty awaits us."

Faith gives sure "hope that we will meet again, hope that we will arrive where there is that love that created us, where love awaits us, the love of the Father."

The feast of All Souls also includes a call to follow God's path in order to live eternally with him. That path, the pope said, is outlined in the Beatitudes in St. Matthew's Gospel.

"These beatitudes — meekness, poverty in spirit, justice, mercy, pureness of heart — are lights that accompany us so that we do not take the wrong path," the pope said.

"Let us ask the Lord today," he said, "to give us the grace to never lose or hide the memory" of loved ones, the grace to continue to hope and the grace "to understand what are the lights that can accompany us on the journey so that we do not err and so we can arrive where they await us with such love."