Francis, the comic strip

Pope Francis celebrates a memorial Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Nov. 4, 2021. (C

Pope Francis celebrates a memorial Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Nov. 4, 2021. (CNS photo/Yara Nardi, pool via Reuters)

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November 4, 2021

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Maturing in the Christian life means learning to trust God and hang on to hope even when daily trials tempt one to complain, Pope Francis said.

Celebrating a memorial Mass Nov. 4 for the 17 cardinals and 191 bishops who died over the past year, the pope said, "Let us ask for the grace to look at adversity with different eyes. We ask for the strength to know how to live in the meek and trusting silence that awaits the salvation of the Lord, without complaining, without grumbling, without allowing ourselves to be saddened."

Twenty-six cardinals, 22 bishops and diplomats accredited to the Vatican joined the pope for the Mass at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter's Basilica.

The pope noted in his homily that the number of cardinals and bishops who had died over the course of the year was higher than normal. "Some of them died as a result

of COVID-19, in difficult situations that compounded their suffering," he said.

He prayed that all of them would hear the Lord say, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."

Waiting on the Lord with patience and hope, he said, is something Christians learn gradually, but it is not automatic.

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"In the face of life's difficulties and problems, it is difficult to have patience and remain serene," he said. "Irritation can set in and despondency. Thus, one can be strongly tempted by pessimism and resignation, to see everything as black, to become accustomed to mistrustful and complaining tones."

"It's bad to reach old age with a bitter heart, with a disappointed heart, with a heart critical of new things," Pope Francis said.

Instead, throughout their lives Christians must prepare for old age and death by cultivating "the art of waiting for the Lord," waiting for him "meekly, trustingly," knowing that God loves and will save them, he said. "This is how we prepare for the last and greatest trial of life, death."

"What is needed is for each of us to bear witness with our lives to our faith, which is a docile and hopeful expectation. Faith is just that: Docile and hopeful expectation," he said. Christians do not downplay suffering, "but they raise their eyes to the Lord and amid trials they trust in him and pray for those who suffer."

Christians keep their "eyes on heaven," but their hands are "always extended to earth, to serve" those in need, he said, even when they are experiencing their own time of sadness or darkness.