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Pope Francis wearing a red cape over his ususal white cassock bows his head and holds his p

Pope Francis prays after receiving Communion during a memorial Mass for Pope Benedict XVI and the cardinals and bishops who have died over the past year celebrated at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Nov. 3, 2023. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

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God seeks and loves those who are humble because it allows him to be a part of their lives, Pope Francis said.

"This is Christian humility, which is not simply one virtue among others, but the basic disposition of life: believing ourselves to be in need of God, making room for him and putting all our trust in him," the pope said in his homily Nov. 3.

The pope celebrated a memorial Mass in St. Peter's Basilica for Pope Benedict XVI and the six cardinals and 147 bishops who died over the past year. Eighteen of the bishops were from the United States and five were from Canada. Also included was Australian Cardinal George Pell, former prefect of the Vatican's Secretariat for the

Economy, who died in January in Rome at the age of 81.

Benedict, who died Dec. 31, 2022, reminded everyone "that faith is not primarily an idea to be understood or a moral precept to be followed, but a person to be encountered." Francis said. "That person is Jesus Christ, whose heart beats with love for us, whose eyes look with pity upon our suffering."

The Lord is compassionate and "is moved by death, the greatest cause of our suffering," Francis said. "How important it is to communicate that same look of compassion to all those who grieve for the death of their loved ones!"

The Lord is especially compassionate and close to orphans, widows and "strangers," those who are "most alone and forsaken, having no one else to trust but God," the pope said.

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"These are the people closest and dearest to the Lord," he said. "We cannot be close and dear to God if we ignore those who enjoy his protection and preferential love, for one day they will be the ones to welcome us to heaven."

"It is the humble, the poor in spirit, who reveal to us the 'littleness' so pleasing to the Lord, the path that leads to heaven," he said.

"God loves humility because it permits him to interact with us," he said.

Francis recalled "the very first words with which Pope Benedict described himself following his election: 'a humble laborer in the vineyard of the Lord.' "

"Indeed, Christians, especially the pope, the cardinals and the bishops, are called to be humble laborers: to serve, not to be served and to put the fruits of the Lord's vineyard before their own advantage," he said. "What a fine thing it is to renounce ourselves for the church of Jesus!"

"Let us pray for our beloved, departed brethren. Their hearts were pastoral, compassionate and humble, for the Lord was the center of their lives," he said. "In him may they find eternal peace."