



Remembering our departed loved ones at home

The month of November can be a challenging time, especially for those who are recently bereaved. The days are shorter and the darkness may seem to envelop us. It is the time when, as a faith community, we remember our loved ones who have died, and we pray for their eternal peace. It is a time too to remember that they are now part of the communion of saints in heaven and are praying with and for us, as well. This month we are invited to look forward to the eternal life Jesus Christ offers each of us.

Praying Space

- Create a little space that helps you to be more conscious of God's presence with you at all times...you might like to place a candle there to remind you of Christ being the light that darkness cannot overcome. Remember that Jesus said he would be with us until the end of time.
- Into that place, you might like to put a picture of your loved one ...perhaps a photo of a time you enjoyed with them.
- Prayer: *The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* [Philippians 4:5-7]

Actions

- Visit your local church and pray for your loved one – light a candle in their memory.
- Visit your loved one's grave or a place special to your loved one – recall special moments you shared – let those memories bring you joy now.
- Plant bulbs in their memory – the coming of new life in spring will remind you that even in darkness, God is still at work in our world, bringing healing and hope.
- Reach out to someone who is also grieving and mourning – listen to their story of the one they mourn – take comfort in the fact that others understand our sense of loss.
- Perhaps there was a charity that supported your loved one or that was close to your loved one's heart – is there a way that you can support that charity at this time?
- In many cities of the world, you may visit the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This commemorates the millions of ordinary soldiers who died in war. An altar to the Unknown

Saint would be a fitting commemoration in our churches for the millions of ordinary Christians who live lives of quiet, and often heroic sanctity.

This month, we remember our unknown saints, known only to those whose lives they touched. We are who we are because of their love and witness to their faith. They are canonised in the eyes of God; their shrine is in our hearts; and the lamp that honours them is the light of our Christian life. You might like to spend some time recalling the gifts you have received from those who have gone before us – remember those who gave you a sense of God, those who taught you to pray, those who showed you the meaning of kindness, love, honesty, goodness, gentleness, justice. We give thanks to God for the gift they were to us and reflect on how we might share their gift with others. Our prayer to them now might be

'Pray for us, hear us, be with us, and reassure us.

Remind us that we are together in God's presence.'

Reflection

Nothing
can make up for the absence
of someone we love.

And it would be wrong
to try to find a substitute.
We must simply hold out
and see it through.
That sounds very hard at first,
but, at the same time,
it is a great consolation.
For the gap, as long as it remains unfilled,
preserves the bond between us.

It is nonsense to say that
God fills the gap.
God does not fill it,
but, on the contrary,
keeps it empty,
and so helps us to keep alive
our former communion with each other
even at the cost of pain. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

Prayer in time of Bereavement

Lord, you are close to the broken-hearted.

Be with me now

in my grief and loneliness.

*Give me the courage to face my loss
and not to grieve in silence.*

*Be with me as I struggle
with many different and painful feelings.*

Ease the hurt in my heart.

Encircle me and my loved ones

in your love,

*and help me to hold tightly to you
in my pain and loss.*

*Shed the light of your love
into my darkness,*

and enable me

to trust in your resurrection.

Amen.

Source unknown