**Homily for Deceased members of the Catholic Union, Immaculate conception Church, Farm Street, 3rd November 2026.**

In these past days we have celebrated two great Feasts so dear to our Catholic faith and imagination - the Solemnity of All Saints and the Commemoration of the Holy Souls. They help us to meditate on the final destination of our earthly pilgrimage. In this spiritual atmosphere, we gather this evening, to remember and pray for the deceased members of the Catholic Union. I know, too, we all remember our own loved ones whom we have lost. We recall their faces, their personalities and they are with us once more. For at Mass, we are united with those who have gone before us.

We give thanks for all that these individuals meant to us, we remember how these members of the Catholic Union served others and lived their lives also serving the Church with fidelity and love. In the variety of their gifts, experiences and tasks, they gave an example of selfless offering, of wise and zealous dedication to the Lord. Gathered in prayer, we entrust them to His mercy, consoled that Jesus desires that they be with Him forever.

In the Gospel the Lord speaks of a banquet to which he invites all and sundry. It starts with the invited, but since they do not respond well, the generous Master seeks the poor, the blind, the lame, and since he still wants more, he instructs his followers to go to the highways and the hedgerows….to the very margins of existence. In this parable Jesus clearly presents God our Father as the one who has such boundless mercy and generosity. His one desire is that the banqueting hall be filled by as many as possible.

In the face of the reality of death, human beings in every age search for a glimmer of light that brings hope. Remembering the dead also expresses this desire. For us it is not nostalgia, or recollection filled with regret. It is not just a kind of wishful thinking that everything will be alright in the Kingdom. We respond to the great question of death with faith in God, with a gaze of firm hope founded on the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, made real for us in the Cross, and re-presented for us in the Sacrifice of the Mass. In light of the Gospel, we remember that the Father wants our loved ones to be in His banqueting hall.

So, death opens to life, to eternal life, which is not an infinite extension of the present time, but something completely new. Faith tells us that the true

immortality for which we hope and long, is not an idea, a concept, but a relationship of full communion with the living God. It is resting in His hands, in His love, and becoming in Him one with all the brothers and sisters that He has created and redeemed, with all Creation. It is finding a pale in His banqueting hall, foreshadowed for us in the Holy Eucharist. Our hope, then, lies in the love of God that shines forth from the Cross of Christ.

In the Cross, Jesus takes death on fully and transforms it. "For though he was in the form of God, Jesus di not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (2 Philippians 5: 6-7).

In the shadow of His Cross, we discover life in its fullness: life in God. We recognise what we are called to and what we must leave behind, what we must shed. This shedding, particularly of our old self is, of course, the work of every human life. It is what St Edith Stein calls the "breaking of the chains of personality". For most of us this breaking of the chains, is a work that is not complete by the time of our own death, as it was not for many of our loved ones. So, the process of change and transformation is continued in the journey we make to God following death. Here we encounter the Church's deeply consoling belief in purgatory. For the believer, time does not run out. If there is any unfinished business to prepare the soul for an eternal face to face with God, then God in His Providence allows for this.

At the same time, the person on their way through purgatory, knows that what is longed for, what is desired - eternal beatitude, being in the banqueting hall - will eventually be granted. So tinged with any sense of regret is the joy that such a soul will ultimately see God.

For us too there is consolation in the knowledge that we are still united with the ones we have lost. We can help them with our prayers and their suffering which is but the pain of deep longing and deep desire to be with God forever, this longing and this desire can be offered to God out of love for all those are still on the way. It is such longing and desire which acts as a flame to purge away any lack of love or truth and which expands the soul fully so that we can be prepared to receive God in His fullness.

It is this reality, this belief, which gives us hope this evening as we gather to pray for the repose of the souls of our beloved deceased members of the Catholic Union. Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen
Eternal Rest grant unto them Oh Lord….

+Mark O'Toole
Archbishop of Cardiff-Menevia