

## Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear Parishioners,

The clocks go back this weekend at 02.00 hrs. on Sunday morning. The short-term gratification of an extra sixty minutes in bed is outweighed by the fact that darkness comes an hour earlier on Sunday evening, and right until the winter solstice on 21 December the days will be getting shorter, and the nights longer, by a couple of minutes each day until mid-winter. Nature goes into mourning in November as the copper leaves which added such colour to a glorious autumn are shed in abundance. The advancing darkness, the barren fields, the bare trees and the cold winds are all signs of a nature going into hibernation.

November is the month in which the Church has over the centuries remembered its dead, those who have gone before us and – our faith assures us – “sleep the sleep of peace.” A new and terrible poignancy was added to this November commemoration of the dead in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the First World War ended with the armistice of 11.11.1918 – precisely one hundred years ago this coming month. In the United Kingdom, and in most countries of Europe, 11 November is the occasion on which civil society commemorates the dead of the two world wars of the twentieth century. Indeed, advanced as we are now into the new century and even though, thanks largely to the European Union, we have largely avoided war on European soil for over seventy years, we still think on 11 November of those brave men and women, in the armed forces or in civilian life, who have died as a result of conflict right up until today.

Our focus in the early days of November, however, is on the souls of the dead and especially on those who were personally known to us. We remember our parents, siblings who have died and, in some particularly sad cases, children who have predeceased us. We remember too our many friends whose lives came to an end before us, and the longer we live the more of them we have occasion to remember in the early days of November. The apostle Paul called the members of the church congregations to which he wrote “saints” – the “saints at Philippi” – but even if few of us would apply the term to the living there must be no hesitation in applying it to the dead, even if their sanctity has not been recognised officially by the Church through canonization. I always feel the All Saints is precisely the feast of those who are in heaven but who have not been canonized. We give thanks for the tremendous witness of their earthly lives, we rejoice in their current happiness (which lasts eternally!) and look to the example they set us to re-model our own lives on gospel values. Not everyone can presume to enter heaven immediately, we all feel we will need some sort of purification before we can dare enter the blinding light of God’s presence. Hence our belief in Purgatory. On 2 November we pray for those souls who await permanent admittance into the beatific vision, those in the “ante-chamber” to heaven, where their halos await them.

**Father Patrick**