



## The Parish Churches of S Philip and S Augustine and S Matthew with S Mary the Virgin Newcastle

### Homily for the All Souls (2<sup>nd</sup> November) 2025

A Requiem Mass sits as a bulwark against the encroachment of secular perspectives. It asserts that the life of this world is not all that there is to human life. Beyond the grave and the gate of death, people must continue to search for the path of life - drawn along by the power of Christ's saving Sacrifice and perhaps guided more clearly by the Light of God's power and love than is the case for many - most - in this life. As we say and sing at Easter, through His Resurrection from the dead, Christ has trampled down death and bestowed life on those in the tomb: a life lived in the lee of God's throne of glory, which calls to them.

Here, life is - as the early part of the Eucharistic Prayer puts it - changed, not taken away; here, beyond our mortal end, they are, to use the theological term - purged of those worldly accretions, which impede our progress towards union with God; here, they journey through the transition between this world and the fullness of Heaven.

For those who remain on earth, their life is also changed, but not taken away. At a mundane level, something of who they were continues to guide and reassure us: even in new situations, sometimes, what they taught us can help us navigate our way through the challenges we encounter.

More profoundly, during the Mass - and maybe at other times as well - our world and theirs interact: The eternal through which they are journeying touches ours in the divine Presence in our midst: in the Sacrament a window is, as it were, opened between the realm which we inhabit and the one where they are to be found; and we respond as we might have whilst they walked among us on earth: we pray for them.

We repeat the prayer first offered for them shortly after their earthly death, commending them to God's love and keeping, metaphorically walking with them for a moment as they search for the prize, which we believe waits for them.

Requiem Masses are moments when we step aside from the busyness of our days to remember that those whom we have known and loved, but see no longer have not been annihilated by the natural course of this earth. Rather than a fleeting thought, this is, in the changed but not taken away context of our continuing engagement with them, a pre-arranged meeting. As once we would gather with them face to face, now we so do through the mediation of Christ's Presence in our midst.

Yet, for all that this responds to our continuing affection for those whom we have known and loved, there is a more profound purpose.

As Saint Paul taught us, the Mass is the proclamation of Christ until He returns. Inherent in Him is God's work of Redemption and the hope of Heaven. As we gather to pray for those who have laid aside their mortal bodies, we make plain our conviction that, although in the eyes of the foolish they seem to have died, in fact they continue to live through the power of Christ's Sacrifice: they are just further along the path of life than are we.

Just as every Mass is offered for all the departed, so, even a Requiem Mass is also first and foremost a celebration of Christ's Resurrection: through it we articulate our hope - for ourselves, those whom we hold in enduring remembrance and all the departed.