CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL

Date:	2 November 2026
Service:	Requiem Eucharist, All Souls' Day
Preacher:	The Venerable Russell Dewhurst, Archdeacon of Hastings

Some words from St Peter's epistle: 'a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time'

"a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." If salvation were complete here and now, we would not feel the weight of grief that accompanies the remembrance of all souls. But St Peter writes of a salvation which is Ready—though not yet fully seen. Promised—but not yet fully realized.

We are not gathered here to pretend death is nothing at all. We carry both our pain and a sure and certain hope in the resurrection to eternal life. We are conscious both of our separation from those whom we love; and that together we await the last Day.

If tears come tonight, we are not denying our faith. Even the saints weep. The gift of tears, indeed, is a spiritual gift. Even Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus his friend. Grief is not incompatible with the "indescribable and glorious joy" of our faith, as St Peter describes it.

Today, we remember: names are read out. Some names raw, fresh, recently gone, perhaps before their time; other names of those who died many long years since. And we cling to memories, what made him him, or made her her. Because we love, we treasure these memories, we hold tight tight, we hate to think of them fading, of not being able to remember our loved one's voice or smile.

Our love is strong. God's love is greater still. He clings to those we love infinitely more fiercely than we cling to our memories. We love those we remember because we have seen something of goodness in them. God's love, by contrast, does not respond, it creates. God does not love people because they are good; people exist because God loves them... their goodness, Aquinas tells us, is caused by God's love. Through his love God willed them into being in the first place, and sustains them still in unchanging love, stronger than the grave.

We know that, for all those we love and see no longer, God's love causes their continuing goodness and their ongoing existence. This is the immortality of the soul. God does not withdraw his divine gaze from those he loves: not now, not ever. All that made them precious to us, all we remember today, is kept in God's eternal present, awaiting the resurrection.

This would be good news enough for people of faith. But the immortality of the soul is not the final destination. All is not yet complete. God's work is not yet complete in each of those who have died in faith whom we remember tonight; God's work is not yet complete in all creation. And so tonight is an evening not just of remembering, but of prayer.

Why do we pray "Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord." We pray not because they are unsafe, but because God's work in them is not yet finished. Why are we praying for rest eternal? What does rest mean for those who have died? In Scripture, the first and primary image of rest is the seventh day of creation, when God has finished his work. Completion, in other words. In praying "Rest eternal" we are praying that those who have died may be sped towards that completion, made ready for that salvation which is to be revealed in the last time. There, they can rest in God's eternal changelessness; there, indeed, light perpetual will shine upon them.

We and they together, living and departed, await the completion of God's work in all creation. There is a salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time. Jesus promises that "the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." The one who crossed over from death to life in His own resurrection is himself the creative word; he is the Word God will speak at the end of time. Then God's work of redemption, re-creation, and restoration will be brought to completion. His is the love that will not let them go.

Amen.