

# All Souls Day

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By Ruth Harvey

## Introduction

Who are your inspirations, your living saints in this world? If saints are those fêted by the church for their public prowess, the 'souls' are those largely forgotten in public life, but equally powerful in how they raised up the weak and gave voice to the wounded.

Who are the 'un-fêted' souls who raise their voices for the poor, for justice, for peace?

When Kofi Anan, ex-UN Secretary General, and 'Elder' died recently, Mary Robinson said of him that he "was driven by the passionate intensity of the very best convictions: that peace, justice and human rights are not only to be desired but essential values that must be fought for. His was a courageous, inspirational, warm and humane life that will echo down the generations. In our grief today, this is something for which we can give the deepest and warmest of thanks."

Kofi Annan and the Global Elders raise their voices for the weak and the powerless particularly in situations of conflict around the world. Their lives 'echo down the generations', living on through others inspired by their conviction and action. They are the saints who champion each soul, each human being in our world who is denied the basics of life, including a just peace.

Our Gospel reading for All Souls day reminds us that eternal life, being raised up 'on the last day', is an option. Our task is to live lives inspired by Jesus, and by those already raised up, those gone before us who themselves raised up the voices of the least and the smallest, sacrificing their lives for peace and hope.

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## Text

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.'

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**A Prayer for All Soul's Day**

Risen Christ, we stand before you,  
and in the presence of all now gone before us,  
in the mystery of life beyond life.

We pray for all the saints,  
and for all the souls,  
the fêted and the forgotten,  
who sit on our shoulders  
and who live on in our dreams.

We pray for the living saints,  
witnessing in their small acts of radical kindness  
the power of love, and the potential to transform lives.

We name before you here the  
souls and the saints known to us,  
who by the sacrifice of their own lives,  
have extended those of the excluded,  
the rejected, the forgotten.

We name before you here the  
souls and the saints who, now long dead,  
are a witness to the power  
of the collective voice persevering for justice for all.

We pray for all forced to live lives as if they were dead:  
for the one trapped behind the sickly-sweet-veneer of a living hell,  
caught in a cycle of masking and robing serving only to thwart life;  
for the girl enslaved by the banter of the bully, and the silencing of a bribe;  
for the boy locked in a shed of slavery, humiliated, terrorised, denied life;  
for the children caught in a deathly cycle of abuse and fear,

For those trapped in a living hell, may the principalities  
and the powers be held to account by each one of us  
with a voice and a vote.

We pray for the grieving,  
for those seeking solace in the presence  
of the once-and-always-beloved  
who tenderly remains  
as close as breathing  
as gentle as the feather-felt  
on the soft cheek.

For as we live and breathe, dear Lord,  
may we be so inspired by those who have gone before us  
that, as we have the power and the potential,  
we may speak out and speak up for all caught in a living-death.

Risen Christ, we stand before you,  
and in the presence of all now gone before us  
in the mystery of life beyond life.

Amen

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Season: Ordinary time

Themes: