

## **On the Celebration of the Feasts of All Saints & All Souls: November 1, 2020**

St. Vincent de Paul Church, Baltimore

### **A Reflection**

“I love you forever.” Those were the words my dear friend, Molly, and I shared many times during the last weeks of her life. She had terminal cancer, and knowing that our time together was limited, we ended all of our visits with those words. They were a promise and a blessing.

When my dad was dying in February, it was hard for him to speak in his last few days, but our eyes said the same: I love you forever. Each of the three readings today promises us life after death. Exactly what that will be is a mystery to me, but I believe that it is true. Even though my father died months ago, I continue to feel his love. I know that some of that is in my memory, and some is because his love shaped me in so many ways that it lives in me, but there are also times when I have the unmistakable feeling that he is continuing to share his love with me now. I do not know how that works, and I do not need to know how it works: I just know it's true.

The afterlife could be many things. The one thing I know with certainty is that love never ends, and for me, that is enough. It is more than enough: it is everything. I believe that grief moves us from the knowledge of what we have lost to the understanding of what we can never lose. There are many things that I miss now that my father has died, but I feel extremely blessed that his love remains.

Today we celebrate the mystery that life continues after our death and that love is eternal, and in doing so, we acknowledge that we are not alone. We are surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses that have gone before us, and we are held in love. In the midst of our day to day lives, it is easy to forget that—especially when the world seems to be falling apart all around us. That is why we need reminders. We do not lose our connection with the people we love when they die, and in today's world, the love they share seems especially important. So today, we say their names, light candles, and open our hearts in prayer, to honor them and to reach through the Mystery in gratitude for the love we share. May that love feed and strengthen us for the work that lies ahead.

This song is not one that is typical for All Souls/All Saints, but it describes that journey from loss to enduring presence that is at the heart of what we celebrate. I hope you enjoy it. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhRGLEdy4ug>

*Donna Dannals*