

PREFACE 1 DEAD

Day 4 Day (RHK CBS)

Ten years ago today, America and much of the rest of the world was shocked by the assassination of President Kennedy. It seemed as if time stood still for a while, as people recovered slowly from the impact of that news. And even today, the trauma of that event is still very much felt in America, where this anniversary is reawakening old speculations and thoughts of what might have been. President Kennedy, for various reasons, was the first person whose death affected people all round the world in a personal way: through him, the brotherhood of all mankind was experienced as never before in the face of one man's death. Yet, people die violently every day, somewhere: this week, students in Athens, last month in Thailand, before that in Chile. These have been the headline-makers, which to a greater or lesser extent involve the rest of us in sympathy or disgust. They have been political events, and like it or not, we are all in some sense involved in politics, simply because it's a human activity. Our reactions to such events are human reactions... but there's another dimension too, which Christian faith makes us aware of. And this is why we pray for those who have died, a prayer which is beyond politics or any of the divisions that hide the unity of mankind under God, the brotherhood of all men with and through Christ. It is, perhaps, often not an easy prayer; as making oneself a neighbour to all men isn't either, including your enemies, those you don't agree with, whom you can't stand. But as we remember the dead, in this month of November, we do so with the cross of Christ before our eyes - He too died a violent death, which He accepted for us all, to bring us all together around His cross. The anguish and shock we feel, we share with His mother and close friends, with His disciples most of whom ran away and hid. Suffering, whether in ourselves, in sympathy with others,

or in the human family, is something we can't avoid. There is of course too much unnecessary suffering in the world, unnecessary violence and death: and people dedicated to Christ should be among the first and most active to try to change this, to bring healing and reconciliation among men. But Christ did say that it was necessary that He should suffer and so enter into His glory --- and no disciple of His should be surprised to have to share His human lot, the common experience of mankind. What we should remember, in His promise of His return, is that He is coming to gather us to Himself - that the crises, upheavals, the frightening dis-orientations we've to go through, in personal lives as in social and corporate life as human beings, is a necessary prelude. But we're not alone: He has been, is there before us: that even though we may not understand it at all, His cross is the salvation/the safety of us all, as it is our cross too. The people who've understood this best are probably the martyrs - those who've given their own lives in witness to their faith & love, their conscious sharing in Christ's love for all men, their hope for the reconciliation of man with God, for the true peace of the world. As it happens, we keep today also the feast-day of a martyr, one whose name is widely known, but who is in a way the unknown martyr, a bit like the unknown heroes each country is proud of. A young Roman girl, one of many who've made a headline because they've given the most complete and ultimate proof of their love of God: greater love no man has than to lay down his life for his friends. St Cecilia is also patron of music: let's ask her help to pray and to live, while we listen to this music. St Agnus Dei from Duruffe's Requiem

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