

4. 11. 68

TAPE

Angelus.

I think we should devote our prayers and thoughts, at least at the beginning of this month of November, following All Saints Day - the Commemoration of all the faithful who have died, to remembering the dead, especially our own friends & relatives - but also to some consideration, unpleasant though it may be to human nature, of death itself. People have a funny way of trying to avoid having to think about it seriously - perhaps because, though we know in theory we all have to die, death is an unreal commonplace in modern life, as contrasted with its very stark reality for people up to the time of the first world war. What I mean is, that most people have got used to the idea of seeing death nowadays, but in a detached, unreal way. Films, newspaper pictures, television show us people dying or being killed in all sorts of gruesome ways all the time. It doesn't really matter that most of it is, as we know, make-believe. When, as recently happened, we are shown a news-reel of actual death, it hardly makes much impact on anyone's thinking about the most serious & important moment of human life - except for a TV critic lamenting that the particular item wasn't treated as a sensational scoop by the Station which showed that film. For us, for whom death is not an end but a beginning of an unimaginable life with Christ, it's an event which has happened for some of our friends and about which we should think and pray more often. Let's do so now, on the occasion of these Niddy Prayers.

PRAYERS.

For a prayer in music today, ~~today~~ I've chosen a part of one of many ^{musical} settings of the Requiem Mass for the dead. This is the Communion verse from Duruffe's Requiem: R.

Requiem: Duruffe
RS 139

The Church has always held in special honour and veneration people who have shared Christ's death in the special way of dying violently in witness to their faith, trust and love of Him - the martyrs, those who have been put to death by their fellow-men because of their refusal to deny Christ, because of their complete dedication to Him. In this year of Human Rights, perhaps it may seem unnecessarily provocative to talk about martyrs; but unfortunately, the freedom to believe in Christ and act according to that belief is something which in very many places does not exist, nor is it likely to. As long as men are men, Christ will continue to be a stumbling block for those whose ambitions are material gain, political power, control of others. Christ Himself was put to death: he promised that his followers could look forward to no better treatment - and so it has been, right down to the present time, and there's not much sign that it will ever be different. If the Church of Christ is an innocuous, ignored body in society, it's not living up to the pattern of Christ's own life which it should be witnessing to. The Church doesn't have to seek opposition - if it is making Christ's presence and message and principles present in the world, there'll be plenty of opposition of one kind

and another from men who don't or won't accept this message, these principles. The Pope wasn't being melodramatic when he mentioned this in connection with his recent encyclical on Human Life - and the opposition it aroused proves the point; whatever you may think of it, once he came to the decision that he must speak out with authority and then came out with his statement of principle, people started objecting - as others would certainly have, if a contrary statement had in fact been made. While the Church must always try to speak to contemporary men in a contemporary idiom, and make herself open to all and understandable by all, there are points which limit its accommodation to the world as it is, principles which simply are Christian and therefore at variance with the principles by which much of the world lives. The State may be one body that the Church finds itself in opposition with (remember yesterday's Gospel at Mass?), but it's not the only one. 'The King's good servant, but God's first' is the saying attributed to St Thomas More who died because of his firm holding on to a principle which he saw he couldn't deny or trifle with. The film 'A man for all seasons', recently seen here, brings this out somewhat - but it's not surprising that many people who saw the film, or the play, thought Thomas More was silly or stupid to sacrifice his life like that.