

All Souls' Day 2018

12 noon, Duddington.

### **Jam Making**

My brother, in his retirement and following the example of our mother, has turned to jam making. Like many of you in September, the cry goes up for more jam jars – any jars of whatever shape or size.

There are of course last year's jam jars but other jars also, which once held honey or mincemeat or even peanut butter are gathered. They are all greatly prized. But when the jam begins to be poured then lots of other jars are called into service: mustard jars if they are thoroughly washed and even pickle jars at a pinch, if sterilized. And so the harvest is collected and nothing is wasted.

Whatever their previous purpose, - honey, mustard or pickled onion jars - all now sit smartly on the shelf and are labelled *jam jars*! So it is with that great variety of human kind. We come packaged in every conceivable shape and size – valued as much for the nature on the inside as well as the body on the outside.

### **The Soul.**

All Souls' Day provides us with an opportunity to give thanks for the lives of those in the orbit of our love who have gone before us in life and through death. We miss both their appearance and their inner nature. They significantly shape our lives: their idiosyncrasies, their passions, tastes and emotions; their gifts and their generosity. We even miss those less noble sides to their personalities which once we found irritating, maddening or even ridiculous. Those shady characteristics are so often overlooked in that understandable mist of bereavement, nostalgia and loss. We would give anything to turn back the clock, to experience once more their love and endure their idiosyncrasies. But we are here because of that hope in all of us that their lives will not be wasted but somehow collected up and caressed by the more intimate love of God, their creator.

Whatever our origins – both divine as well as human – we acknowledge in our better moments that we are mixtures of darkness and light; of the quite brilliant and the darkly irritating. Each one of us is a unique blend of various characteristics which make up our memory, our understanding and our will. That is what philosopher's term 'The soul' and it is that amazing uniqueness in our loved ones which no-one else can replicate and which we miss so much. These are the souls which we commend to God's continued keeping today.

### **The Future.**

Back to our jam jars. Every new jar – whatever its original purpose – is now coloured by the jam which is in it. So our souls, those inner energies, that unique blend which makes us who we are shape our actions, our attitudes and our nature.

But we also carry in our memories the characteristics of our loved ones now departed. How can the best of those gifts be shared and valued today and for future generations? The photograph album, the special place and favourite sayings help us to recall the best of our memories – those godly

characteristics – which are worth passing on. How can we use those gifts of a previous generation to shape and flavour our own lives to the glory of God?

We cannot turn back the clock and neither can we tell how God cares for our loved ones but the best of those soul-gifts can still be treasured here on earth.

Life is a gift freely given in all its variety of shades and flavours. Like any generous jam-maker my brother is only too keen to give away the best of his jam. So too we can identify and pass on the best of those gifts from our departed loved ones. It will help us see through the waste of past death and contribute to our present life. To God be the glory, amen.