those who have witnessed to the faith as we seek to do each day. And we unite ourselves with the souls in Purgatory and by our remembrance, prayer and charity, we commend them to a loving God who inexorably draws them into God's holy presence.

We bring the month of November to a close with our celebration of Thanksgiving Day. We gather as a family, as a church and as a nation. We remember and give thanks to a good and gracious God for all of the blessings that are ours.

The Liturgy of Thanksgiving Day gives voice to the spirit of this time, a spirit we are called to make our own.

"God our Father, from your hand we have received generous gifts so that we might learn to share your blessings in gratitude. Accept the gifts we bring and let the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ draw us closer to all our brothers and sisters in the human family so that we may share with them all the gifts of time and eternity." Fr. John Conley, C.S.C. was ordained a priest in 1979. He received both his BA in history (1973) and his Master of Theology (1977) from the University of Notre Dame. He received a Master's in Education from Loyola University of Chicago. Fr. John served as teacher and assistant principal of Notre Dame High School in Niles, Ill, as well as principal of Bourgade Catholic High School in Phoenix, Ariz. For nine years he was Director of Vocations for the Indiana Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross. Since 1997 he has served as Rector of Siegfried Hall on the Notre Dame campus and also serves as Chaplain to the Notre Dame Hockey Team.



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## NOVEMBER 2016 VENITA AD ME OMNES

## Monthly Reflection Series

## November - A time to Remember

by Rev. John Conley, C.S.C.



I can't remember exactly when I became interested in learning about my ancestors but for the past few years I have found myself gathering bits and pieces of information from old newspapers, church and vital records to fill out the Conley family tree. I have always enjoyed reading and studying history. And I have wonderful childhood memories of sitting on the front porch with my grandparents on warm summer evenings listening again and again to their stories of memorable family moments that took place generations ago and trying to imagine what my ancestors were like. Now, I'm the storyteller to whom my own nieces and nephews go as they seek to learn about our family's story.



At some point in the process of tracing my family tree beyond and sorting through more and more ancestors, I was struck by the realization that I am not so such much descended from any individual but from a people. I am who I am because of all these people and for that I can be grateful.

This reminder that I belong to something larger is an appropriate thought particularly now as we Catholics observe the month of November. November is a special month for remembering who we are as a people and who we are as a church. On November Ist we gather to celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints - a day which honors the more obscure saints as well as the saints each of us have known. On November 2nd, we observe All Souls' Day. The Church has always encouraged prayer for the dead. We believe that it is an act of Christian charity to pray for a loved one as a way of erasing any distance between us, even the chasm which death imposes. For when we pray we place ourselves in God's presence in the company of those we love even if those persons have gone before us in death.

When I was younger I can remember describing the Church as the Church Militant, the Church Triumphant and the Church Expectant. Christ's church is a communion of saints and although some of us may be separated from each other because of death we remain united to each other in one church supported in prayer. Those Christians here on this earth make up the Church Militant. The Latin word militans can mean "to struggle; to make an effort," and we certainly know our share of struggles and efforts every day against sin so that we when die we hope to attain heaven and be members of the Church Triumphant, those who are victorious over sin. The Church Expectant, of course, embraces our departed brothers and sisters in Purgatory.

This is a time of year to remember that each of us is a unique person fashioned by a loving Creator who are but part of a larger communion of persons stretching back (and forth) in time.

As we enter into this special month of November, we begin to plan and prepare to gather as families and friends for the upcoming holidays. This is a time of year to remember that each of us is a unique person fashioned by a loving Creator who are but part of a larger communion of persons stretching back (and forth) in time. We rejoice with the saints in glory,