

**Dear Sisters and Brothers,**

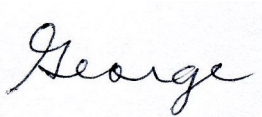
November is a good month to consider liturgy's important role in opening our minds and hearts to Christ's paschal mystery. November focuses our attention on the end of the church year, on apocalyptic "end times" and "last things," and invites us to reflect deeply about our continuing relationships with our beloved dead. They have gone before us. Our deceased family members, religious sisters and brothers, and friends have completed the journey we are on. They now know everything, and they turn to tell us, "Pay attention. Don't miss life's true purpose or neglect your own path to holiness." But their voices are not the only ones we hear.

The church at prayer in November invites us to expand the circle of our remembrance to include all the dead, especially those who have died unjustly and violently. Liturgy deepens our awareness that among the deceased who praise God with the living church is an immense throng of martyrs who gave their lives in the struggle to bring about God's beloved community of peace and justice. Their sacrifices, united with Christ's sacrifice, confront us and encourage us to offer ourselves in the same way.

This deepened and expanded prayer is the challenge of liturgy during November. Wherever the church gathers to pray, in whatever nation or circumstance, the same life-and-death mystery is there, and it is about us. The word liturgy means "the work of the people." Faith is hard work, first dealing with the hard facts of suffering, sin and death, but then holding firm to the belief that Christ has already overcome sin and death and anything that tries to separate us from the glorious future God has prepared for us all, the living and the dead.

As we conclude this liturgical year and begin another one, let us more and more become women and men of prayer, living witnesses of gospel joy and hope!

Affectionately,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

George J. Cerniglia, S.M.