All Souls
2/11/26

In our hope for others is our hope for ourselves, and what brings joy to so many funerals is the recounting of goodness that we have found in those we have now lost, and the looking forward to encountering that goodness once again, despite all their failings and sin (which are not necessarily the same). In the context of a monastic community, André Louf was able to say:

> "*He will find a place here even with his sins because he is better than his sins*." ('In the School of Contemplation', p 50)

This is not to express a confidence in fallen humanity so much as to reaffirm the goodness of God, in whom we have our goodness and being - we are better than our sins because we have been made originally good, which is a way of reaffirming our origin in God, created good in God's image. So, in a sense, we are making a claim on God's goodness when we pray for those who have gone before us, and perhaps our fond memories of them, despite their failings, are not merely a superstition – 'mustn't speak ill of the dead' - but a sign of our trust in the original goodness of God, which must necessarily prevail against sin. The difficult bit for us is to pray, in the same vein, for all those impossible figures, both in our own history and the history of humankind generally, who seem unforgivable, beyond the pale, deserving of hell, and the realisation that Jesus died for them also. The get-out clause we have is that the offer of salvation is made for them also in Christ, and it's their decision to accept or reject this. But that shouldn't stop us praying for them if our hope for others is also our hope for ourselves. It's that sort of hope we see in today's passage from Isaiah:

> "*On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food*."

A hope based for us on Christ and always then a hope based on Christ for others.

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