

*Give rest, O Christ, to your servants with your saints,
where sorrow and pain are no more,
neither sighing, but life everlasting. Amen.*

While we've been celebrating our 275th anniversary as a parish this year, there've been some historic milestones in the sports world too. The Chicago Cubs won the World's Series for the first time in 108 years. The Cleveland Cavaliers won that city's first major national championship since 1964.

During the World Series, a brick wall outside Wrigley Field in Chicago became a makeshift memorial as present-day Cubs fans used chalk to write the names of loved ones who died without ever seeing their team win a championship. "My parents are gone," said a Cubs fan named Tom Dale, "But they're here."

They're here.

I don't know if there was a similar reaction in Cleveland during the NBA finals, but I wouldn't be surprised, would you? There's something about seeing or hearing our deceased loved ones' names at special moments in our lives. I guess it's our way of sharing "life's milestones" with them. Honoring their ongoing presence in our lives.

And that's what we as Christians do -- at many points in the year, I suppose, but most formally in our observance of All Saints' . All the saints, not just those captured on stained glass but folks like us -- without halos -- who even now are members of the Communion of Saints in light. Simultaneously saints and sinners, as the great reformer Martin Luther said.

And so in a few moments in our Litany of the Saints, we'll remember our departed loved ones.

Like the folks at Wrigley Field, many of us have written out the names of those who've gone before us. Ours are written not on the wall of a baseball stadium, but the leaves for our All Saints' Tree of Remembrance.

In a few moments, as the bells toll,

walk up from your pew just as you do for communion.
Come toward the light –
the Paschal Candle first lit on Easter Eve –
reminding us of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,
which our loved ones now share in all its fullness.

Then pick a few leaves from the basket.
And no matter how shy you think you are,
no matter how hesitant you are to speak aloud into the microphone,
do it anyway.
Let us hear the names of our loved ones, our saints, said once more.

And in the end it doesn't matter if the name is spoken
at this service or the other,
or even if it's pronounced just right.
God knows exactly who it is.
God knows.

And you'll know
that *they're here*.

AMEN.