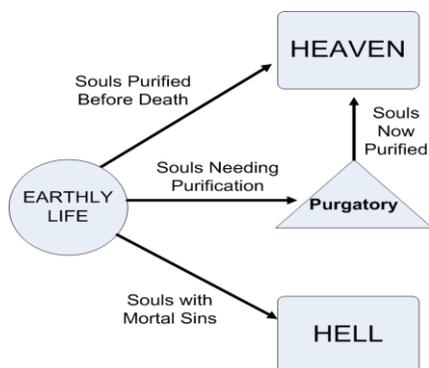


## Why pray for the Dead?

November is traditionally a month in which the Church is focused on praying for the Dead. The month begins with a celebration of the triumphant Saints of God, who, we are assured by faith, stand before the throne of God's grace, purified of sin, and therefore Holy. Immediately afterwards, however, we commemorate All Souls.

Logically, the Saints do not need our prayers since they share the fullness of Christ's victory, and the vision of God in Heaven. However, it is a doctrine of our Faith that there are others who have died and are undergoing a final purification in order to be admitted into God's Holy presence. Yet, there are still others who are lost for all eternity because they denied God in some radical way during their lifetime.

This latter group will not benefit from our prayers because of the definitive nature of their rejection of God. **The "Souls"** undergoing a final purification, however, **are still "in communion" with Christ and his Church.** They have gone forth from this life with some taint of sin still on their souls, but not as those who have totally rejected God's gift of salvation through Christ. Therefore, just as we pray for one another's intentions in this life, we continue to pray for them to come into the full light of God's presence.



**What is the basis of this belief?** Just as we infer the Holy Trinity from sacred scripture, (the word itself is not found there), we infer the notion of Purgatory or purification from them as well: The Apostles speak of purification through fire, in this life and in the life to come (1 Cor. 3:15, 1 Peter 3). The Evangelist Matthew records Jesus' teaching of divine justice in terms of imprisonment *"until you have paid the last penny."* In the Biblical Traditions of St. John, (including the Book of Revelation), we also find inferences to such a reality as Purgatory: In **1 John 5:16** a distinction is made between sin that is "deadly" and that which is "not deadly." Then, in the Book of **Revelation 21:27** it is said that "nothing unclean" shall enter the heavenly city.



This combination of scriptures strongly suggests that those who go to death with sin which is not "deadly," remain in need of a cleansing in order to enter into the holiness of God's presence. It is for these people that we pray as they pass through this purgation. We cannot know exactly for whom we are praying, since this is knowledge only God can have. Nevertheless, our deceased relatives and friends may be among them, and so we pray *"Lord, forgive them their sins, and receive them into your arms of mercy."*