



Season of Remembrance

Why Pray for the Dead?

Purgatory is much more like heaven than hell, for the souls detained there are not in Satan's clutches, but ready for God's loving embrace. They have their pains, but they also have their joys. They have their pains, because they cannot see God just yet, though they are so close to Him. Their knowledge that their sentence is terminating builds up the desire for heaven to such a pitch that the pain of deprivation is most intense. But there is a mixed feeling. They also have their joy. Pertinently St. Catherine of Genoa wrote: "Apart from the happiness of the saints in heaven, I think there is no joy comparable to that of the souls in purgatory because they know for certain they are bound for heaven!". Their state is such that it is more correct to call them "holy souls" than "poor souls".

We are all called to be Holy. If we committed even one venial sin prior to entering into Heaven, we couldn't possibly go straight there. We'd take a detour off into Purgatory, to be purified, since nothing unclean can enter into Heaven. Most of us will take that detour. We will suffer because as St. Thomas Aquinas says "The more one longs for a thing, the more painful does denial of it become. And because after this life, the desire for God, the Supreme Good, is intense in the souls of the just, the soul suffers enormously from the delay."

Here is an analogy of Purgatory; Imagine that your child accidentally breaks your elderly neighbor's window. Your child is upset because he knows that he will have to admit his mistake to the neighbor. Yet being a responsible parent, you march your child next door. The sweet elderly lady hugs your child and assures him that she completely forgives him. She isn't mad at all. But of course, there is the detail of the broken window. Windows are expensive to replace. You promise to pay the charges but your child will have to work off the cost. Your child is forgiven but he still has to clean up his mess. C.S Lewis says "Our souls demand Purgatory, don't they? Would it not break our heart if God said to us, 'It is true, my son, that your breath smells and your rags drip with mud and slime, but we are charitable here and no one will upbraid you with these things, nor draw away from you. Enter into the joy' Would we not reply, 'With submission, sir, and if there is no objection, I'd rather be cleaned first.' 'It may hurt, you know'— 'Even so, sir.'"

HOW TO HELP THE HOLY SOULS

The holy souls know in advance how long they must stay in purgatory, and they can do nothing to shorten that stay. They are at the mercy of others, of us. They are like the poor man at the football stadium—without a ticket. He sees the crowd and hears them cheer, but he cannot join until someone gives him a ticket. The holy souls are dependent on others to get them to heaven before a lengthy sentenced time or before the final day of judgement.

We, the faithful left behind can do just that, and we want to do it. The holy souls are our friends who have gone ahead into eternity. We still love them and want to do something for them. We can! —through our prayers. This is certain from the clear statement (Macc. 12:46): "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from sins."

Another thing to remember is that our prayers are never wasted. If the souls of the ones we loved so much here on earth have already passed on into heaven, we have the honor of joining them with Our Lady of Guadalupe and all the saints in heaven, in the highest act of supernatural charity. That is, praying for the souls who have no one to pray for them and are in most need of God's mercy.

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE AS INTERCESSOR FOR THE HOLY SOULS

The Blessed Virgin is Mother of Christians on earth, in Heaven, and in Purgatory. We have the marvelous certainty that Mary is ever pleading for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. Mary's participation at the foot of the Cross in the work of redemption gives her the ability to intercede for the souls in a special way. In the writings of St. Brigid, she tells about hearing Jesus say to His mother: "You are My Mother, the Mother of Mercy, and the consolation of the souls in purgatory." St. Faustina had a vision during her postulancy with the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in which her Guardian Angel took her to Purgatory. She says, "I saw Our Lady visiting the souls in Purgatory. The souls call her 'The Star of the Sea.' She brings them refreshment".

The 2020 Guadalupe Torches, in a Season of Remembrance, will illumine the parishes as a symbol of the impassioned prayer of those who participate in the Diocesan wide mission to pray for the dead in this All Souls month. The Guadalupe torch light also reminds us that our Lady of Guadalupe is present in these moments of prayer and advocating our requests to her Son Jesus, who we know will never deny her anything.

We urgently need "Apostles of Purgatory" to join with Mother Mary in remembering the Holy Souls. We need to speak of them, pray for them, and plead their cause. We have a unique opportunity to be their voices and echo their cries. God wants us to be merciful. St. Paul of the Cross says "If, during life, we have been kind to the suffering souls in purgatory, God will see that help be not denied us after death." We are all part of the Communion of Saints and our role is to intercede for each other. Not only in this life on earth, but also after we have departed. Praying for the souls of those that have gone before us goes right in step with Divine Mercy.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church also says that our prayer for the souls in purgatory is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective. (CCC 958) The Holy Souls in purgatory love us. If they loved us here on earth, they love us even more now that they are so close to the Essence of Love, so close to God. They cannot merit anything for themselves as the time of merit has passed once we die, but in love they can pray for us and they know we are praying for them. Our responsibility to our loved ones does not end because their bodies have died... it just changes. The same way we cared for them here on earth we still have to care for them on their journey home, just in a different way. Death does not sever the bonds of love and our departed loved ones need us more than ever.

St. Catharine of Bologna, said that whenever she desired any favor, she had recourse to the souls in purgatory, and was immediately heard. She even testified that by the intercession of the souls in purgatory she had obtained many graces which she had not been able to obtain by the intercession of the saints." St. John Vianney says "If it were but known how great is the power of the good souls in Purgatory with the Heart of God, and if we knew all the graces we can obtain through their intercession, they would not be so much forgotten.