



A Newsletter from the Missions Office/Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States
Catholic Diocese of Columbus, Ohio

Two November celebrations help us remember loved ones who have died

To monthly mission donors: Thank you for your support!

On behalf of His Excellency Robert Brennan, the Bishop of Columbus, and Very Rev. Father Andrew Small, OMI, the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States, I would like to thank you for your prayers, sacrifices and financial support for the missions.

“Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall keep you then more effectively than during life” .
Saint Dominic’s last words to his brothers.

The Sistine Chapel gives us a good picture of the Communion of Saints.

At the ceiling is God creating Adam in a cloud of heavenly glory. Every inch of the wall is filled with images of Father, Son, Spirit, Mary, angels, prophets, and saints, as well as people on earth and people in purgatory. Residents of hell are there too, but they are not part of this communion. In awe and enthusiasm we can sing, “O blest communion, fellowship divine!”

Every year on November 1 and 2 we celebrate All Saints and All Souls Days. In our worship, we consciously join ourselves to the

saints in heaven and the souls in purgatory. Effectively, on these two days we put into practice our faith in the communion of saints.

Why do we honor the saints in Heaven? Why should they care about earthly attention when they have all the love they need from our heavenly Father? The saints do not need us to praise them. Our devotion adds nothing to what they already possess. If we venerate them, it is for our own advantage - not theirs.

Thoughts about the saints arouse within us, a longing to be with God and to share their company. Awareness of the saints awakens within us the urge to live in the company of the patriarchs, the assembly of prophets, the college of apostles, the fellowship of martyrs, confessors and all saints, who have heard the call to absolute love and responded with enthusiastic faith.

When we remember the saints in Heaven, we are fired with another yearning: to practice the virtues that we see in their lives and to be filled with the life of Jesus just as they were. Recalling the saints reminds us of the ultimate destiny and our need for Christian living here on earth.

On the other hand, when we pay attention to the souls in purgatory on All Souls Day, we become aware that they need our loving attention and care during their time of purification.

Our prayers and good works on earth can be offered on their behalf so that we can hasten them on their journey to eternal glory. It is only natural that we especially remember our relatives and friends who have died.

However, we should also pray for those who have no one to remember them.

In addition, the Communion of Saints calls us to pause and to reflect on our own mortality. Death is a fact. It should motivate us to fill our lives with meaning and possibility, something we can best do by daily obedience to God’s will for us while we live here on earth.

Death is not the end of life, but a transition to a new life. The souls in purgatory (and those in Heaven) reminds us of this truth of faith.

The Catechism speaks of the Communion of Saints first in terms of shared spiritual gifts and then as a community on earth, in purgatory and in Heaven - all bound in grace and love by the will of the Father, the saving work of Christ and the active power of the Holy Spirit.

Simply put, the Communion of Saints is God’s one great family in Christ: those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in Heaven - all together forming one Church.

Purgatory exists

That may seem like stating the obvious, but for some Catholics, purgatory has become what pastor, author and blogger Father Dwight Longenecker called “the forgotten doctrine.”

“Many modern Catholics don’t know what purgatory is any-more,” said Father Longenecker, who blogs at [Standing On My Head](#). “They’ve bought into the idea that sin has no consequences, that everyone goes to heaven because God is too nice to send anyone anywhere else.”

The Church’s doctrine on purgatory, however, proclaims the opposite. It reminds us that sin does have consequences — eternal ones — and that while God is Love, He still honors the free choices made by men and women.

“That’s the terrifying compliment God pays the creature,” said Dr. Regis Martin, professor of theology at Franciscan University and author of [Still Point: Loss, Longing, and Love of God](#) (“He takes seriously the freedom we exercise, even if it carries us straight into hell.”)

That being said, he continued, “While hopefully few of us are so wicked that we would choose to be wretched forever without God, not many of us are so pure that we can be catapulted straight into the arms of God. Most of us are somewhere in between.”

Hence the need for purgatory — the final purification of those who die in friendship with God but who haven’t fully broken their attachment to sin or atoned for wrongs done in this life.

“When we stand before Christ the Judge, all the compromises we’ve made, all the gray areas into which our choices led us, have to be accounted for,” said

Martin. “We’ve got to square accounts with the Judge.”

Sufficient, sustaining grace

“I was given a thorn in my flesh, the messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I plead with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me: ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’” (2 Cor. 12: 7 - 9).

A thorn in the flesh – what an imagery! A sharp end of a thorn pierces the soft skin of life and lodges beneath the surface. We have reminders of the thorn in the flesh - cancer in the body, child in a rehab center, phone calls from creditors, tears in the middle of the night. “Take it away” we plead.

But what you hear is this: “My grace is sufficient for you”. Paul calls it “sustaining grace”.

Saving grace saves us from our sins. Sustaining grace meets us at our point of need and equips us with courage, wisdom, and strength.

Sustaining grace promises us not the absence of struggle - but the presence of God.

According to Paul, God has sufficient sustaining grace to meet every single challenge of our lives.

A joke a priest can tell...

I walked into a doctor’s office and the receptionist asked me what I had. I said: “Shingles”. So she wrote down my name, address, medical insurance number and told me to have a seat.

Fifteen minutes later a nurse’s aid came out and ask me what I had.

I said: “Shingles” So she wrote down my height, weight, a complete medical history and

told me to wait in the examining room.

A half hour later a nurse came and asked me what I had. I said: “Shingles”. So the nurse gave a blood test, an electrocardiogram, and told me to take off all my clothes and wait for the doctor.

An hour later the doctor came and found me sitting patiently in the nude and asked me what I had.

I said: “Shingles”. The doctor asked me : “Where?”

I said: “Outside on the truck. Where do you want me to unload them?”

Quip:

If you aim for nothing you are sure to hit it.

Quote:

What sunshine is to flowers, smiles are to humanity. -Addison

Quest:

Common sense is seeing things as they are, and doing things as they should be done.

Pope Francis’ November prayer intention

Dialogue and Reconciliation in the Near East: That a spirit of dialogue, encounter, and reconciliation emerge in the Near East, where diverse religious communities share their lives together.

***Leandro (Lany) Tapay, Director
Gina Sergio, Program Coordinator***

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