

Series on the Mass, Part 45: The Canon, Memento for the Deceased

January 10, 2021

"Remember, O Lord, your servants, who have gone before us marked with the sign of the faith...." In the first part of the Canon, we prayed for the Church Militant here on earth with the "Te igitur" and the "Memento" for the living prayers. We also invoked the Church Triumphant in heaven with the "Communicantes" prayer. Now we pray for the Church Suffering, the souls in purgatory. At this point the priest pauses to pray for the souls in particular for whom the Mass is being offered, if it was for a deceased person, but also for all those who are dear to him that have gone to their eternal reward. At a High Mass, the master of ceremonies (MC) steps back a little, as he did at the memento for the living, so he cannot hear the names that the priest might be whispering to himself.

The priest bows his head while praying for the souls of the faithful departed and this is a sign that the faithful should pray for those who are dear to them. We should not forget to remember the souls who have been most abandoned. The souls in purgatory can no longer pray for themselves and any prayers that we offer to them will be greatly appreciated. If we help release a soul from purgatory, we will have a dear friend in heaven to intercede for us while we are still in this vale of tears.

That purgatory exists is a truth of the Faith defined at the Councils of Lyon (1274), Florence (1439) and Trent (1563). The "mark of the sign of Faith" is the character of a child of God that was received at baptism. The place of refreshment, light and peace to which we pray for these souls to be released is, of course, the full beatific vision in heaven, where there will be no more suffering and where we will see God face to face. The custom of praying for the souls in purgatory can be traced back to the Old Testament in the books of the Maccabees.

Sincerely in Christ,

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