

All Souls Day and Purgatory

Jesus Christ: Yesterday, Today, and Forever ~



This Sunday, November 2, happens to be All Souls Day, a special day of the year on which the Church has historically made a point of praying and doing penance for the dead. Although I touched on purgatory in a pastor's column a month ago on the Four Last Things, I go into a deeper dive here hoping that it will help you in your faith, and inspire or challenge you to help those who cannot help themselves anymore.

We are all sinners. No one in heaven is, yet they were on earth. How does the transformation from sinner on earth to sinless in heaven happen? How are our sins atoned for after death? God has a plan for all this—purgatory—a word derived from Latin, meaning purgation, purification, or cleansing. Purgatory is the process after the death of the saved by which God's justice for our sins is satisfied through our remorse (which is very painful), and we are purified by God and prepared to enter the beatific vision of heaven. This process of purgation lasts for various sensations of "time" and intensity depending upon the state of each person's soul at death. The Catechism of the Catholic Church does a very good job of explaining what purgatory is, as do the websites www.catholicanswers.org and www.newadvent.org.

Over the past 20 years I've read much about purgatory. Three books in particular stand out to me as exceptional, as all three have people on earth either experiencing purgatory through a grace of God, or souls from purgatory reaching out to them. Here they are from beginner to advanced (if you read any of them, do not start with number three).

1. *The Mist of Mercy* – by Anne a Lay Apostle.
2. *Visions of Purgatory* – by an anonymous author. Scepter Press
3. *Get Us Out of Here!!* – by Maria Simma and Nicky Eltz.

Know too, that the holy souls in purgatory (holy because they are no longer sinners) can pray for us too, and they appreciate the opportunity to do so. They are not only aware of our prayers and sacrifices for them; they are also aware of our requests for their help through their prayers. This intercession of theirs for us is very powerful for us. There is a caveat though.

The holy souls of purgatory have to be asked by name to pray for us, and for those for whom we wish them to intercede. So, pray and do penance for your deceased loved ones, and those beyond your family who have no one to intercede for them in death; and ask deceased family members to pray for you or your holy cause. With the assistance of the Church in Heaven (Triumphant) as well as the Church on earth (Militant), let's help all those who are in purgatory (Church Suffering) atone for their sins, glorify God, and move along into the beatific vision of heaven.

I have attached a short story below about a priest in purgatory. After that story, I finish this pastor's column with an abridged chapter at the end of the book cited above, *Visions of Purgatory*.

May Almighty God Bless You,

Fr. Thomas Nathe

Exorcist Diary – Priest in Purgatory

<https://www.catholicexorcism.org/post/exorcist-diary-360-a-priest-in-purgatory>

By Msgr. Stephen Rossetti

"There are souls in purgatory who, at times by God's providence, contact us needing our prayers. There are even cases of priests in purgatory asking for our prayers. The following is a case in point...

One of our exorcists shared with me the following experience:

I was an associate pastor. The pastor told me that, before I arrived, a parish in the diocese was experiencing a strange phenomenon. Every morning when the sacristan came to prepare for Mass, he found the altar set up for Mass with the candles burning. He asked if anyone had prepared the altar for Mass, and no one admitted to it. The parish priest denied it, and the sacristan was the only one with access to the Church in the morning, aside from the pastor. Eventually, the bishop was notified because it was happening daily without any possible explanation. It was discovered that the previous parish priest, who had died, had a stash of Mass intentions for the dead that were never celebrated. The bishop asked the priests in his diocese to celebrate Masses for the dead for (I think one month) all the missing Masses. Once the month had passed, the altar was found normal again.

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I find this especially interesting since, some years ago, a priest-friend told me a similar story. Years ago, after a priest-pastor died, the new pastor said there were a number of unexplained, apparently preternatural, phenomena in the rectory. After some discernment and searching, they found a drawerful of unsaid Mass intentions. Again, the pastor said all the Mass intentions and the preternatural phenomenon ceased.

We all have a call to pray for deceased souls, especially passed loved ones. For example, Padre Pio said that the majority of souls that visited him during his life were souls in purgatory needing his intercession. This is a startling statement given the countless living people that made their way to San Giovanni Rotondo seeking the saint's intercession during his lifetime.

These experiences show the importance of our prayers for the dead, and offering Masses for them. I think we priests have a special ministry to pray for our deceased brother priests. Moreover, priests must diligently fulfill their duties including ensuring Mass intentions received are fulfilled."

Visions of Purgatory: A Private Revelation. By Scepter Press. Pages 183-186.

From its origins, the Church, through its prayers and suffrages for the deceased, has clearly shown its faith in purgatory. Later, with wise cautiousness, it defined its doctrine in the Second Council of Lyon (1274), the Council of Florence (1438), and the Council of Trent (Twenty-Fifth Session, December 1563). Let us recall the broad lines of this doctrine, which is so luminous and consoling:

1. In purgatory, the souls of the just pay their debt to Divine justice, suffering purifying punishment. We point out, in the first place, that the purification of purgatory is not focused on the fault, but on its punishment. If God's pardon granted to the repentant soul, erases the fault, it does not make the punishment disappear, then this is the means that man has to repair the disorder that his sins have occasioned. Here on earth the soul suffers punishment under the form of a voluntary and meritorious penance. In the other world it is under the form of an obligatory purification.
2. According to the doctrine of the church, there are two classes of punishments in purgatory. The principal one is the temporary privation of God, accompanied by unheard of suffering. The soul burns with desire to see God, but it cannot attain him, because it did not expiate its sins sufficiently before death. In purgatory there are other pains, called "pains of the senses," but the Church has never made a pronouncement about the exact nature of these pains. The object is to repair the disordered attachment to creatures [and things].
3. The pains of purgatory are not the same for all souls. They vary in duration and intensity according to the culpability of each one. The souls receive serenely the expiratory sufferings that God inflicts upon them. They do not seek anything except the glory of God, and they desire ardently to complete the one who is, from now on, their whole hope. In purgatory there reigns a great peace and joy, for the souls there have total certainty of their salvation, and they see their pain solely as a means of glorifying the sanctity of God and thus arriving at the glorious vision. The sufferings of purgatory are no longer meritorious, nor do they increase charity in the soul of the one who has suffering.
4. The church on Earth can help through its suffrages the Church "which is being cleansed beyond the doors of death" (Cardinal Journet); they are united by one and the same Love in Christ. This Union creates the possibility of a communication of merits. The souls in purgatory, incapable of procuring for themselves the slightest alleviation, can thus take advantage of the works of expiation that the living carry out in their favor with the intention of paying their debts. These works of satisfaction have the value of expiation for the punishment of the Holy souls, and it is God who regulates the application of suffrages for the dead according to his wisdom.
5. The Mass is the most efficacious help that the Church on Earth (the Church militant) can provide to the souls being purified. Is not the Mass, in fact, the sacrifice offered by Jesus on the cross for the salvation of the world? Alms, prayers, and all forms of sacrifice are also means to help "our good friends who are suffering" (St. Margaret Mary). Be sure to offer Masses that you attend for souls in purgatory.
6. Purgatory will terminate in the final judgment. All souls destined to glory will have satisfied by then, in one form or another, divine justice.
7. For the souls of the just, purgatory is the state and place of suffering in which punishments are expiated that have not been satisfied in this world (i.e., mortal and venial sins that are already forgiven). The venial sins are forgiven in terms of guilt, if they have not been forgiven during one's lifetime.