

Wis 3:1-9; Ps 22; Rom 5:17-21; Mark 15:33-39

We have two opportunities in this life which must not be wasted. Both have been given to us by God through Jesus Christ. The first is to say sorry for our sins, to make amends as best we can, and resolve to change - with God's help - the way we live. This is found most perfectly expressed in taking up the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Confession as often as we can. The second is to pray for the faithful departed: Christian souls who are in Purgatory now, who are on the threshold of heaven but still being purified so that they can see God the Father. We do this because we love them – we love them because Christ has loved us - and we want them to be rejoicing in the full presence of God's glory. Together, to borrow a phrase from St Ambrose, Confession and prayers for the dead form the opportunity to live in the 'daily familiarity with death.'¹ A daily familiarity with death makes us humble before the God who made us and gives us a determination to live good lives daily in God's presence.

One of God's great gifts of love to us is the ability to intercede for someone else, to bring before God our love for them and, that while accepting his Justice, to ask for His mercy. Just as Christ intercedes for us before God the Father for the forgiveness of our sins; just as we can ask for the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Saints; so too we can plead for others and especially the Christian dead. We are to be Christ-like in our love for them. So we bring His own sacrifice before Him and bind ourselves to it. This is what it means to be in the Communion of Saints. This is why we offer Masses for others,

especially for the dead, just like St Monica asked her son St. Augustine to do for her when she died: 'Pray for me before the altar of God.'

Pray often and ardently for the souls of the Faithful Departed – the Holy Souls - that they may soon be perfectly acceptable to God, and so that through this act of mercy, we may be too.

¹ St Ambrose on the death of his brother in the Divine Office for 2 Nov.