

LITURGICAL LIVING

Series 10: Oct. 29– Nov. 4

What's the Deal with All Souls' Day? Indulgences?

All Souls' Day is also known as the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. Additionally, November is the month of the Holy Souls in Purgatory. As Christians, we believe that the dead are not gone. Their bodies may have died, but their souls live on forever. At the end of time Jesus will return and give final judgment to every soul that has ever lived.



But those who die before Jesus' return will face what is called particular judgment which has three possible outcomes.

1. People who have perfected their love for God go straight to heaven.
2. People who have rejected God's love through mortal sin and died without repenting, are condemned to eternity in complete separation from God (hell).
3. Purgatory. This outcome is a result of God's mercy. Some souls have not loved God perfectly but still love God. They need a time of "purification" to achieve the holiness necessary to enter heaven.

The existence of purgatory is a dogmatic teaching of the Catholic Church. The souls in purgatory are called "poor" because they are no longer capable of praying, offering sacrifices, or obtaining indulgences for themselves. They completely rely on US to pray for them, to offer sacrifices for them and to obtain indulgences on their behalf. This helps them to ease their suffering and advance their purification so they can join the saints in heaven and be with God for all of eternity! Wow! I don't know about you but that is quite convicting to me. My prayers, my actions, can help someone enter into the bliss of heaven. And it is known to them when they reach heaven! I cannot think of a reason why to not be more intentional about this in my prayer routine. Praying for our deceased family, loved ones, friends, neighbors or souls who have no one to pray for them is an act of charity that pleases God. We have a book in the Narthex in St. Peter where you can list any faithful departed that you wish to pray for this All Souls' Day. Let's fill our book up this year! It is also good to make time for you and your family to go to a cemetery and pray for the faithful departed. More on this later.

Did you know that praying for the dead is a Spiritual Work of Mercy? [The Spiritual Works of Mercy](#) have long been a part of the Christian tradition, appearing in the works of theologians and spiritual writers throughout history. Just as Jesus attended to the spiritual well-being of those he ministered to, these Spiritual Works of Mercy guide us to "help our neighbor in their spiritual needs."

Praying for the dead is something that can be done year round but the Church offers special indulgences during the month of November. But what is an indulgence? Admittedly, I am not super familiar with indulgences so this was a good learning week for me! Indulgences are an ancient practice of the Catholic faith that are making a comeback! Because they are so powerful they have been abused and there is a lot of confusion and misinformation about them. Here is a short explanation and misconception-busting article from [Catholic Answers](#). Basically, an indulgence is a way that the Church can exempt a member of the faithful from some or all of the temporal punishment due to his or her sins, after he or she has been forgiven of the eternal consequences of sin through the sacrifice of Jesus. The Church has "[The Manual of Indulgences](#)" promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1968, but as mentioned before, this is a practice that dates way back. The Council of Trent (started 1545!) described that the practices of indulgences must be preserved!

LITURGICAL LIVING

Series 10: Oct. 29-Nov. 30

Indulgences Continued

There are actually many ways to obtain a plenary or partial indulgence. You can find that information here! A good general rule is that you are a baptized Catholic that has the intention of obtaining the indulgence and is free from attachment from sin. You must perform the required action (this can vary), receive Holy Communion, make a sacramental confession (on the day of the action preferred but up to three weeks) and pray for the intentions of the Holy Father (this is usually one Our Father and one Hail Mary). They are an important tool that the Church uses to help us obtain God's mercy more fully and to help us have contrition for our sins.



[Indulgences for the dead](#) during the first week of November!

- On All Souls' Day if you visit a church and pray the Our Father and the Creed along with the indulgence requirements listed above. This will gain a plenary indulgence for whom you are praying for.
- Visiting a cemetery between November 1-8 to pray for the dead. You can do this any time of the year for a partial indulgence but the Church grants plenary indulgences for this week. You can obtain one on each of those days.
- Pray for a specific person with the prayer for eternal rest: *Eternal rest grant them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace, Amen.* Each time you say it, it is a partial indulgence. This can easily be done by adding it after Grace before meals during this November.

All Souls' Day is an important day for us to remember our departed loved ones and to pray for all of the faithful departed. Taking time to remember and pray for our loved ones is important. Light a candle and pray for them that they may be with God for all eternity in heaven!

Halloween (October 31), All Saints' (November 1) and All Souls' (November 2)

Halloween, All Saints and All Souls' Day has been called the "Triduum of Autumn." Three holy days commemorating the dead that have deep Catholic roots. These "Days of the Dead" are important for us Catholics for a variety of reasons. First, they help to remind us of our mortality. "Memento Mori" is a phrase that literally means remember you will die. We will all die eventually and it is good to live our life with this reality in our minds to guide our actions. To make the most of the life that God has granted us and to prepare for our death. To be ready to meet Jesus! But, death is not the end because we know that Jesus has defeated sin and death! Additionally, it helps to remind us to pray for our dead. Remember that our prayers through God's mercy can help "poor" souls reach heaven from purgatory! No prayer is ever wasted!