

Reflection for Thursday 4th November 2020

Throughout the year the Church wants to focus our minds on certain important aspects of the faith. So, during November we think about and pray for the Holy Souls, those people who have died and who need our prayers so that they will reach Heaven as soon as possible. As Catholics we believe in Heaven, Hell and Purgatory. We all desire and hope to reach Heaven where we will be in the presence of God and enjoy eternal happiness. We do all we can to avoid Hell which is an eternity of torment and suffering where we are deprived of the joy of God's presence. Purgatory is not so much a place but a cleansing of sin to make us worthy of a place in Heaven. In this state of preparation for Heaven souls are totally dependent on the prayers of others and in particular on Masses being offered on their behalf. This is why you might hear about people having Masses said for the suffering souls in purgatory generally or for a particular person who has died.

The holy sacrifice of the Mass is the chief source of grace for the holy souls. This is why Catholics will have masses said for their loved ones who have died not just in November but throughout the year. So, the most powerful means to release a soul from purgatory is through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. You'll find more details in the Catechism. It says it in paragraph 1032: "From the beginning, the Church has honoured the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God."

After the Mass, the next most powerful way to help the souls is the Rosary, the most powerful Marian prayer on earth — in her approved apparitions, Mary tells us to pray the Rosary for peace in the world, in our hearts and in our families. Another good prayer for November as well as for the season of Lent is the 'Stations of the Cross'. Both the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross are prayers that carry an indulgence. This means they are especially powerful in helping souls to leave Purgatory and reach Heaven. But you have to be in the state

of grace yourself to gain an indulgence and help the souls in purgatory.

When we pray for the souls, we've got to remember we're giving them paradise, the face of God, when we get them out sooner from purgatory. Our prayers are shortening this horrible suffering of being without God. They then are able show us their gratitude in the same proportion to their joy by praying for us when they reach Heaven.

Learn this prayer by heart and say it every day for the Holy Souls:

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them and may they rest in peace. Amen

The Church teaches that the Holy Souls cannot help themselves, but that we can gain indulgences, have Masses said, offer our sacrifices, prayers, works of mercy and almsgiving for their release from Purgatory. We can, and indeed should, help the Holy Souls at all times, but All Souls Day and the whole of the month of November are especially dedicated to them.

Saint John Vianney wrote: "If we knew what we may obtain from God by the intercession of the Poor Souls, they would not be so much abandoned. Let us pray a great deal for them; they will pray for us."

Let us try out of love, to gain these indulgences?

Requirements for Obtaining a Plenary Indulgence on All Souls Day (2 November and during the week following)

- Visit a church and pray for souls in Purgatory
- Say one "Our Father" and the "Apostles Creed" in the visit to the church
- Say one "Our Father" and one "Hail Mary" for the Holy Father's intentions.
- Worthily receive Holy Communion (ideally on the same day if you can get to Mass)
- Make a sacramental confession within 20 days of All Souls Day

You can acquire one plenary indulgence a day.

A partial indulgence can be obtained by visiting a cemetery and praying for the departed. You can gain a plenary indulgence **visiting a cemetery each day between 1 November and 8 November**. These indulgences are applicable only to the Souls in Purgatory.

God bless you and your family,

Deacon Kevin