

Tridentine Community News

November 18, 2007

Praying for the Dead

During the month of November, Holy Mother Church asks us to pray for the souls of the faithful departed. In our modern age, the recently deceased are often presumed to have already attained Heaven. Ironically, it is right after a person has passed away that he or she is most in need of our prayers, while the soul is in judgment.

We who are still living on earth, despite our various challenges, do possess some important abilities: 1) We can earn merits for ourselves by prayer, sacrifice, and good works; 2) We can pray for ourselves; 3) We can go to Confession and have our sins forgiven; 4) We can pray for the dead; 5) We can earn Indulgences, or remission from temporal punishment, for ourselves as well as for the departed souls.

A soul goes to Purgatory to satisfy temporal punishment for sin and to be purified before being admitted into Heaven. While in Purgatory, a soul cannot pray or earn merits for itself. It cannot earn Indulgences for itself. That time has passed. It is assured of going to Heaven, yet it experiences great pain and longing for Heaven while undergoing the necessary purification.

We on earth therefore have both a privilege and a duty to pray for the faithful departed. We must not be so presumptuous to believe that our family and friends go straight to Heaven. Quite the contrary, we should assume that they do not. Who knows what mercy God may show to a soul for whom prayers, sacrifices, Masses, and Indulgences are being offered. Let us also remember that those often referred to as "Poor Souls" or "Holy Souls" may not just be unnamed homeless or forgotten people. They almost certainly include family and friends for whom prayers are not being offered.

Consider this casualty of our age: A beloved mother passes away. Her Catholic funeral is attended by many; the Mass celebrates the many accomplishments during her life. Those present at the funeral practice their faith and may also regularly attend Mass on All Souls Day. However, if none of them offers prayers, sacrifices, Masses, or Indulgences for this beloved woman, she, despite her many friends and family members, may be a Poor Soul, languishing in Purgatory for lack of direct prayer. She may ultimately be aided out of Purgatory by prayers, Masses, and Indulgences offered by people who were unknown to her on earth.

If a soul for whom we pray has already attained Heaven, our prayers will be applied to another soul in need of them. It is therefore an act of charity to pray not only for the souls of those close to us, but also for those souls for whom few if any other prayers are being offered. Thus derives the meritorious custom of praying for the "Poor Souls in Purgatory."

All Souls Day, of course, is the Church's feast day for the departed. The theme continues throughout the month of November. Notice, for example, that in these final Sundays of the Church Year, the *De Profundis* ("From the depths I have cried out

to Thee, O Lord") is repeatedly used as the Alleluia verse and the Offertory Antiphon, to remind us of our November duty.

Besides our own private prayers and sacrifices, the Church offers us two especially efficacious forms of prayer for the dead:

- Offer a Partial or Plenary Indulgence to be applied to the Souls in Purgatory. A Plenary Indulgence, in particular, is a powerful way to help a soul out of Purgatory, as it provides for total remission of temporal punishment due for sin.
- Have a Mass offered for specific deceased person(s), or for the non-specific Poor Souls In Purgatory. This is easy to request via the Mass Intention Request forms available at the missal table.

The Tridentine Missal includes numerous forms of Masses for the Dead, among them: 1) The standard Requiem Mass for funerals; 2) A Mass to be said on the 3rd, 7th, and 30th day after burial; 3) A Mass to be said on the (annual) anniversary day of death or burial; 4) The three Masses of All Souls Day; 5) A "Daily Mass for the Dead", along with special versions of it for certain deceased persons (a man, a woman, a group of people, a priest, a bishop, all buried in a cemetery, etc.). A Mass for the Dead may be celebrated as a Votive Mass (at the priest's option) on any day of the year on which a feast is not scheduled. In the Tridentine Calendar, such days are termed "Ferias". The general rule for a Feria is that either the previous Sunday's Mass is celebrated, or one of the many Votive Masses in the Missal may be chosen.

Mass Intentions

St. Josaphat is now accepting Mass Intentions for the new Monday evening Tridentine Mass. Following old custom, on Ferial Days you may request that this be a Mass for the Dead.



Such a Mass will be said using black vestments, and is essentially a mini-Requiem Mass. You may also request the use of a Catafalque during this Mass. If so, as on All Souls Day, the "Absolution", or prayers at the

Catafalque, will be said after Mass. A Mass Intention offering of \$20 (\$10 over the usual \$10 stipend) is requested if you wish a Catafalque to be set up. Upcoming Monday Ferial days in 2007 and 2008 include December 10, 17; and January 7.

Charity consists not only in helping our fellow man here on earth, but also in assisting those who cannot help themselves in Purgatory. Some day you may in their position, longing for intercessions from the living. That sobering thought alone should move us not to forget our responsibility to our departed brethren while we still have the ability to do good.