

**Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's
The Church's Year
Instruction On The Feast Of All Souls**

November 2



What is All Souls' Day?

It is the day set apart by the Catholic Church for the special devout commemoration of all those souls who have departed this life in the grace and friendship of God, for whom we pray, that they may soon be released by God from the prison of purgatory.

What is purgatory?

Purgatory is a middle state of souls, suffering for a time on account of their sins. St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: And the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built there upon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire. (i. Cor. in. 13-15.) "And when St. Paul," says St. Ambrose (Serm. 20. in Ps. cxviii.) "says, yet so as by fire, he shows that such a man indeed becomes happy, having suffered the punishment of fire, but not, like the wicked, continually tormented in eternal fire." St. Paul's words, then, can only be understood to refer to the fire of purification, as the infallible Church has always explained them.

Are the heretics right in denying that there is such a place of purification as purgatory?

By no means, for by such denial they oppose the holy Scriptures, tradition and reason. The holy Scriptures teach that there is a purgatory: it is related in the Second Book of Machabees, that Judas Machabeus sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem, to be used in the temple, to obtain prayers for those who fell in battle, for he believed it a good and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins. But for what dead shall we pray? Those in heaven do not require our prayers; to those in hell they are of no avail; we must then pray for those who are in the place of purification. Christ speaks of a prison in the future life, from which no man comes out until he has paid the last farthing. (Matt. v. 25, 26.) This prison cannot be hell, because from hell there is never any release; it must be then a place of purification. Again Christ speaks of sin which shall be forgiven neither in this world nor in the next, (Matt. xii. 32.) from which it follows that there is a remittance of some sins in the next world; but this can be neither in heaven nor in hell, consequently in purgatory. As the

council of Trent says, (Sess. 6. c. 30.) the Church has always taught, according to the old tradition of the Fathers, in all her councils, that there is a purgatory, and every century gives proofs of the continual belief of all true Christians in a purgatory. Finally, man's unblinded reason must accept a purgatory; for how many depart this earth before having accomplished the great work of their own purification? They cannot enter heaven, for St. John tells us: There shall not enter into it any thing defiled. (Apoc. xxi. 27.) The simple separation of the soul from the body does not make it pure, yet God cannot reject it as He does the soul of the hardened sinner in hell; there must then be a middle place, a purgatory, where those who have departed not free from stain, must be purified. See how the doctrine of the Church, reason and the holy Scriptures all agree, and do not let yourself be led away by false arguments from those who not only believe in no purgatory, but even in no hell, so that they may sin with so much more impunity.

For what, how much, and for how long must -we suffer in purgatory?

Concerning this the Church has made no decision, though much has been written by the Fathers of the Church on the subject. Concerning the severity of the punishment in purgatory, St. Augustine writes: "This fire is more painful than any that man can suffer in this life." This should urge us to continual sanctification and atonement, so that we may escape the fearful judgment of God.

How can -we aid the suffering souls in purgatory?

St. Augustine writes: "It is not to be doubted that we can aid the souls of the departed by the prayers of the Church, by the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and by the alms which we offer for them." The Church has always taught-that prayers for the faithful departed are useful and good, and she has always offered Masses for them.

What should urge us to aid the suffering souls in purgatory?

1. The consideration of the belief of the Church in the communion of saints, by which all the members of the Church upon earth, in heaven, and in purgatory are united by the bonds of love, like the members of one body, and as the healthy members of a body sympathize with the suffering members, seeking to aid them, so should we assist our suffering brethren in purgatory. **2.** The remembrance that it is God's will that we should practice charity towards one another, and that fearful judgments are threatened those who show no charity to a brother in need, together with the recollection, of God's love which desires that all men should be happy in heaven. **3.** We should be urged to it by love for ourselves, for if we should be condemned to the pains of purification, we would assuredly desire our living brethren to pray for us and perform good works for our sake, while the souls who have found redemption, perhaps through our prayers, will not fail to reward us by interceding for us.

Can we aid the souls in purgatory by gaining indulgences?

Yes, for indulgences, (as explained in the Instruction on the eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost,) are a complete or a partial remittance of the temporal punishment due to sin, bestowed by the Church to penitent sinners from the treasury of the merits of Christ and His

saints. If we gain such a remittance, we can apply it to the souls in purgatory. Such an indulgence, however, can be transferred only to one soul.

For which souls should we pray?

We should, on this day especially, offer prayers and good works for all the faithful departed, but particularly for our parents, relations, friends and benefactors; for those who are most acceptable to God; for those who have suffered the longest, or who have the longest yet to suffer; for those who are most painfully tormented; for those who are the most forsaken; for those who are nearest redemption ; for those who are suffering on our account; for those who hope in our prayers; for those who during life have injured us, or been injured by us; and for our spiritual brethren.

When and by what means was this yearly commemoration of the departed introduced into the Church?

The precise time of its introduction is not known. Tertullian (A. D. 160) writes that the early Christians held a yearly commemoration of the faithful departed. Towards the end of the 10th century St. Odilo, Abbot of the Benedictines at Cluny, directed that the yearly commemoration of the faithful departed should be observed on the 2nd of November with prayers, alms and the Sacrifice of the Mass, which time and manner of celebration spread through various dioceses, and was officially confirmed by Pope John XIX. This day was appointed that, having the day previously rejoiced at the glory of the saints in heaven, we might on this day most properly pray for those who are yet doing penance for their sins and sigh in purgatory for their redemption.

The Introit of this day's Mass as of all Masses for the dead reads: Eternal rest give to them, O Lord: and let perpetual light shine upon them. A hymn, O God, becometh Thee in Sion; and a vow shall be paid to Thee in Jerusalem: hear my prayer; all flesh shall come to Thee. Eternal rest give to them, O Lord: and let perpetual light shine upon them.

COLLECT O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, grant to the souls of Thy servants departed the remission of all their sins: that through pious supplications they may obtain the pardon which they have always desired. ! Who, livest &c.

EPISTLE (i. Cor. xv. 51-57.) BRETHREN, behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall all indeed rise again, but we shall not all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible: and , we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? Now the sting of death is sin: and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL (John v. 25-29.) At that time, Jesus said to the multitudes of the Jews: Amen, amen, I say unto you, that the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given to the Son also to have life in himself: and he hath given him power to do judgment, because he is

the Son of man. Wonder not at this, for the hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life: but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.

The Epistle and Gospel of this day speak of the resurrection of all men and of the judgment, when every one according as he has lived, sinful and impenitent, or pure and innocent, will receive an eternally miserable or an eternally happy life. Purgatory will then end and there will be only heaven and hell. It remains with us to choose which of these two we shall possess.

At the Offertory of the Mass the priest prays:

O Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory, deliver the souls of all the faithful departed from the pains of hell and from the deep pit: deliver them from the mouth of the lion, that hell may not swallow them up, and they may not fall into darkness: but may the holy standard-bearer, Michael, introduce them to the holy light: which Thou didst promise of old to Abraham and to his seed. We offer to Thee, O Lord, sacrifices and prayers: do Thou receive them in behalf of those souls whom we commemorate this day. Grant them, O Lord, to pass from death to that life which Thou didst promise of old to Abraham and to his seed.

We may profitably and devoutly repeat the following as often as we pass a graveyard.

V. From the gates of hell,

R. Deliver their souls, O Lord.

V. Eternal rest give to them, O Lord,

R. And let perpetual light shine upon them.

V. May they rest in peace,

R. Amen.

V. May the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace,

R. Amen.