

**A MONTH
WITH OUR FRIENDS
THE SOULS IN PURGATORY**



*Knowing them
Praying to them
Delivering them*



Jather ljerlioux - 1880

A Month with Our Friends the Souls in Purgatory
A Plenary Indulgence can be gained for a Holy Soul in Purgatory by your spending at least one half hour before Christ exposed in the Blessed Sacrament

The Vatican "Book of Indulgences" states:

"You must have a confession within 8 days and be in a state of grace

***You must receive Holy Communion on the day of the Indulgence**

***You must say two prayers for the Holy Father's intentions**

**" You must be aware of and ask for the Indulgence
, Only one Plenary Indulgence per day**

Note: These readings and prayers conform to the doctrine of the Catholic Church - in accordance with the texts of the Second Vatican Council - of the Church's dogmatic constitution "Lumen Gentium" (49 to 100)

and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1030 to 1032 -1471 -1472).

The Council reaffirms the doctrine of the preceding Councils on the communion of life with our brothers and sisters who are experiencing purification following their death. (P.913)

Revised and edited by Aidan Byrne (2019)

Why this booklet on the Souls in Purgatory?

Everything began by a tragic accident. A young woman, mother of four, had died in an automobile accident.

Her sister cried her loss. She thought of the emptiness her sister had left. But being a fervent Christian, she thought especially about her soul...!

Yes, where is her soul?

In Paradise? That was difficult to imagine ...

In Hell? No, she was too generous ...

In Purgatory then ... ?

We don't talk about Purgatory anymore ... Does it really exist...?

If so, what goes on in that place?

That is how, going from church to libraries, she sought the answer. She finally found a small booklet on Purgatory .. in a friend's attic!

That book, written by Father Berlioux, was printed in 1880 but had never been opened. The pages had not even been cut! Yet, though it was a little yellowed with age, its reading so pleased the reader that she decided to seek a publishing house that would print the booklet. "Impossible", she was told with a wry smile, "Purgatory does not sell very well these days".

She contacted the "Etoile Notre Dame" association, which regularly spoke of Purgatory in its bulletins. It accepted without hesitation. After modernising certain expressions, which were common in the 19th century, she got down to work!

Remarkably, the book is now in its 6th edition with more than 100,000 copies sold. The booklet is now being sold in Belgium, Canada and the United States.

Begin these prayers and exercises as soon as you receive your copy, be it November or any other month of the year. The souls in Purgatory suffer and plead with us unceasingly ...

Through these readings and prayers you will enter into the mystery of the souls who depend entirely on us. In return, they will give back a hundred-fold what we do for them ...

Meditate and pray with the indicated readings every day. You may add a few prayers for the deceased. You will find some of these prayers at the end of this booklet.

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord!

A Month with our Friends the Souls in Purgatory

Readings and Prayers for one month

YOU MAY BEGIN:

In November, the month that the Church consecrates to the Holy Souls,
Or: On November 25, in order to end on Christmas Day, that great day of liberation for the souls in Purgatory,

Or: On the day you receive this book,

Or: On the death of a loved one,

Or: When you feel called to it:

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit! Come through the powerful intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, your beloved spouse! (3 times)

Prayer for the Souls in Purgatory

Lord Jesus, have mercy on the souls detained in Purgatory. It was for their salvation that you took on our human nature and suffered a most painful death. Have mercy on their burning desire to see you, have mercy on their tears of repentance. Through the merits of your Passion remit the sentence they incurred by their sins. Dear, loving Jesus, may your Blood descend on those dear souls! May it shorten their time of atonement and may they soon be called to eternal happiness in your presence! Amen.

De Profundis

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord hear my voice! O Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleading. If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, Lord who would survive? But with you is found forgiveness: For this I revere you. My soul is waiting for the Lord more than a watchman for daybreak. Let the watchman count on daybreak and Israel on the Lord. Israel indeed will be redeemed from all its iniquity. Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...

Thy kingdom come...

I beg you, Oh Blessed Father, forgive the souls in Purgatory. They have not always sought nor desired Your Kingdom with enough fervour and commitment, that kingdom where true and eternal peace reigns.

In reparation for their indifference, I offer the most ardent desire of Your Divine Son that these souls also would inherit His Kingdom. Amen.

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven...

I beg You, oh Blessed Father forgive the souls in Purgatory, for they have not always submitted their will to Yours, nor have they sought to do Your will in all things. They have often behaved solely by their own will.

In reparation for their disobedience, I offer You the heart of Your Divine Son filled with love, perfectly conformed to Your Will and totally submitted to that Will until His death on the Cross. Amen.

Give us this day our daily bread...

I beg You, Oh Blessed Father, forgive the souls in Purgatory. They have not always sufficiently desired to receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist. They often received it without love or even with iniquity. They have also, at times, neglected to receive the Eucharist at all.

In reparation for all the faults committed, I offer You, the eminent Holiness and the deep recollection of our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Divine Son, along with the ardent love with which He gave us this incomparable gift. Amen.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...

I beg You, Blessed Father, forgive the souls in Purgatory for all their offences, especially for having succumbed to the Seven Deadly sins and by not loving and forgiving their enemies.

In reparation for those sins, I offer You the prayer given with Love which Your Son cried out to You in favour of His enemies as He hung on the Cross. Amen.

Lead us not into temptation...

I beg You, oh Blessed Father, forgive the souls in Purgatory. So many times they failed to resist temptations and passions and followed the enemy of Holiness by giving in to the sins of the flesh.

In reparation for the multiple types of sins of which they are guilty, I offer You the glorious victory of Our Lord Jesus Christ over the world. I offer You His Holy Life, His works, His suffering and cruel death. Amen.

But deliver us from evil...

and from all chastisement, through the merits of your Beloved Son, lead us, along with the souls in Purgatory, to Your kingdom of eternal glory.
Amen.

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Prayer to Mary



Oh Mary, may the souls who suffer cruel torments in Purgatory, purified by the ardour of the flames, be the object of your compassion!

Oh Mary, Open Spring which cleanses our faults, Reconciler of sinners, reach out to those who pray to you and implore your assistance in Purgatory!

Oh Mary, intercede for our deceased. They patiently await the end of their suffering when they will see you and taste eternal joys!

Oh Mary, Model of the Just, Guide of the faithful, Salvation of those who hope in you, help us to pray ardently for the souls of the deceased and touch the Heart of Your Divine Son!

Oh Mary! By the merits you have gained, give the dead true life, obtain mercy for them and be the way which leads to your Son Jesus and to Eternal Rest! Amen!

O salutaris hostia sacra...

Oh Holy Victim for our salvation. You are perfect humanity, true divinity, the source and origin of our salvation.

Have mercy on the deceased!
You, our Redeemer, Oh Jesus!
You erase our sins and You forgive us.
Have mercy on the deceased!
Touched by our prayers, sweet Jesus and by the supplications of all the faithful, receive our prayers and have mercy on the deceased!

Oh Jesus, we beg You to grant eternal rest to those who have died in Your Grace.
May the eternal and blessed light shine upon them. Amen.

Formula of the Heroic Act

O Holy and Adorable Trinity, desiring to cooperate in the deliverance of the souls in Purgatory, and to testify my devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, I cede and renounce on behalf of those Holy Souls all the satisfactory part of my works and all the suffrages which may be given to me after my death, consigning them entirely into the hands of the Most Blessed Virgin that she may apply them according to her good pleasure to those souls of the faithful departed whom she desires to deliver from their sufferings.

Deign, O my God, to accept and bless this offering which I make to Thee at this moment amen.
(The sovereign pontiffs, Benedict XIII, Pius VI and Pius IX have approved this heroic act, and have enriched it with indulgences and privileges).

St. Mechtild's Our Father for the souls in Purgatory

This prayer for the relief of the souls in Purgatory, was taught to St. Mechtild by Our Lord during an apparition.

Our Father who art in Heaven...

I beg you, Oh Heavenly Father, forgive the souls in Purgatory. They did not love You nor give You the honour which You deserve. You are their Lord and Father. By pure grace, You adopted them as Your own children. On the contrary by sinning they chased You far from the heart in which You wanted to dwell.

In reparation for their sins, I offer You the love and the veneration which Your Son gave You during His earthly life. I offer You all the actions of penance and satisfaction which He accomplished and by which He erased the sins of men. Amen.

Hallowed by thy Name...

I beg You, Oh Blessed Father, forgive the souls in Purgatory, for they have not always honoured Your most Holy Name. By their sinful life, they often pronounced it in vain and rendered themselves unworthy of the name Christian.

In reparation for the faults of their sins, I offer You all the honour that your beloved Son gave Your Name, by His words and by His actions during His earthly life. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INDULGENCE FOR THE DEAD

Prayers of indulgence constitute a most efficient means of helping the souls in Purgatory. Popes have regularly repeated this point of doctrine. The application of indulgences is founded on Revelation.

The doctrine of indulgences is based upon the Power of the Keys, which the Church possesses; it is based on the possibility of reparation, which Christ offered for us and on the community of Saints.

An indulgence is the remittance of a temporal punishment due after a sin has been forgiven. God has forgiven us but we must still erase the pain, which we have caused Him in order to retrieve the full and complete Light and therein chase away the darkness we have accumulated.

The faithful who are well disposed, receive partial or plenary indulgences under the established conditions and with the assistance of the Church which is the Keeper of Redemption and which has the power to distribute and apply to each the merits of Christ and all the Saints.

Indulgences are part of the Spiritual Works of Mercy. We can earn indulgences if we are in a state of grace and fully intend to complete the prescribed exercises. We must, however, be completely detached from sin and attached to God with all our heart and place our complete trust and faith in the Infinite Mercy of God.

Have we ever stopped to think that not only our friends and relatives await our help but also those souls who were our accomplices when we sinned and who are possibly being punished partly because of us?

Let us therefore often recite the ejaculatory prayers listed below for the souls in Purgatory. With time, these prayers will become our spiritual property and we will recite them by heart in many circumstances. We will thus learn to live in the presence of God and in communion with the deceased.

God wants us to allow the talents received to multiply. We most certainly behave as our Merciful God intended when we use the treasure of graces, which the Church places abundantly within our grasp. Those works of mercy profit not only our deceased friends but ourselves and the whole Church.

To each of the following ejaculatory prayer is attached an indulgence.

Since the publishing of the Apostolic Constitution "indulgentiarum doctrina" on January 1, 1967, indulgences may be partial or plenary in that they may erase partially or completely the temporal sentence attached to sin. Days are no longer mentioned, only the fact that they are partial or plenary. Thus, the faithful are not tempted to place more value on the quantity than the quality. A sincere cry from the heart may hold more value in the eyes of God than a long prayer.

EJACULATORY PRAYERS

- **My Lord and my God.**
- **Dear Heart of Mary, be my salvation.**
- **Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.**
- **Blessed be the Holy Trinity.**
- **Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.**
- **Jesus and Mary bless us.**
- **Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul,**
- **Jesus Mary and Joseph, help me in my final hour.**
- **Jesus Mary and Joseph, grant that I may live and die in peace with you.**
- **Merciful Jesus, grant them eternal rest.**
- **Praised and adored be the Blessed Sacrament.**

The Souls in Purgatory

Why a month of readings and prayers?

The objective of this short work is to relieve the dead and to be of use to the living. It is a well known fact in the Christian world that the prayers of the living are beneficial to the dead¹. However, we are not sufficiently aware of how beneficial for the living are the suffrages (their prayers for our benefit) of the dead².

Truly, the power and the gratitude of the holy souls in Purgatory are too little known and appreciated and we neglect to ask for their intercession. Yet their merit is so great that if we didn't have repeated examples bearing witness to this fact, we would have a hard time believing it.

In fact, these blessed souls can no longer earn merits for themselves, as they are no longer on earth; but they are capable of presenting past merits in our favour. They can obtain nothing for themselves, but their prayers for our intentions and the suffering they endure are dear to God's heart. They can be immensely useful to us while they are in this place of atonement. And what will they not do for us when they have attained Heaven! How grateful will they be towards their benefactors!

Many theologians, among them saints Liguori, Bellarmin and Suarez teach us that we can legitimately invoke the souls in Purgatory in order to obtain from God the graces and favours which we need, either for our soul or for our body.

St. Theresa claimed that she obtained everything she asked the Lord through the intercession of the faithful departed. *"When I want to be certain of obtaining a particular grace,"* said St. Catherine of Boulogne, *"I have recourse to those suffering souls, that they might present my request to the Lord and the grace is always obtained."* She claims to have received through their intercession many favours, which had not been granted through the intercession of saints.

There are certain temporal favours which seem to be especially reserved for the souls in Purgatory: the healing from a serious illness rescue from grave physical, spiritual or moral danger, marriages and harmony in the home, finding employment... God is aware of the importance we attach to these matters of secondary importance and has handed them over (in a manner of

¹ "I saw my Guardian Angel, who ordered me to follow him. In a moment I was in a misty place full of fire in which there was a great crowd of suffering souls. They were praying fervently, but to no avail, for themselves; only we can come to their aid. The flames which were burning them did not touch me at all. My Guardian Angel did not leave me for an instant. I asked these souls what their greatest suffering was. They answered me in one voice that their greatest torment was longing for God. I saw Our Lady visiting the souls in Purgatory. The souls call her "The Star of the Sea." She brings them refreshment. I wanted to talk with them some more, but my Guardian Angel beckoned me to leave. We went out of that prison of suffering. [I heard an interior voice] which said, "My mercy does not want this, but justice demands it." Since that time, I am in closer communion with the suffering souls" (Divine Mercy in my Soul, 20).

² "Praying for the souls in Purgatory has benefits beyond those that apply to the holy souls. It's a great exercise in charity, which can only benefit the intercessor. On top of that, we win friends in heaven: 'The dead will not be thankless. One day, freed from their torments by our solicitude, they will help us by their powerful intercession, and, when we fly up toward the heavenly fatherland, they will accompany us in procession'" (Arminjon, Fr. Charles, End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life, 2009).

speaking) to the suffering souls, in order to encourage us to pray to them and for them constantly.

As such, we have everything to gain by exchanging our prayers with those of our deceased brethren. Admirable gift of Providence and mystery of the Communion of Saints! As we relieve their suffering through prayer and sacrifice, they offer for us the merits they acquired while on earth and we thus receive temporal and spiritual blessings. How great are the advantages and the consolations of all kinds obtained

through the practice of Christian Charity towards the suffering members of the Church!

To know the souls in Purgatory, to pray to them, to deliver them: those are the three reasons for this work. Who can claim not to have a family member or a loved one in Purgatory?

Let us begin! Let us make a daily visit to our forgotten friends in Purgatory. Let us bring them a little relief and hasten their deliverance....

This book was written at the end of the nineteenth century, that is before the revelations concerning Divine Mercy were given to St. Faustina. These revelations point to the inestimable mercy and love of God, and where appropriate, we have included references to the mercy and love of God throughout this new edition of the book. Whilst reading the book one should read it with the understanding given to St. Faustina that God is love, and He offers an ocean of mercy to all, particularly to those who show mercy to the Holy Souls who cannot help themselves. This is a powerful act of love and charity, and it is an act that opens the floodgates of mercy to oneself and one's family.

Prayer for a happy death

Divine Heart of Jesus grant me the grace to always live according to Your Will, be that during the most beautiful, joyous, most important hours of my life as well as during the most difficult moments, so that I may always be ready for my final hour.

Give me the courage to abandon everything to Your Love, even my very life if necessary. Oh Jesus! By Your holy and painful Passion, grant that when you come for me, You will find me awake like the good servant, with sincere repentance, a good confession and armed with the Sacrament of the sick.

Lord, do not abandon me in my final struggle on earth when I will be faced with Satan's fury. May Your Holy Mother, St. Michael the Archangel and his Angels assist and protect me against all temptations in my final hour on earth. May they console me and strengthen me in my agony.

Grant me at that hour, a strong faith, a firm trust, a deep love and a great patience. Grant that I commit myself, with full conscience into your hands and that I fall asleep in Your Holy Peace.

In Your Infinite Goodness and Your great Mercy, remember me Lord Jesus. Amen.

THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of Heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again. He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen.

Salve Regina

Hail holy Queen,
Mother of Mercy,
hail our life, our sweetness and our hope!
To thee do we cry poor banished children of Eve.
To thee we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn then,
most gracious Advocate thine eyes of mercy
towards us,
and, after this our exile,
show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus.
O clement,
O loving,
O sweet Virgin Mary!
Pray for us O Holy Mother of God,
that we may be made worthy of
the promises of Christ.

REQUIEM

By the Mercy of God
may the souls of the faithful departed rest in Peace.

LITANY FOR THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Lord have mercy.
Jesus Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy.
Jesus Christ, hear us.
Father in Heaven, God Almighty, *have mercy on the faithful departed.*
Son of God, Redeemer of the world, Almighty God...
Holy Spirit, Bread of life, Almighty God...
Holy Trinity, the One True God...
Holy Mary, Mother of God, *pray for the faithful departed.*
St. Michael the Archangel...
My Holy Angel and Angels of the faithful departed...
Community of Blessed Spirits ...
St. Joseph and St. John the Baptist...
Holy Patriarchs and Prophets . .
Holy Apostles and Evangelists . .
St. Stephen and St. Lawrence . .
Holy Martyrs ...
St. Gregory and St. Augustine ...
Holy Doctors, Popes and Confessors ...
St. Ann and St. Mary Magdalene ...
St. Catherine, St. Ursula and her companions ...
Holy Virgins and Widows ...
Holy Saints of God...
Be their Conciliator *Lord and forgive them.*
Be their Conciliator *Lord and save us.*
By your holy and tender Name Lord, *have*

mercy on the souls of the faithful departed.
By Your great Mercy Lord...
By Your bitter Passion and Your Sacred Wounds Lord...
By Your Precious Blood and by Your Death Lord...
We are poor sinners Lord, *hear our prayer.*
Have mercy on all the faithful departed Lord...
Remit the sentence incurred by their sins Lord...
Take them to Your peace and eternal rest Lord ...
Grant them Your paternal inheritance Lord...
Invite them to come and contemplate Your Divine Beauty Lord...
Fill them with Your unlimited bounty Lord...
Fulfill their total desire for salvation Lord...
Give eternal rest especially to the souls of our relatives, friends and benefactors Lord...
Have mercy on the soul for whom no one prays Lord...
May the offering of the Holy Mass and Holy Communion be beneficial to them Lord...
Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, *forgive them.*
Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, *Sweet Jesus, hear them.*
Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, *grant them eternal rest.*

LET US PRAY FOR OUR FRIENDS, THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

ST. JOHN VIANNEY, THE CURED' ARS

"If we knew how great is the power of the Holy Souls and how many graces we can obtain from God through their intercession, the souls in Purgatory would not be forgotten! Let us pray for them that they may pray for us".

ST. AUGUSTINE

"I pray for the dead so that when they have attained Eternal Glory, they might pray for me".

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

"The most ardent furnaces and the most scorching flames to which martyrs were condemned are but a slight breeze when compared to the suffering endured by the souls in Purgatory in order that they be purified".

A Month for the Souls in Purgatory

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

FIRST DAY

1. Reasons for the sanctification of this month

The origins of the Month dedicated to the dead go back to the Old Testament, to the people of Israel. This people in fact, who alone possessed the true Spirit of God, were not content with simply proclaiming in its holy books that it was a holy and salvific deed to pray for the dead. The people of Israel also determined the duration of such prayer. It was agreed that mourning would not cease until each of the deceased had been mourned for one month. Thus, after the death of Jacob, his sons mourned him and said prayers for him for one month.

Inspired by such an ancient and authorised practice, the piety of the faithful has consecrated a whole month to the relief of the souls in Purgatory. The Church celebrates the commemoration of all the deceased on the 2nd of November.

That month seems the most suitable for such devotion. The month consecrated to the souls in Purgatory and recommended by the Holy Pontiffs and enriched with spiritual favours is publicly celebrated by a large number of religious communities and Christian parishes.

Welcome with great joy the dawning of this month which so admirably responds to the needs of the heart. It will remind you of most tender family memories, most sacred promises, the most touching farewells. It will develop your compassion for family and friends who because of their suffering and wretched state have become dearer to you.

Yes, the dignity of these unfortunate souls, the severity of their suffering, their inability to save themselves, the Glory of God, your personal interest everything cries out for you to visit them and to come to their aid, each day of the month.

It is the month of charity and gratitude, the month of the living and the month of the dead, the month of true liberation!

Full of enthusiasm at the beginning of such a month, a saint once exclaimed, "Let us empty Purgatory". Dedicate this month to the souls in Purgatory and pray for their relief. Do not neglect this duty of yours!

2. Means of sanctifying this month

In order to fully celebrate this month of the dead, make the following resolutions and be faithful to them. Every morning, offer God the merits of your labour and suffering for the souls in Purgatory and the relic of your deceased relatives. Set aside a specific time during the day to read your "Month with the Souls in Purgatory". This reading will

enlighten your mind and soften your heart. Do not omit these readings. **Go to the cemetery from time to time and pray over the graves of those who were dear to you. Your prayers will bring them consolation. It is good to pray! Consecrate a special day every week to the souls in Purgatory and attend Holy Mass for their intention. During the month, go to confession and offer your masses for their intention.** Yes, do this and at the end of that month of liberation, you will have sent to the triumphant Church in Heaven a great number of souls who were weeping and suffering in the purifying flames of the "Suffering Church". What consolation! What a bond of hope! "Arise," cried out St. Bernard, "Fly to the rescue of the souls in Purgatory. Invoke Divine clemency upon them, especially through the Holy Eucharist. Beg for mercy upon them by your own penance and intercede for them through your prayers".

Example

The following is an account of an extraordinary healing obtained through the intercession of the souls in Purgatory during the month of November.

"For years, I was the victim of a cruel disease which had reduced my body to a mere skeleton and which caused me to suffer excruciating pain. A long list of medical specialists were unable to do much more than to prescribe medication which rarely brought more than a little relief if any, and which left me weaker and depressed. Unable to obtain any permanent comfort from medical sources, I abandoned all medication and I had recourse to the souls in Purgatory. The month of

November, which is consecrated to them, was just beginning. I decided to celebrate that month with as much fervour as possible. My relatives and friends joined their prayers to mine. Every night, gathering in my room before a statue of St. Joseph, we asked with confidence for two graces: deliverance for the souls in Purgatory and my physical healing. Towards the end of the first week, I had already noticed an improvement. The last day of the month found us in church, full of joy, happiness and thanksgiving. My healing was complete. There was no trace of the disease which had tortured me for so long and which according to the doctors was incurable. They were amazed at my healing. May God bless the souls in Purgatory whose intercession had obtained such a grace for me!"

How many graces will we all receive if we pray during one month for the holy souls in Purgatory! Have courage and faith!

LET US PRAY - Gracious and merciful God hear our fervent prayers during this month of blessings. We consecrate each day and each hour for the relief and the liberation of those captive souls who cry unto You and unto us from their dark prison. Lord, call your children and our brethren to eternal rest and may the light that never dies shine upon them! May they rest in peace!

Follow these daily prayers with a decade of the rosary - **the litany for the deceased** (p.72) - **The Creed - Salve Regina** (p.73) - **the prayer for the Souls in Purgatory - the De Profundis** (psalm 130 p.1)

THE FUTILITY OF TEARS

Reported by Thomas of Catimpre:

An elderly woman had recently lost her only child. She had hoped this son would take care of her until she died. She was inconsolable, crying day and night. Doctors feared she would lose her eyesight from stress.

Unable to console or reason with her, Thomas de Catimpre called upon his entire community to pray with him. They began a novena, asking God to enlighten her tortured soul.

God did not delay in granting the request. One night, as she lay on her bed sobbing uncontrollably, she had a vision:

She saw a group of beautifully dressed young people walking down a road. She sought her son in the crowd and finally saw him, walking far behind the

others. He was visibly tired and his clothing was dripping wet.

Intrigued and worried she asked, "Why my son are you walking so far behind the others?"

"Oh mother", he answered, "I am delayed by the sterile tears you are shedding and which make my clothing so heavy! If you wish to relieve my suffering, offer the merits of your prayers and Masses for my intentions. You will thus deliver me from this place of torment and introduce me to the Blessed Eternity!"

The vision ended. The woman dried her tears and hastened to make use of the time she had left to put into practice all the Christian exercises she could to deliver her son from that "place of torment".

OFFER MASSES FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

Marian Consecration is one of the best ways to help souls get out of Purgatory

Why? How does this work? well, part of Marian consecration means that we give to Mary "even the value of our good actions." This includes our merits, which we can "offer up" for the souls in Purgatory. For instance, if I have a cold or a toothache, I can offer it up as an efficacious prayer for the souls in Purgatory. But maybe you're asking yourself, "How does this help the souls in Purgatory?" It helps them because when we give all our merits to Mary, she augments them so there's more to go around. Saint Louis de Montfort offers an unforgettable image to explain this:

It is as if a peasant, wishing to gain the friendship of the king, went to the queen and presented her with a fruit which was his whole revenue, in order that she might present it to the king. The queen, having accepted the poor little offering from the peasant, would place the fruit on a large and beautiful dish of gold, and so, on the peasant's behalf, would present it to the king. Then the fruit, however unworthy in itself to be the king's present, would become worthy of his majesty because of the dish of gold on which it rested and the person who presented it (True Devotion, N. 147).

Like the queen in de Montfort's analogy, Mary purifies all our good action, making them even more pleasing to her Son. So, when we're consecrated to her, all our prayers and good actions have even greater power and can be used even more effectively for the souls in Purgatory.

Now, here's one objection that might come up. When we're consecrated to Mary, because we give her all the value of our good actions, we, therefore, cannot apply our prayers to whomever we want and whenever we want. This is true. Let me explain:

When one makes a total consecration of himself to Jesus through Mary, he can no longer insist on determining who receives the value of his prayers and good actions. Indeed, the very nature of Marian consecration is that we leave everything up to Mary: We give her all, "even the value of our good actions." Does this mean that Mary will forget the souls in Purgatory? Not at all. Not at all. We still can and should pray for them- we should tell Mary of the people and intentions on our hearts. Then we offer her our prayers and good actions, letting her distribute the graces in the best way possible.

Mary is never outdone in generosity. When she sees that we give her the value of all our good actions, then in her generosity, she'll take care of our loved ones even better than we ourselves can! This includes our loved ones who are in Purgatory. Moreover, if we have a special devotion to the souls in Purgatory and desire that they especially receive relief from our prayers and sacrifices, Mary will see to it that they are particularly cared for. Remember, when our merits pass through Mary's hands, they have even greater spiritual power, there's more grace to go around, and she'll give special attention to the intentions we hold in our hearts.

Consecrating ourselves to Mary, therefore, is a win-win. We win in that it's the quickest, easiest, surest, and most perfect way to holiness. The souls in Purgatory win because, if they're on our hearts, Mary is not outdone in generosity and will take care of them even better than we ourselves can.

(Cambra, Fr. Dan, Prayers and Practices For The Souls In Purgatory, 2017, pp. 56-57).

St. Chrysostome recommended this pious practice, "Set aside a place in your home for a container in which anyone can deposit alms for the dead. Use these alms for Masses offered for the dead".

Excerpts from the "Manuscript in Purgatory"

Edited by the association of "Our Lady of a Good Death" at Tinchebray (Orne)

(These are teachings and advice, given by a nun from Purgatory to the Mistress of Novices on earth, so that she might help her quickly escape that terrible place of purification).

"Oh how anxious I am to go to Heaven! What martyrdom we suffer since we know God!"

"No! We do not see God in Purgatory. That would be Heaven".

"Yes, at times we see St. Joseph, but not as often as Our Lady".

"Oh yes, I do love God and as my soul is purified, that is, as it nears Heaven, my love increases".

"A small prayer brings such relief. It refreshes, as would a glass of cold water given to a thirsty person".

"If you want to please God, do nothing on Sunday. Pray to Him as much as you can. That is all".

"When I am released, I will do more for you than you could ever do for me. I already pray so much for you".

"As for Our Lady, we see her with her body. She comes to Purgatory on her feast days and she returns to Heaven with so many souls. While she is with us, we do not suffer".

"Those who have forgotten the souls in Purgatory will themselves be forgotten. If we inspire them to pray for the dead, if we teach them a little about Purgatory, they will most certainly behave differently".

"There are also some souls who do not remain in Purgatory as such. In my case, I follow you everywhere you go during the day but at night I suffer twice as much in Purgatory".

"As a reward for their devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and their respect for the Holy Presence, some souls obtain the grace of being purified at the foot of the altar".

"At the time of death, a soul is completely lost in God. It finds itself in a bright light and in the wink of an eye it sees its whole life pass before it along with all its merits".

"It pronounces sentence on itself. The soul does not see God but is overwhelmed by His Presence. When a soul sees itself covered with sins, it flees to Purgatory on its own".

"St. Michael is there when a soul leaves its body. He is the only one I saw and he is seen by all the souls. He is the executor of Divine Justice. I then saw my Guardian Angel.

"On All Souls Day (November 2), many souls leave the place of atonement. On that day all souls benefit from the Church's public prayers, even those of Purgatory. It is, nonetheless, on Christmas Eve that the most souls rise up to Heaven".

"The more a soul loved God on earth, the more it attains perfection, the more it loves God and understands God in Heaven".

"Jesus is the true Joy of the earth and the eternal Joy of Heaven!"

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

SECOND DAY Purgatory

1. What is Purgatory?

Faith teaches us that Purgatory, as the word indicates, is a place of suffering and atonement.³ There, Divine Justice continues to purify souls not yet pure enough to be admitted into Paradise, where nothing stained may enter; it is not Hell where there is no longer Redemption; it is an intermediary place situated between the infinite joys of Heaven and the infinite flames of Hell. It resembles Hell in the intensity of suffering and Heaven by the holiness of those who are suffering there.⁴ It is a flame that devours but that purifies; it is a journey of tears, but it is not the place

³"All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1030).

⁴"The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire:

As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offences can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1031).

of eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth of which Scripture speaks. When the time of purification is over, God will call to himself those souls cleansed by suffering to share in his eternal happiness.

Thus, Purgatory is a temporary sentence, which will cease to exist following the final judgement.

That is Purgatory. That is where most of the souls who have ended their pilgrimage here on earth find themselves, suffering and weeping in atonement. Immediate entrance into Heaven is the privilege of very few. Purgatory is where some of our relatives and dear ones may very well be. It is where we might end up ourselves! And maybe soon! Who can flatter oneself as to think, at the moment of death, to be in such a state of purity as to not need to make reparation?

It is thus important for us to get to know the state of those poor souls in order to have compassion for their sufferings and in return to be worthy of their prayers.

2. Why Purgatory?

When a soul appears before the Divine Judge, if it is exempt of any stain, Jesus himself will open up Heaven's gates and grant it the crown promised to

the blessed. If that soul has only a few small stains on its garment, what will become of it? Where will it go? What will happen to those souls not pure enough to enter heaven but not so unclean as to deserve Hell? Will they never see the face of God? Let us praise God who has created a means to reconcile his Justice with his Mercy by placing Purgatory between Heaven and Hell. Souls will be purified there like gold in a blast furnace. There, souls will be cleansed of all impurities caused by sins. Tertulien, speaking of the suffering souls must endure in Purgatory calls them the torments of Mercy.

There is a reason for the existence of Purgatory. It is necessary for completing the penance which we did not do while on earth, to satisfy Divine Justice and to earn an immense glory through atonement. It is a creation of the mercy of God that can be called the 8th sacrament, the sacrament of fire, for those souls, which the Church's true sacraments did not purify perfectly.⁵

Glory be then to the Divine Mercy which by means of Purgatory saves the souls of our loved ones, and provides us with means of alleviating their suffering and allows the gates of Heaven to open for them.

EXAMPLE

A priest ended his homily on the subject in Purgatory with the following, "*A few days ago, I received news of my father's death. Unable to be near my family, I felt devastated. I hadn't had the opportunity*

of giving him a final kiss, to close his eyes with the hands he had loved to kiss after they had received the anointing of priesthood. In my anguish and pain, the only consolation I can find is in recommending him to your prayers, you who are so good and indulgent. I am filled with this consolation as I go to the altar to offer the Holy Sacrifice for the repose of my beloved father's soul. I know that our prayer will alleviate his suffering, shorten his stay and deliver him from Purgatory and open Heavens gates where he has invited me to join him in the house of God. It is a holy and beneficial deed, that of praying for the deceased! Purgatory is a creation of Gods mercy."

LET US PRAY - My God, I adore your eternal decrees; I confess that Purgatory, which reconciles your Justice and Mercy, is a product of your Love. Lord, help me avoid that place of suffering and deprivation by my penance, and may my prayers obtain through your paternal indulgence the release from exile of those suffering souls who call unto you so ardently. Dear Jesus, be their Conciliator! Call your dear children and our brethren to eternal rest and may your light shine upon them! May they rest in peace!

⁵The author is using a turn of phrase here that is not intended to usurp the Church's constant teaching that there are only seven Sacraments (see Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1210). In this, what is meant is that because of the effects of sin and free will, there remains a debt to be paid, and that through the mercy of God, this debt is paid in full in Purgatory. Furthermore, the living can assist the Holy Souls in paying this debt, and this is an act of charity.

EXAMPLE

A man had three friends, two of which were especially dear to him.

One day he was arrested and tried for a crime he did not commit. "*Which of you*", he asked his friends, "*will come and testify my innocence?*" The first excused himself, claiming he was too busy. The second followed him to court but stopped then turned around, fearing the judge's anger. The third one, he in whom the accused had placed little faith, went in and spoke eloquently in his favour. He attested to his honour and his innocence with such conviction that the judge not only acquitted the accused by granted him reparations.

In this world, we have three friends whom we can call upon at the hour of our judgement:

- **money**, our closest friend will not come with us, abandoning us completely and will be of no use at all.

- **relatives** and close friends will accompany us to our grave, will throw a little holy water in it, bid a final adieu and quietly leave.

- **good deeds**. The third friend, the one which we gave the least importance during our life will be the sum of all charitable actions, done for the love of God. These friends will remain faithful, standing before the Lord, preceding us and speaking in our favour to obtain His Mercy and Pardon.

Christian souls, in your will, do not hesitate to donate to Church charities and you will have devoted friends who will open the gates of Heaven for you.⁶⁰

⁶⁰"St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: 'Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours; but theirs.' The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due injustice is not to be offered as a gift of charity:'

When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.

The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God:

He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none and he who has food must do likewise. But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you. If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2446-2447)

A FEW REVELATIONS ON PURGATORY

Excerpts from the book, "*The Souls in Purgatory in the life of Saints*" (Resiac edition)⁶¹

- Before entering Heaven, souls spend an average of 30 to 40 years in Purgatory.

- After death, every soul is submitted to a particular judgement. Every detail of terrestrial life passes before its eyes. Except for a rare preparation and a death in God's friendship, it will flee on its own to Purgatory. It cannot accept the face to face encounter with the Divine Majesty unless it is pure or purified.

- At the moment of the particular judgement, certain souls will only see St. Michael or their Guardian Angel; this is, however, a marvelous piece of Heaven. Anxious to finally enjoy the vision of God and his Paradise, the soul's impatience becomes a veritable martyrdom for the soul.

- It is a fact that in Purgatory, souls maintain a certain human form; the parts of the human body which were stained by sins become incandescent in the fire of Purification.

- As they are purified, souls rise to less painful levels in Purgatory.

- There are three levels in Purgatory and within each there are many degrees.

- The lower Purgatory or great Purgatory is very near Hell.

- The lower Purgatory differs from Hell in that the soul does not rebel against God. It does not despair and does not wish evil on others. On the contrary, it thanks God for having saved it despite its faults and it prays for the conversion of loved ones still on earth.

- In lower Purgatory, souls cannot benefit from the relief offered by relatives and loved ones (except on All-Saints Day).

- However, in ordinary Purgatory, souls benefit from the refreshing alms offered on earth; this nevertheless, with the condition that during their lifetime, those souls had themselves been charitable towards the poor souls in Purgatory.

⁶¹The Resiac Edition is the French Edition of the book cited (EDITIONS RESIAC)

PRACTICAL ADVICE

From The Author, Father Berlioux

In closing these 30 days of exercises (which if you choose, can be done any other month than November) allow me to give you some advice as a friend, a brother, a priest:

a) If the souls in Purgatory are more than generous towards us when we pray for them, are you convinced that you will not be forgotten by the living after you are gone?

b) Do not wait for your old age before you register your last will.

c) Why not set aside a certain amount, which you can give to the church for Masses and prayers in memory of the dead?

1. Regarding gratitude, you can rely on that of the deceased, for the deceased, according to St. Francis of Sales, are always grateful towards those who help them; but rely very little on the gratitude of the living, especially if they are not your own children.

Your heirs will probably organise a beautiful funeral. They might place you in a tomb where vanity will have more importance than filial and religious piety, but they will be as stingy with the Church as they were extravagant at the cemetery. Your heirs might be more anxious to dispute your inheritance than to execute your last will and to extract you from the torments of Purgatory.

Are you not aware that people, after losing sight of someone, soon lose the memory of that person? Far from the eyes, far from the heart!

Are you not aware that forgetting the deceased is a worldwide phenomenon and that their memory ends with the sound of the church bells?

Are you not aware that regarding

Salvation, one must rely on oneself?

Learn from this salvific warning, which the author of the Imitation gives you, *"Do not rely on friends or relatives for they will forget you faster than you think. They have their own agenda. If you do not take care of yourself, who will do so after you're gone?"*

2. If you have temporal wealth to distribute, do not wait for your final hour to prepare your last will. Who knows whether you will be taken by a sudden illness or by an accident? Experience is there to attest the fact that so many persons leaving this world unexpectedly, do so without wills.

"I beg you", cried St. Augustine, *"before you are overcome by disease, to prepare your will, to prepare your estate. If you wait to be at death's door, you will be compelled through threat or flattery to do things you would rather not do".*

3. It is a good thing to leave some of your belongings and wealth to charitable works. Do not forget to prepare and insure spiritual dividends by establishing anniversaries for yourself and your family members. He who prepares to leave on a long journey makes the necessary provisions. Would you consider that long journey into eternity without the charitable actions, which will propitiate the Lord of Lords and open the gates of Heaven! May the money you possess and which so often provides iniquities baubles for you become a friend for your soul in its distress! It is the advice not only of a priest but of Jesus Christ himself. To Him all glory and honour on earth where we suffer and in Heaven where the family will gather in eternal joy!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

THIRD DAY

The existence of Purgatory (1)

1. The Word of God

The existence of Purgatory is not a mere pious belief, which we are free to accept or to reject. It is a formal dogma taught by faith, which we must profess lest we become anathema. It is a holy and salvific thought, proclaims the Old Testament, that of praying for the dead so that they may be delivered from their sins. The Jews were so convinced of this truth that they had a prayer for the deliverance of the deceased, which the head of the family had to recite before the family sat down to a meal.

Jesus Christ himself taught, *"Settle your accounts with your enemies while you are still in this world. If you do not, your enemies will deliver you into the hands of the Judge and the Judge will give you over to his minister, who will throw you in jail from which you will not be freed until your debt has been paid, down to the last farthing."* That enemy,

according to St. Augustine, is God Himself, the irreconcilable enemy of sin. That inexorable Judge, according to Scripture is Jesus Christ, the Judge of the living and the dead. Finally, the dreaded prison is Purgatory, from which we cannot leave until we have satisfied Divine Justice, that is, after having eliminated all the murkiness of our soul.

Jesus was not content with engraving the memory of Purgatory in our hearts. After his Death, setting for us a perfect example, He descended into Limbo⁶ where Souls had been awaiting deliverance since the Fall of Adam, that Fall which had closed all access to Heaven. Amid immense celestial joy, He reopened forever the gates of Heaven.

My God, I believe in Purgatory, I adore the equity of your judgement, including the rigours of your Justice!

2. The Church's teaching

The faith of the Church is no less explicit. This is how it was formulated by the Council of Trent: *"May they be anathema, those who would affirm that after having received the grace of justification, all sinners obtain so much remission and eternal acquittal, that there is no temporal debt left to atone, in this world or in Purgatory before they might enter Heaven."* All the Latin and Greek doctors of the Church as well as all ancient and modern theologians have confirmed this belief.

In accordance with this belief, the Church, a tender and compassionate mother prays every day during Mass for the souls in Purgatory. She recommends that we, her children offer to God, prayers, sacrifices, sufferings and Holy

⁶While the word Limbo is used here, the actual expression that is understood today is that these Souls were detained in the Abode of the Dead. The Church doctrine concerning Limbo is defined in the 2007 document from the International Theological Commission document titled The Hope of Salvation for Infants who die without being Baptised.

Masses for the deliverance of our deceased brethren. She marks a solemn anniversary when we are invited with all of Christianity to come to the aid of the faithful departed.

How consoling it is for us to realise that after our death, the Church will pray for us and will ask all of the faithful to ask God for our deliverance. She will not stop praying until we are brought into the bosom of the Triumphant Church. Our Catholic Church is like a tender mother. She knows her children's weaknesses!

EXAMPLE

Judas Maccabee, that man of faith in whose care God had entrusted the law of Israel, Jerusalem and her temple, defeated the enemies of God and Israel in a great victory. The first action of this pious and brave man was to fall on his knees and praise the Lord of all armies. Rising with his troops, he beheld the bodies of his fallen companions. Filled with a holy respect for the brave deceased, Judas had them gathered and buried in the tombs of their ancestors. Finally, thinking of the souls of these martyrs who had died for their Faith and for their Country, he collected offerings and sent twelve thousand drachmas to Jerusalem as a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of these martyrs.

For, in wisdom and piety, he

considered that those who had died in Faith had indeed stored up a precious reward.

That is how the children of God behaved two thousand years ago. Confirming these serious and moving facts, the Spirit of God repeated them through the mouth of the sacred historian, *"It is a holy and salvific thought, that of praying for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sins."*⁷

LET US PRAY - Obedient child of your Church, I firmly believe, O my God, in the existence of Purgatory. I believe because your Spirit of Truth has revealed it, because your saints and your doctors teach it. Increase my faith that my charity for those captive souls in Purgatory might grow. Be their Conciliator O Jesus! Lord, call your children and our brethren to eternal rest and may the light that never dies shine upon them. May they rest in peace!

of your own faults to which will be added those, which I still have to suffer in order to satisfy Divine Justice".

The guilty relative was struck by the threat and, wanting to clear his conscience, he hastened to execute the captain's last will. He did everything asked in order to avoid the consequence of his actions. He could not, however, avoid his death, which had been prophesied. Injustice and ingratitude towards the dead are despised by God and provoke His Holy Anger in this world and the next.

Let us hasten to repair any injustices we may have committed towards the deceased.

LET US PRAY - Oh my God, do not allow me to neglect my duties towards the dead. Their rights are sacred, their last will is equally sacred to me. I will fully satisfy all the obligations which they have left me and, if possible, I will accomplish those, which I might have neglected to this day. I will pray faithfully for their deliverance. Merciful Jesus, Mary Queen of Purgatory, be their Conciliators. May they rest in the peace of Heaven!

⁷"This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: 'Therefore Judas Maccabeus made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.' From the beginning the Church has honored 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. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead:

Let us help and commemorate them. If Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice, why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1032).

possible so as not to deprive those souls of the relief they will obtain through the Masses we offer or through our charitable deeds. We must also remember to ask them to pray for their benefactors.

Every day we delay is a fault for which we are totally responsible.

If we could only understand how terrible atonement is in Purgatory! Instead of putting off the offerings, which would diminish their torment, we would hasten to bring relief to those souls who are so worthy of our compassion, some of whom were so dear to us.

Those who neglect fulfilling the sacred responsibilities they contracted with their dying loved ones will be severely judged!⁵⁹

Learn from this. Carefully choose those in whom you will entrust your last will. Place the sums you wish to donate to charitable works in hands worthy of trust, along with the Masses offered for your deliverance. It is the only way you can be assured of having your last will accomplished, unless you belong to a very Christian family which in faith has conserved the respect for the memory of the deceased.

Example

The following describes the punishment awaiting those who do not execute the last will of the dying. There is a report, in the "Charlemagne's Gestures", of a valiant sea captain who was approaching retirement. He sent for a relative whom he had often helped and told him, *"I have spent over sixty years in the service of king and country, never asking for anything else than my wages. I own nothing but my trusted horse which I would like you to sell after my death and distribute the sum you obtain among the poor for my soul's relief"*. The relative promised to do exactly as he had asked.

When the captain died, the relative, seduced by the horse's beauty and training, kept it to himself and neglected to give the required alms to the poor. Six months had gone by when the soul of the deceased captain appeared to the ungrateful relative. *"You wretched man"*, said the soul, *"you have not kept your promise. You are the cause of the terrible torments I have to endure because you have not given the alms I had requested. Know this! Your conduct will be punished by a prompt death and a particular chastisement has been set aside for you: you will carry the sentence*

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

FOURTH DAY

The existence of Purgatory (2)

1. Witnessing of our reason

Along with faith, our reasoning also proclaims the existence of Purgatory: its voice speaks to us as do the Church and Scriptures. It tells us firstly that God, being perfect Holiness, cannot allow anything impure to enter Heaven. There is an eternal invincible repulsion between the slightest evil and perfect Goodness. A soul marked by the smallest stain, is unworthy of being united to God until it has been purified. It would otherwise introduce sin into Heaven. *"Lord,"* cried out the prophet, *"who may dwell in your tabernacle, on your holy mountain? Only those without sin who possess the perfection of Justice."*

Our reasoning also tells us that God, being infinite Justice, requires reparation. He cannot leave the slightest sin without purification, just as He cannot leave the slightest virtuous action without reward. Thus, those who have not made reparation for their sins in this world will without fail make reparation for them in the next. The satisfaction we neglected to render to the Justice of God during our lifetime, God will render unto

himself following our death. Where will it be rendered? In Purgatory.

Let us prove our faith in the dogma of Purgatory by having a tender charity for the souls who are subjected to rigorous purification and by avoiding the sins that will send us there. May those who are just become even more just and those who are holy become even more holy!

2. Witnessing of the heart

"There is no Catholic dogma that does not have its roots deeply imbedded in the human heart," said Monsieur de Maistre. That is why we are inclined to embrace certain revealed truths. Purgatory is among these truths.

Many self-proclaimed atheists who have renounced every belief or religious sentiment, have admitted that under grave circumstances, they could not refrain from secretly praying in the depths of their heart for loved ones who have died. Therein lies the proof of the sentiment printed by God on the heart of man. It is manifested in every country and in all the peoples of the world. Is there anything more comforting for the human heart than to know that we are still united to the memory and the suffering of the deceased? Truly, we need to believe that there exists beyond the barriers of time, a place of purification which is not Hell but the gateway to Heaven. We need to believe and we must believe that our friends and family members who are prisoners in Purgatory, are comforted by our prayers and good deeds, that they see and they hear us. We need to believe some day we ourselves will need to be relieved from our suffering. That thought is soothing and comforting.

Example

A young Scottish Lutheran had an only brother whom he loved deeply. That

⁵⁹"At the beginning of the retreat, I saw, on the ceiling of the chapel, Jesus nailed to the Cross. He was looking at the sisters with great love, but not at all of them. There were three sisters at whom Jesus looked severely, for what reasons I do not know. I only know what a terrible thing it is to meet with such a look, which is the look of a severe Judge. That look was not directed at me, and yet I was paralyzed with terror. I still tremble as I write these words. I did not dare to say so much as a single word to Jesus. My physical strength failed me, and I thought I would not live to the end of the conference. The next day, I saw the same thing again, just as I had seen it the first time, and this time I dared to speak these words: 'Jesus, how great is Your mercy!'

On the third day, that gaze of great kindness upon all the sisters, except the three, was again repeated. I gathered up my courage, which drew its force from love of neighbor, and I said to the Lord, 'You, who are Mercy Itself, as You Yourself told me, I beg You by the power of Your mercy, to look then with kindness at these three sisters as well. And if this is not in accord with Your wisdom, I ask You for an exchange: turn to them the kind look meant for my soul, and let Your severe gaze at their souls be turned on me.' Jesus then said to me these words: My daughter, for the sake of your sincere and generous love, I grant them many graces although they are not asking Me for them. But I am doing so because of the promise I have made to you. And at that moment, He turned a merciful look towards those three sisters as well. My heart leapt with joy to see the goodness of God" (Divine Mercy in my Soul, 383).

young brother suddenly died from a ruptured aneurysm during a large family gathering. Devastated by the loss, the young man could not stop thinking of his brother and constantly worried as to the state of his soul. He feared he had not been pure enough to enter Heaven immediately and his Protestant faith did not teach him that there exists a place of purification between Heaven and Hell. He decided to go on a trip to France to try and relieve his sorrow. He met there a priest in whom he confided his grief. "My friend," said the man of God, "it is necessary for all people to expiate their sins, even in the hereafter. Our Catholic faith teaches us that there is a place between Heaven and Hell where souls finish their purification and from which we can help deliver them with our prayers and sacrifices." The young man accepted the teaching of the Catholic Church and began praying for his dead brother. It is true that belief in Purgatory is a necessity for the human heart!

LET US PRAY - My God, may my prayers, my sacrifices and my suffering serve to touch your Goodness and hasten the moment of deliverance for the souls of our loved ones! Be blessed, oh my Jesus, for your consolations! Call our brethren to your eternal kingdom! May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

FIFTH DAY

Torments in Purgatory (Fire of Purification)

The long tradition of the Church tells us that souls cannot be admitted to the eternal kingdom of glory before they are purified by fire. It is not the fire of Hell, which will never die, but one whose harshness will be felt in Purgatory. Such is the affirmation of all doctors of the Church. St. Augustine and St. Thomas called this: the torment by fire. That mere word is frightening. To be completely immersed in a penetrating flame... what cruel torture! Material fire acts only on the body and how terrible are its effects. Who could hold a glowing coal in his hand for only a minute? But the flame in Purgatory acts on the soul itself; it affects the intelligence, the

Heaven to be with those whom he had himself helped relieve of their suffering. Let us imitate such a beautiful example of charity.

LET US PRAY - My God, You are powerful and good enough to send us extraordinary messengers to remind us of the needs of the faithful members of the suffering Church. You want us to come to their aid. Be their Conciliator! Lord, call Your children to Your Eternal Home and may the light that never dies shine upon them! May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

THIRTIETH DAY

Last will of the deceased

1. We must execute it faithfully

A dying person's last will is sacred! We must respect it!

The Council of Trent recommended that bishops closely scrutinise the execution of the last will made by the faithful departed.

Other Councils went so far as to refuse communion to anyone who appropriated to himself the gifts of the

dying or who refused to abide by their last wishes.

Strict laws also help us to understand how guilty we become when we deprive the deceased of their merits which they tried to gain for themselves after their death.

Woe to those who would appropriate for themselves the merits of the souls in Purgatory! They deprive them of the relief they would have received and in a way, they become their torturers and thus become responsible for their torments.

Let it be known that God will not absolve them so easily. The day will come when God will ask them to account for those injustices.

They will probably be punished, even in this world, by temporal chastisements and who knows how long they will have to endure the rigours of Purgatory?

Christian souls ponder these words! Did your parents, friends and benefactors not give you pious recommendations on their death beds?

Did they not ask you openly, or in a will, for prayers and Masses?

Did they not beg you through tear-filled eyes to at least remember them in your prayers?

Have you justified the trust they placed in you?

Have you fully and conscientiously satisfied all the obligations they had left you?

If you have not done so, commit yourself to acquit that sacred debt of Justice.

2. We must execute it promptly

Not only must we faithfully accomplish the supreme wishes of the dead but we must also do it as soon as

⁸ The expression devouring fire can evoke fear among some. In this regard, it is worth reflecting on the Catechism of the Catholic Church which explains,

"Fire. While water signifies birth and the fruitfulness of life given in the Holy Spirit, fire symbolizes the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's actions. The prayer of the prophet Elijah, who 'arose like fire' and whose 'word burned like a torch,' brought down fire from heaven on the sacrifice on Mount Carmel. This event was a 'figure' of the fire of the Holy Spirit, who transforms what he touches. John the Baptist, who goes 'before [the Lord] in the spirit and power of Elijah,' proclaims Christ as the one who 'will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.' Jesus will say of the Spirit: 'I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!' In the form of tongues 'as of fire,' the Holy Spirit rests on the disciples on the morning of Pentecost and fills them with himself. The spiritual tradition has retained this symbolism of fire as one of the most expressive images of the Holy Spirit's actions. 'Do not quench the Spirit'" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 696).

who were dear to us, and who suffer, from expressing their torment to us and of begging for our pity?

In fact, Scripture, the Life of Saints and history itself relates well documented apparitions throughout the ages, in every part of the world and before all types of witnesses".

One must be aware of the gullibility of some people who think that they see apparitions all the time and who take as real the phantoms of an imagination exalted by suffering or by memories.

Guard yourself from denying the possibility of apparitions. Reason tells us that God can authorise them and experience proves to us that He has authorised them on many occasions. They may be rare, but they are possible.

2. Why does God allow them?

Scripture teaches us that after his death, Samuel appeared to Saul to severely reproach him. I am not afraid of saying out loud that the strongest reasons why God would allow such events, is without a doubt the ingratitude of those who forget them. Those who are only bent on becoming rich with their inheritance, those who let them suffer indefinitely in Purgatory without thinking of relieving their torment. Those poor souls usually appear in a form or a manner, which excites our pity and our compassion. Their face is often sad, they are covered with flames, they breathe deep sighs, they cry in pain and they spew reproaches. They sometimes reveal their presence with deafening noises, by extraordinary symbols. It is always a material sign, which stuns us and awakens in us their memory, urging

us to pray more fervently for them.

Example

A young man, born in a Christian family and faithful to his pious activities, nevertheless, gave little consideration to the souls in Purgatory. He never or rarely prayed for his deceased parents. Not only did he not practice that salvific devotion himself, he also dissuaded others from doing so claiming it was misguided charity. *"Why should one bother praying for those who are certain of being saved and who can no longer offend God nor lose Him?"* he would ask. He did not believe in apparitions either, ridiculing the very notion of the deceased visiting loved ones.

In order to correct him, God allowed those very souls to come out of their prison and to appear in horrible forms to him who was causing such severe damage in his community. They besieged him everywhere and at all hours of the day, screaming in pain, filling his eyes with strange beings, freezing his heart with fear. They allowed him no rest, night and day.

This proved to be very efficacious. Leaving behind his worldly ways he entered the Dominican Order. After his ordination to the priesthood, he inspired many with the desire to follow him in his devotion to the Holy Souls in Purgatory. Never has there been more convincing and more numerous reasons to prove that the greatest charitable deed one can perform toward a neighbour in this world is to pray for the deceased. He died in holiness and his soul surely rose to

memory, the senses; all our faculties are seized and permeated.

Faced with this torment which we could hardly imagine and which we merit so often through our daily sins, let us ask ourselves this question: who among us could dwell in that devouring fire?⁸

My God save us from the fire in Purgatory. It is the breath of God's Justice, which ignites it and fuels it. It does not behave like an element but as an instrument of Divine Power, purifying souls without destroying them. This world's fire is nothing when compared to the flames of Purgatory. The fire of this world is a gift of Providence; that in Purgatory is a creation of Divine Justice. St. Thomas said, *"The most roaring furnaces, the most ardent flames to which martyrs were condemned are a mere shadow when compared to the devouring flames we must endure in Purgatory."* *"That flame,"* said a holy Pontiff, *"is equal to that of Hell in everything except its duration. The pains of this world, no matter how severe, cannot compare with those in Purgatory. Who could then be so inhuman as to disregard the heart-rending cries of those unfortunate souls who plead unceasingly for our help? If you were in their place and the whole world has as little charity for you as you have for them, how would you define such cruelty? Meditate on this and make the resolutions which you deem necessary."*

Example

Venerable Stanislas Chocosca, a Dominican, received the visit of a soul from Purgatory, completely enveloped in flames and suffering terribly. He asked the soul if the fire in Purgatory was comparable with that which we have on earth.

The soul told him that the fire of this world is a mere breeze when compared

to the flames of Purgatory. The old priest could scarcely believe what he heard and mentioned that he would like to feel the fire, if at all possible. The flaming soul told him, *"a person still living is incapable of withstanding even a slight sample of that fire, but stretch out your hand towards me and you'll have some idea of what I'm saying."*

Stanislas offered his hand and the deceased let a drop of sweat fall upon it. The pain was so intense that the venerable Stanislas let out a horrible scream and passed out. Other religious rushed to his cell. When he came to, he related the event and the reason for his scream...

Upon hearing the description of the event, all were seized with fear and resolved to multiply their penance and prayers, to flee from worldly pleasures and to tell everyone they met about this extraordinary event, in order to encourage them to avoid Purgatory and to hasten the release of souls!

Venerable Stanislas Chocosca lived for one more year in constant agony from the bum on his hand, which would not heal.

Father Ferdinand de Castille relates another event, which occurred in Zamora Spain.

A pious and virtuous Dominican priest resided in a convent along with a no-less holy Franciscan priest with whom he often discussed the mysteries of the hereafter. They promised to remember each other after their death and vowed to pray for the one who would be the first to die. The Franciscan died shortly after and appeared to the Dominican. He related the terrible suffering he was enduring for trivial offenses he had not expiated. In order to implore his friend's pity, he let him see the flames which were torturing him, *"Nothing on earth can demonstrate the ardor of this fire. Do you want proof?"* He placed his

hand on a wooden table into which it immediately embedded itself.

That table, bearing witness to the fire in Purgatory, may be seen in Zamora, province of Leon, Spain.

Hear what Catherine of Genoa told us in her biography:

"From that Divine Love, I see rays of fire enflame the soul so completely, so fiercely, that they seem capable of annihilating not only the body, but the soul itself. Those flames have a dual purpose: purification and annihilation."

Such is the effect of fire on material things. The difference is that the soul cannot annihilate itself in God but only in its own being. The more it purifies itself, the more it annihilates itself and thus becomes totally purified in God.

Gold, purified to 24 carats cannot consume itself any longer, no matter what flame it is subjected to. What can be consumed in it is simply its own imperfections.

That is how the soul behaves in the Divine Fire. God maintains it in that fire, until all imperfections have been consumed. He brings it to the total purity of 24 carats, each individual soul, according to its degree of impurity. When it is purified, it remains completely in God with nothing of its own; its being now is in God.⁹ Once God has recalled a purified soul to himself, that soul, needing no further purification, can no longer suffer. In that state of purity, that soul can no longer feel anything other than the Divine Fire of Love and for all eternity.

LET US PRAY - Oh my God! How I dread your Divine Fire when I recall

⁹ As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1127).

¹⁰ This appears to be a theological expression from the time in which the book was written. In this, the author seems to be expressing the view that a type of damnation can be experienced by the Holy Souls who cannot see God, and yet they yearn to see His Face and experience His love eternally in Heaven. They hunger and thirst for Him whom they cannot yet see. Through our prayers, this time of yearning can be shortened, and this is a great act and gift of love and charity from the living to the deceased.

my sensuous life, my countless sins, the Little I have done for you! Have mercy on me Lord! Have mercy also on my brethren, the souls which have preceded me into eternity and who are now in the hands of your Divine Justice. Oh Jesus, be their conciliator and lead them to your kingdom of glory. May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

SIXTH DAY

The Sentence of Dam¹⁰

1. Deprived of God

The greatest suffering in Purgatory is not that of fire, as fierce as it may be. A greater suffering is that which theologians call "The sentence of Dam." In this world, we do not understand the intensity of the suffering caused by being deprived of God because we do not see

Purgatory, we can also offer: a visit to a church, a pilgrimage, the use of holy water, Masses, novenas, prayers, sacrifices, acts of love, humiliations, fasting ...

Using holy water is pleasing to the Lord.⁵⁸ Every time the priest blesses us with holy water, he does so as the Church's representative whose prayers the Saviour always heeds, no matter for whom he offers them. Maria Simma tells us, *"When you take holy water and make a sign of the Cross, allow a few drops to fall on the ground for the souls in purgatory"*.

LET US PRAY - Oh my God, do not let me forget, by a false sensibility, the salvific thought of Purgatory. Etch its existence in my heart as a powerful means of preserving me from Purgatory and of coming to the aid of the souls who linger there. Help me to bring their exile to an end and to open for them the gates of Heaven!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you

for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY

Apparitions

1. Does God allow the souls in Purgatory to come back to earth?

One of St. Augustine's close friends, the Bishop of Ustale, one day asked him the following, *"What must we make of the many reports we have of deceased people appearing and going about the world? What must we also make of the reports that in certain graveyards, sounds may be heard coming from tombs at different hours of the night?"*

"I do not doubt that those apparitions are frequent but it is not of their doing", answered the venerable doctor. *"If it were so, my pious mother who was constantly by my side, even during my pilgrimages to foreign lands, would visit me every night. I am, however, certain that the Almighty allows them to appear from time to time for reasons full of wisdom and which we must respect."*

Infact, why would God keep souls

⁵⁸ Sacramentals are instituted for the sanctification of certain ministries of the Church, certain states of life, a great variety of circumstances in Christian life, and the use of many things helpful to man. In accordance with bishops' pastoral decisions, they can also respond to the needs, culture, and special history of the Christian people of a particular region or time. They always include a prayer, often accompanied by a specific sign, such as the laying on of hands, the sign of the cross, or the sprinkling of holy water (which recalls Baptism).

Sacramentals derive from the baptismal priesthood: **every baptized person is called to be a 'blessing,' and to bless.** Hence lay people may preside at certain blessings; the more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more is its administration reserved to the ordained ministry (bishops, priests, or deacons).

Sacramentals do not confer the grace of the Holy Spirit in the way that the sacraments do, but by the Church's prayer, they prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it. "For well-disposed members of the faithful, the liturgy of the sacraments and sacramentals sanctifies almost every event of their lives with the divine grace which flows from the Paschal mystery of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. From this source all sacraments and sacramentals draw their power. There is scarcely any proper use of material things which cannot be thus directed toward the sanctification of men and the praise of God!" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1668-1670).

for the dead and who had a bad or uncertain death".⁵⁶

This is assuredly a means of avoiding the rigors in Purgatory! Let us heed the advice of the Gospels, "Let us make friends so that at the moment of our death, those whom we have relieved will introduce us to the Eternal Tabernacles" 57

Our brethren, the deceased, are now in need. What little we do for them will help them fly up to Heaven whose very gates we will have helped to open. Yes, let us deliver them from Purgatory and they will keep us from falling there ourselves. It is reported that at the moment of St. Catherine of Cortone's death, all the souls she had helped by her prayers, came to receive her triumphantly.

Example

There is a story told about a woman who had consecrated her life to the relief of the souls in Purgatory. As she was about to breathe her last, the evil one attacked her furiously, realising that she was about to escape his grasp. It seemed as if all the demons in Hell had

congregated around her. The dying woman fought desperately against the Hellish cohort, when suddenly there appeared in her room a number of beings. They were unknown to her but they shone like so many suns. They chased away the demons and surrounded her bed, encouraging and consoling her. Heaving a deep sigh, the woman cried out, "Who are you who bring me so much consolation?"

They answered, "We are grateful visitors from Heaven who were beatified by your help and we have come to help you cross into eternity, to take you from this place of anguish and to introduce you to the joys of the Holy City". With those words, a smile broke out on the dying woman's face and her eyes closed as she entered the Lord's Peace. Her soul, pure as a dove, presented itself to the Lord of lords where it found as many protectors and advocates as she had delivered from Purgatory. Found worthy of Glory, she entered in triumph amid the applause and blessings of all the souls she had pulled out in Purgatory. May we one day know the same happiness!

For the relief of the souls in

⁵⁶"The Church encourages us to prepare ourselves for the hour of our death. In the litany of the saints, for instance, she has us pray: 'From a sudden and unforeseen death, deliver us, O Lord'; to ask the Mother of God to intercede for us 'at the hour of our death' in the Hail Mary; and to entrust ourselves to St. Joseph, the patron of a happy death. Every action of yours, every thought, should be those of one who expects to die before the day is out. Death would have no great terrors for you if you had a quiet conscience Then why not keep clear of sin instead of running away from death? If you aren't fit to face death today, it's very unlikely you will be tomorrow Praised are you, my Lord, for our sister bodily Death, from whom no living man can escape. Woe on those who will die in mortal sin! Blessed are they who will be found in your most holy will, for the second death will not harm them" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1014).

⁵⁷"Holy Mary, Mother of God: With Elizabeth we marvel, 'and why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?' Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself: 'Let it be to me according to your word.' By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: 'Thy will be done.' Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death: By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the 'Mother of Mercy,' the All-Holy One. We give ourselves over to her now, in the Today of our lives. and our trust broadens further, already at the present moment, to surrender 'the hour of our death' wholly to her care. May she be there as she was at her son's death on the cross. May she welcome us as our mother at the hour of our passing to lead us to her son, Jesus, in paradise" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2677).

him directly. We do not love Him with all our heart, we do not think of Him very often. But the souls in Purgatory have seen God on their day of Judgement, and according to St. Ambrosius, "Their eyes beheld a great spectacle." God showed himself to them with all his adorable perfection. He imprinted his image so vividly in their spirit, He infused them so fiercely with the glory of his infinite Majesty, that they think of Him continually and love Him with a love that is pure and complete. This insatiable love, this deprivation, this hunger, this thirst for God torments and tortures them. They are continually dying without dying and the Church calls this condition a "death" and rightly so, "Lord, deliver them from death."

To get an idea of this torment, imagine a person dying for lack of air. See the efforts that person makes to gulp a little much-needed oxygen, how the chest is distended and the veins bulge in the neck. It is a terrible struggle between life and death. But what is a little air when compared to God? What is it then to die without God, deprived of the soul's need for God who is the soul's breath? What living hunger! What painful agony!

Lord, deliver them from that terrible agony and show them your adorable Face. Our Father who art in Heaven, gather your children out of exile!

2. Deprived of Heaven

Truly, the soul in Purgatory is not exiled from its earthly native land but from its true native land, Heaven. It has seen the splendours of its blessed homeland when it appeared before the Lord who is the joy and delight of saints. It recalled that loving invitation, "Come,

blessed of my Father, yours is the kingdom which has been prepared for you since the creation of the world." It saw and contemplated all its magnificence. Now, unable to enter that homeland, it has to wait for days, weeks, years, centuries, before being able to plunge into that torrent of Goodness which is God himself. My God! What an exile! What a cruel delay!

How heart-rending are the sufferings of that unfortunate soul, "When will I be able to see my homeland, my family in Heaven? When will I be reunited to my parents, my brothers and sisters who are in the Glory of God and stretch out their arms to me? When will I be invited to unite my soul to Jesus, my celestial spouse? Oh eternal gates, open up! Open up!"

Poor unfortunate soul! It hears a mysterious voice reply, "Not yet. Later." Dear souls, we can open those gates for you. Don't you know that prayer and charity are the golden keys¹¹ that will open the gates of Heaven?

Pray continuously and those souls in exile will rise to Heaven, to their beloved homeland, where they will sing forever the mysteries of God.

Example

When the captive children of Israel had been taken far from their homeland, unable to see the shores of the Euphrates, they sat down sadly on the strange shore. They wept for the memory of Jerusalem: they had no words of joy, no songs of glory, their harps hanging from the willow trees on the shore were silent.

The Babylonians asked them, "Children of Israel, why do you weep?" "It is because we remember Zion,

¹¹ "The Law of the Gospel requires us to make the decisive choice between 'the two ways' and to put into practice the words of the Lord. It is summed up in the Golden Rule, 'Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; this is the law and the prophets.' The entire Law of the Gospel is contained in the 'new commandment' of Jesus, to love one another as he has loved us" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1970).

our homeland! We remember and we regret!"

"But, exiled children of Zion, if you sang to soothe your suffering and dispel your sadness... Sing a few songs from your homeland. Sing your national anthem. Sing!"

"Can children in exile sing patriotic hymns on strange shores? Far from here, we remember, we regret, we sigh, we weep and we tearfully await the consolation of our return. Oh Jerusalem! May our tongue be welded to our palate should we one day forget you!"

The souls of our brethren are detained by Divine Justice, far from the homeland which they lovingly long for. They are condemned to a painful exile on strange shores, which are a thousand times more desolate than those of this world.

There they also weep as they remember their heavenly homeland. Their tears differ from ours as Heaven differs from the earth and time differs from eternity. Humans, unless they are ill, instinctively seek nourishment. If they stopped eating being neither sick nor dying, that hunger would never stop growing because that instinct would never diminish.

Imagine if there was in this world, only one bread that could stem the hunger of any creature. Man would suffer intolerable torment in order to have some of that bread. Imagine if only gazing upon that bread was enough to stem that hunger. His instinct would urge him to seek it in order to be contented. If he were told with certainty that he could never see that bread, then that for him would be Hell. He would be in a state of damnation, deprived of all hope of seeing God, true Bread, true Saviour.

But the souls in Purgatory do have the

hope of one day contemplating that Living Bread and of being filled with it. Meanwhile, they suffer from hunger and remain in their torment as long as they are unable to stem that hunger with the true Bread, Jesus Christ, true God and Saviour, our Love.

LET US PRAY - Oh merciful God, God so holy, God so Just, let yourself be moved out of love for those unfortunate holy souls. Do not conceal yourself one moment longer from the ardour of their desire, do not repel them any longer: open your bosom and allow them to enter and lose themselves in You. Oh Jesus! Call your children and our brethren to eternal happiness and may the light that never dies shine upon them! May they rest in peace!

acquittal of all the debts of the souls in Purgatory whom Our Lady wishes to deliver. I hold as my witnesses all the elected of the Militant Church on earth and the Suffering Church in Purgatory. With this consideration, be the Conciliator Lord of those who suffer in that place of atonement. May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY

How can we avoid Purgatory?

1. By often thinking about Purgatory

The thought of Purgatory leads our spirit to meditate on death and judgement and thereby can only inspire in us salvific reflections. "Meditate on your death", the Holy Spirit tells us, "and you will not sin".

The thought also inspires the spirit of penance and mortification. Meditating on the long, cruel torments, the anguish and the countless victims, who plead for relief, the soul will exclaim, "at long last, I want to atone and redeem. I want

to take advantage of the days granted to me by God's Mercy. I want to atone for my sins with a little generosity and love. I want to avoid the torments in Purgatory by any means. I will succeed with my will and God's grace".

If by God's grace we always had that truth before our very eyes, it would be impossible for us not to become saints, even great saints. The constant thought of Purgatory would eliminate from our life a multitude of venial faults, would inspire the practice of sublime virtues and in our final hour, adorned with our merits, our soul would soar towards its eternal home without having to be purified in Purgatory.

2. By often praying for the souls in Purgatory.

The fathers and doctors of the Church believe that those who take an interest and pray for the souls of the deceased escape Purgatory or at least spend little time there. They tell us that the most infallible mark of predestination is to save many souls, for God did promise to do for us as what we would do for others.

Blessed are the merciful for they will obtain mercy.

We can hope for the gratitude of the souls we have delivered. Could they show themselves less sensitive or charitable than we? At the moment of our death and our judgement, they will come running and will be our protectors, our witnesses, to tip the scales on the side of mercy. They will remove the snares of the infernal spirit and we will obtain the most precious grace: a holy death. St. Augustine said, "I have never heard of anyone who volunteered to pray

2. The advantages of heroic acts of charity

This practice is very useful for the holy souls in Purgatory. They receive so much assistance from the indulgences we earn, every day, every minute of the day, those applied to us during our lifetime, at the moment of our death and after our passing on to eternity.

There is a cool continuous mist of suffrages and indulgences, which falls without interruption on the burning souls, soothing their grief and consoling them.

This heroic gift is of no less advantage for us. God who is so good and liberal will give back a hundred-fold everything we do for his suffering children.

"Give and you shall be given and you shall receive a good measure", said Jesus.

Will Our Lady not come to our aid after we have entrusted to her all our spiritual treasures for the relief of her children?

Will that filial abandonment not earn us the gift of her mercy?

Finally, will we not receive the eternal gratitude of those souls whom we helped?

It is also believed by most that those of us who make these heroic acts will not have very much to fear; God will grant us the means of avoiding Purgatory or at least of not lingering there for very long.

I advise you to make this heroic act as of today. Follow the example of so many persons, famous for their dignity, their science and their holiness.

Follow the example of Pope Pius the IX who often recommended the vow of heroic action, which he enriched with

indulgences.

Example

In the life of St. Gertrude, we read that during her early youth, she learned to offer all her nightly prayers and all her good deeds for the intentions of the souls in Purgatory through the vow of heroic acts. This practice was so pleasing to God that the Divine Saviour often granted that she might see the most needy souls. Later, she would see those same souls delivered by her pious charity, rising to Heaven, shining in glory and full of gratitude.

St. Gertrude had spent her whole life in that holy exercise and full of confidence, she awaited her death with calm. The evil one appeared to her and showed her how she had been stripped of any merit her good deeds had earned and that she was about to be exiled to Purgatory where she would endure long lasting atonement.

That spiritual torment caused her so much desolation that her heavenly Spouse, Our Lord Jesus Christ came to console her, *"Have no fear, O my beloved, for by your charity towards the dead, you have increased your satisfactory merits. Not only are they sufficient but you have earned a very high degree of glory in the Eternal Beatitude. Thus will my Clemency generously reward your devotion to the dead. You will soon enter Paradise where you will receive a hundred-fold what you have done for them"*. How encouraging are those words of the Divine Master!

LET US PRAY - I beg you, Oh my God, to accept and confirm this vow I am offering for your glory and for my soul's salvation. I offer it also for the

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

SEVENTH DAY

The pain of Remorse

1. The evil we needed to avoid

The torments, of which we just spoke, are not the only ones which torture the souls kept captive in this place of atonement. They still feel sadness, bitter regret, desolation and fierce reproaches from their guilty conscience, a thousand times more severe for them than the pain of the flames which makes them suffer without being consumed. "In Hell," says the Gospel, "the worm that gnaws at the condemned, never dies." In Purgatory, it will surely die one day; but as long as it lives, it bites with cruelty and viciously tears its unfortunate victims. Oh, how terrible is that struggle between a soul and its guilt! From the depths of its suffering, the captive soul looks back

sorrowfully on its existence here on earth. In the glow of the flame that tortures it, it clearly sees all the evil it has committed and which it could have avoided with the grace of God, evil¹² which it had never confessed. **It discovers millions of sins it has never perceived or which it had considered trivial, having seen no need for an examination of conscience.** Forced to recognise its guilt, whereas it would only have had to make an effort to be more loving and just, that poor soul is deeply afflicted and cries out in the delirium of its torture, "My God, you are just and your judgement is equitable. I am the only author of my suffering. Oh if I could only start my life on earth over again, Lord how I would serve you and how carefully I would preserve my soul from Purgatory." Vain and sterile regrets! Unfortunately, it is too late!

Let us learn, oh faithful souls. Let us free ourselves from evil. Let us do penance here on earth in order to avoid that fierce torment, that gnawing worm in Purgatory. My God! Strip, burn, crush us in this world and help us avoid that place of penance.

2. The good we should have done

Another torture for the soul in exile is viewing all the good it could have done and yet omitted, all the blessings it received from the bounty of God and which it often misused. What more could God have done for that soul? He

¹²"To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church, it is necessary to understand that sin has a double consequence. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the 'eternal punishment' of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the 'temporal punishment' of sin. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1472).

nourished it with his Sacraments, fortified it by grace, encouraged it with good examples witnessed in others. Supported by so many gifts, it should have taken giant steps on the road to holiness and arrived like so many to a higher degree of perfection. Yet it often stopped along the way or walked at a snail's pace. If only it had been generous, had made penance and sacrifices; if only it had accepted the inevitable hardships of life with resignation, it would have made earth its Purgatory and would have entered into the eternal kingdom with little or no purification necessary. Now instead, it must endure, through its own faults and without merit, much greater suffering and torment. Instead of the crown of glory it would have received in Heaven, it is tortured with a crown of flame in Purgatory. How painful is that realisation.

Dear souls, have we not ourselves accomplished very few good deeds? Have we prayed for the souls of our deceased loved ones? Let us make the resolution to do better in the future, with God's help and through the intercession of our Lady.

Example

Gerson, the chancellor of the University of Paris, as distinguished for his virtue as for his eloquence, relates in one of his books the story of a poor mother who had been forgotten in death by her son. God allowed her to appear to her son in order to express her torment and to beg for his prayers, "My son," she cried, "my dear son! Think of your poor mother who is suffering so much. Consider the terrible torments, to which the Justice of God has condemned me for

the sins of my mortal life. The most excruciating for me is remorse, the regret I have for having loved God so little after He had granted me so many graces. I offended such a great, just, loving God, such a tender Father, so generous a benefactor! That very thought is so painful; it kills me continuously; that gnawing worm is like a sharp dagger which pierces me without bringing about my death; it makes me weep tears of blood. Nevertheless, I am forced to beat my chest and cry out, "My God, you are just and equitable; if I suffer so much, it is through my own fault, my own great fault!" "Oh my son! If you still love me, have mercy on me, tear the dagger from my chest, deliver me from this gnawing worm and open the gates of Heaven for me. I beg you, my dear child to serve God more than your poor mother did and to die with contrition in your heart!" Faithful to his mother's warning and plea, the child prayed constantly for his mother and died in holiness.

LET US PRAY - My God, give me the grace to become as holy and as perfect as you want me to be. For being neglectful, the souls in Purgatory are severely punished by regret that tear their hearts continuously. Appease their remorse, Lord, by forgiving their faults. The dagger, which pierces their heart is so painful! Oh Jesus, be their Conciliator! Call your children and our brethren into the bosom of your Glory! May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters

value of celestial interests.

The poor souls in Purgatory understand this even more: they would give everything they have for the slightest indulgence. It is up to us to give in their stead as much as possible!

(1) Since Vatican II, indulgences are not quantified in days, months or years. They are merely called partial or plenary.

LET US PRAY - You know of my need, Oh Jesus! In excess of Your Mercy, with the treasure of your merits and your satisfactions. You have willed for me to find the means of acquiring all that I am lacking. I will come every day to obtain from this treasure the precious indulgences, which will erase the debts of my deceased loved ones. Oh Jesus! Be their Conciliator! May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY

Eighth means of relieving the souls in Purgatory - Heroic acts of charity

1. Its nature

A heroic action consists in abandoning into Our Lady's hands for the souls in Purgatory, all good deeds, even those done for us by others, before and after our death.

On November 20, 1854, Pope Pius IX recommended that act in a decree to all the faithful and granted it special indulgences. All the indulgences earned by the faithful benefit the souls in Purgatory without our having to present the intention with formulated prayers. Pope Pius IX called this act the greatest consolation for the souls in Purgatory. We can thus say that the heroic act is a gift of Mercy, the most salvific act of charity.

There is no doubt that we have nothing to lose by abandoning something to God. Our Lord revealed to St. Gertrude that He looks at what we do for the souls in Purgatory as if we had done it to Him, as if we had delivered Him from a prison of fire. This act of charity is also a great honour and a great joy bestowed upon Our Lady, because we put everything into her hands in order for her to deliver her suffering children.

Note: Although this act is sometimes called a vow, it is not so. Neither is it necessary to recite a formulated prayer. An act of will and an offering given with our heart are sufficient to grant indulgences and privileges. In fact, this act of will can be revoked by him who made it.

Finally, we must accomplish the prescribed works completely. These are usually very easy to accomplish, take no time to complete and are accessible to all the faithful: a short prayer, a small offering, a mortification or a communion...⁵⁵

Dear Christian souls do not neglect obtaining those easily earned treasures for the faithful departed. Could your neglect be excusable today, especially when you realise how numerous and easily obtainable they are?

Yes, it is your responsibility to help your suffering brethren and it costs so little.

If you earn partial indulgences for them, you shorten their time of atonement; if you are so generous as to earn a plenary indulgence for them, the soul to whom you've applied it will probably be freed of all debt. Heaven will open up to that soul where it will rise radiantly, carrying eternal gratitude for its benefactor which it will lay at the Lord's feet. St. Louis added this last recommendation in his testament, *"My son, remember to earn the Church's indulgences"*.

(It is possible for us, with the recommended conditions, to earn plenary indulgences during certain pilgrimages, such as at St. Mary of the Angels in Assisi, at Collevaenza, at La Scala Santa in Rome and during a holy year when the Pope grants such indulgences).

Example

A Franciscan priest had just finished

a sermon on charity and had granted his congregation 10 days of indulgence (1), given with the authority granted him by the Pope.

A high-society lady, who had lost everything except the fear of openly admitting her present misery, went to see the priest to expose her secret privately. That good shepherd used the same words that St. Peter had used on the crippled man in Jerusalem, *"I have neither gold nor silver but what I do have I give you. I repeat my assurance that you have earned ten days of indulgences by attending my homily this morning. Go and see the banker who, to date, does not give importance to gathering spiritual treasures and offer him the merit of the indulgences you've received in exchange for whatever alms he may offer. I am certain that he will help you out"*.

The poor woman went to the banker in all simplicity and full of faith. The man greeted her with kindness. He asked her with some amusement what she expected to receive for the ten days of indulgences. *"As much as they weigh on the scale"*, she told him.

"Here is a scale", he told her. *"Deposit the slip of paper with the intended indulgences and I will deposit a coin"*.

Surprise! The platter with the coin did not descend. It did not do so after two, ten, twenty, one hundred coins had been deposited. It did not do so until the exact sum the woman needed was deposited on the platter. At that moment, the two platters levelled off. It was a precious lesson for the banker on the

and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

EIGHTH DAY

Duration of suffering for the souls in Purgatory

1. What is the duration?

The Church has not defined anything specific as to the duration of the suffering in Purgatory, but it clearly demonstrates what it believes by celebrating anniversary Masses, for the souls of the deceased. It thus believes that the atonement can be long even lasting for centuries. It is also the belief of the Holy Pontiffs¹³.

Cardinal Bellarmin said that the duration could last until judgement day for some souls if the Church did not intervene. Alas! There are souls who have been languishing in Purgatory for many years.

Who can tell us the length of time and the suffering we will have to endure for our sins so as to remove the stain which sin leaves behind on our souls? How long will it take to purify it, that it may shine with the beauty of Angels?

Oh fathomless mystery of the Judgement of God!

Oh how greatly does that duration

add to the rigours of this suffering! Suffering horribly and for so long! To wait! To wait indefinitely! What pain, what martyrdom for those souls! The intensity of their suffering makes the duration seem even longer.

Lord, alleviate their suffering, ease the intensity of the flame, which our brothers, our sisters and our friends must endure, especially those who will have to remain the longest in that place of atonement.

2. What are the causes?

Let us not be surprised by the terrible duration of the torment in Purgatory. One of the most holy Sisters of the Visitation, Sister Marie-Denise, according to all historians was the recipient of extraordinary graces for the relief of the deceased, noted that many things inevitably affected the duration of the atonement:

1. The perfect purity of a soul before it can possess God.
2. The multitude of our venial sins.
3. The little contrition we express and the little penance we make for our confessed sins.
4. The absolute inability for souls to relieve their own suffering.
5. The abandonment, the strange abandonment of the dead, our guilty neglect of their plight: these reflections are serious and unfortunately they are so true.

So as of now, let us not be too hasty in canonising our poor deceased! We need so much to believe that they are in

⁵⁵"The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes: He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2015).

¹³"Christ's whole life is a mystery of redemption. Redemption comes to us above all through the blood of his cross, but this mystery is at work throughout Christ's entire life: -already in his Incarnation through which by becoming poor he enriches us with his poverty; - in his hidden life which by his submission atones for our disobedience; - in his word which purifies its hearers; - in his healings and exorcisms by which 'he took our infirmities and bore our diseases';- and in his Resurrection by which he justifies us" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 517).

the kingdom of beatitude and peace that we are anxious to convince ourselves that they have already arrived. Thus we stop praying for them.

See how the saints thought and behaved so differently. They prayed their whole life long for those who had preceded them in death. Let us do the same.

We could not keep a fingertip in the flame of Purgatory for a minute without uttering screams of agony. How could we allow through our own neglect the souls of those whom we loved so much to be plunged into the fire of Purgatory for years and years? That would be too cruel!

Beloved souls, we will never forget you. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, help us to pray!

Example

A man who had been imprisoned for years petitioned a rich and powerful woman. She had the necessary wealth and influence to deliver the man and to put an end to his suffering. This is what he wrote to this woman, *"Madame, on October 25th of this year, 1760, I will have been suffering in this prison for 100,000 hours and I will have yet another 200,000 hours to endure. I beg you madam to have pity on one whose suffering is so long and painful!"*

Was the heart of that woman touched by such eloquence? I don't know. But it seems to me that little more could be added in so few words, *"I have been suffering for 100,000 hours and I have yet to face another 200,000 hours!"* He had counted the hours!

In a French monastery, two priests who had a great zeal for the suffering of the poor souls in Purgatory made a

solemn promise to each other: they would celebrate their morning Mass for the first one who died.

One of the priests died. The following morning, his colleague celebrated his morning Mass for him. During his prayers of thanksgiving at the end of the Mass, he saw his friend appear before him shining in glory... The glorious soul then took on a more somber look and said to his friend, *"My brother, where is your faith? You do not deserve God's pity on your soul! You left me in Purgatory for over a year before celebrating the Mass we had promised each other?"*

The priest answered in shock, *"What are you saying? Your body has not yet been buried! You left this world only a few hours ago and I have just finished celebrating the Mass I had promised..."*

The soul of the deceased monk then sighed, *"Oh how terrible is the suffering in Purgatory. I am now flying to heaven where I will implore God to grant you what you did for me because that Mass was needed for my release from Purgatory."*

That is how the souls in Purgatory calculate the duration of their suffering. It is not by hours or by days that they are numbered but by years and centuries and those years seem to be an eternity for them. My Lord, forgive me and have mercy upon me. Through the merits of your Holy Passion, deliver the souls in Purgatory!

LET US PRAY - I fall at your feet, oh my God, seized with fright at the thought of the terrible torments, so long and intense, endured by the souls in Purgatory! Full of compassion for those unfortunate prisoners, I beg you

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY

Seventh means of relieving the souls in Purgatory - Indulgences

1. How precious they are

Our sins are so serious and grievous, our reparations so slight, that we could not acquit the temporal debt of these sins in this world if the Church did not assist our weaknesses by opening up the treasure chest of indulgences.⁵³

This is an immense, inexhaustible treasure, consisting of the abundant merits of Our Lord Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints of Heaven. The key is entrusted to the Pontiff of the Church.⁵⁴

After Holy Mass and Holy Communion, there is nothing more admirable or valuable, for the living or for the dead. It is, in a sense, Divine Mercy's last effort for the salvation of souls.

Through indulgences, which are so numerous, easily earned and within the reach of everyone, we have the means of appeasing Divine Justice. We can comfort souls who are dear to us and who expiate in terrible flames the faults

of their past life.

Consider that multitude of indulgences, which the Church grants so freely, as a marvelous mist which quenches those who are thirsty, as the consolation of those who weep, as the beatific joy of those in captivity. Eternal and paternal invention! What a treasure!

Let us hasten to acquire those spiritual riches, more precious than gold, more abundant and diverse than ever. Let us earn many and often. What encouragement there is in this thought: they are for my dear relatives, for the most needy souls, for the souls that suffer the most! These merits will comfort those whom I love and whom I mourn!

2. How we must earn them

Three conditions are needed to earn indulgences.

First we must be in a state of grace; before we aid others. God wants us to close the gates of Hell behind us. In fact, any deed accomplished in a state of sin is a dead deed, deprived of all merit.

Next, it must be our intention, at least in general, to obtain indulgences. It is thus most important for us to renew every morning, the desire to earn indulgences, which are attached to the pious deeds of the day.

⁵³The doctrine and practice of indulgences in the Church are closely linked to the effects of the sacrament of Penance. What is an indulgence?

'An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints.' 'An indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin.' Indulgences may be applied to the living or the dead" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1471).

⁵⁴An indulgence is obtained through the Church who, by virtue of the power of binding and loosing granted her by Christ Jesus, intervenes in favor of individual Christians and opens for them the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints to obtain from the Father of mercies the remission of the temporal punishments due for their sins. Thus the Church does not want simply to come to the aid of these Christians, but also to spur them to works of devotion, penance, and charity. Since the faithful departed now being purified are also members of the same communion of saints, one way we can help them is to obtain indulgences for them, so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1478-1479).

Example

A parish retreat was being held in a small church where large crowds came to hear the Word of God and to beg His forgiveness. Three men however, refused stubbornly to attend the event. They had sworn never to set foot in a church and especially never to go to confession. One wife went to speak with one of the missionaries. *"Do you have children?"* asked the man of God. *"I have two young children"*, she answered. *"Then bring them to the church and make a Way of the Cross with them and offer it for those souls in Purgatory who are in most need of mercy. Ask for your husband's conversion through the intercession of the souls you will have comforted and I assure you that your prayer will be answered. Experience has taught me two things: that the Way of the Cross is the most efficient means of relieving the suffering of departed loved ones and of obtaining through their intercession, the very help that we seek"*. Every day, at noon, the wife came and knelt at the foot of the tabernacle with her two children with whom she made a Way of the Cross. At every station, the children repeated from the depths of their heart, *"Oh Jesus! Give rest to the dead and convert our father"*. The last night of the retreat the sinner came and knelt at the feet of the missionary and begged him to hear his confession. The next morning he knelt at the altar next to his wife and received Holy Communion. After Mass was over, he hugged his wife and blessed his children. Oh precious Way of the Cross! Useful to all, but especially sinners and to the suffering souls in Purgatory!

LET US PRAY - Oh Mary, Mother of Sorrows! You who have so often meditated on your Divine Son's Passion, you who were the first to walk that hill consecrated by His Passion, teach us to meditate and to practice like you this holy and salvific devotion. Grant that we find in it the graces of conversion for sinners, of perseverance for the just and of consolation for the souls in Purgatory. Sweet Jesus, grant those blessed souls eternal rest!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

in the name of Jesus Christ to look upon them with mercy and to put an end to their martyrdom. Oh Mary, sweet consolation of the afflicted, be their Conciliator! Deliver your children from captivity! May they rest in peace by your side in Heaven!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

NINTH DAY

The powerlessness of the souls in Purgatory

1. Powerlessness in their suffering

Consider the fact that at the moment of death all merit ceases because the soul no longer possesses its freedom to choose between good and evil. Purgatory is that long night of which Jesus spoke, during which no one can freely act; those who languish there are like the farmer of the Gospels whom the father no longer allows to cultivate his field.

That is why the deceased can no longer do anything to alleviate their suffering: perfect resignation, the intensity of their torment, their love of God, nothing will shorten for an instant their stay in Purgatory. The slightest

suffering would have granted them celestial glory while they were still on earth, in this place of atonement, their suffering is sterile for them and sterile for Heaven; it is simply the acquittal of their debts.

Alas, to suffer for years, perhaps for centuries without merit for themselves! How sad that thought and how much it must add to their torment! Also, it is from us that they await assistance and relief.

Truly we are the only source of comfort for the dead! We alone are their liberating providence. Heaven consoles them. We relieve them. Heaven encourages them. We deliver them. Saints open their arms to receive them. We introduce them to their eternal inheritance. Such is our power. Such is our duty. Let us meditate on this!

2. Powerlessness in their prayer

The souls in Purgatory are powerless to relieve their own suffering through their prayer or through their suffering. It is in vain that they cry out to God from the depths of their burning prison.

In vain do they attempt to bend his Justice as they say with David, *"My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me. I cry out by day and you answer me not; by night and there is no relief for me. Remember your mercy O my Lord. Break the bonds that keep me far from you. Deliver me from my torments. Have mercy Lord, have mercy!"*

The time for mercy no longer exists in Purgatory; the reign of Justice has begun. Repeated supplications are no longer efficient; when our debt has been

completely acquitted through our suffering, our soul will fly to Heaven¹⁴.

If the prayers of the deceased no longer benefit them, ours deeply touch the heart of God. As our prayers rise up to Heaven, mercy pours on the souls in Purgatory in torrents of grace, forgiveness, freedom and glory.

It is through prayer that Mary and Martha obtained the resurrection of Lazarus and it is through prayer that we will obtain the deliverance of our loved ones. Let us pray with all our heart! Let us pray unceasingly for them! Let us often say, *"Good and merciful Jesus, grant them eternal rest! Oh Mary, our Mother and our Consolation come to their aid! All saints of Paradise, intercede for them!"*

Example

Going through Judea, Jesus met a paralytic who was sitting sadly near the pool of Siloam. On certain days, an angel descended upon the waters of the pool and stirred the waters. The first person to bathe in it would then be healed. That poor man had been waiting for a long time for his healing. Moved by compassion, Jesus asked him why he did not go forward with the others to be healed. *"Lord,"* answered the man, *"it is because I am paralysed in all my limbs and unable to move by myself. The healing which I desire so deeply does not depend on me, poor paralytic. I am in need of a friend who will come to my rescue and give me his hand!"* Poor

paralytic!

Such is the sad state of the holy souls in Purgatory; they remain immobile in the torturing flames, incapable of helping themselves in the least, unable to throw themselves in the salvific pool of Jesus' Precious Blood. They are waiting for some compassionate friends to come along and bathe them. Be that charitable friend, that liberating angel for the paralytic souls in Purgatory!

LET US PRAY - My God, I beg you to have mercy on the poor souls who are lingering in that long night of purification. Alas, they can no longer help themselves. Allow me to be their mediator and to stand between them and your holy Justice. I beg you Lord, shorten their exile! Oh my Jesus be their Conciliator! May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

¹⁴It should be noted that the suffering of the Holy Souls is not in any way similar to physical suffering that one might endure here in this life. It is the burning desire to be with God that they experience. The intensity is such that the yearning is deep and cannot be satisfied except through the prayers and supplications of the living. A further comment here is that time is an earthly concept that is not understood in Purgatory, which is outside of earthly time. But, their suffering is not eternal like that of the damned, because the Holy Souls are assured of Beatitude once their purification is complete.

step of the Way of the Cross we understand what caused Jesus so much pain. We must fear sinning again in order so as not to renew the suffering of His Passion. To be more like Him, we must seek the spirit of sacrifice and penance, have zeal for the salvation of souls, love humility and poverty, pardon injuries, be patient in trials and renounce worldly attachments.

St. Bonaventure said that if we wanted to grow in faith, to attract all graces and to become similar not only to Angels but to the Son of God, we must often make the Way of the Cross. We will thus take the royal way that leads to Paradise.⁵⁰

There is no more sure method of growing in virtue and of imitating the Divine Example who ascended the road to Calvary. Make the Way of the Cross often, as did Our Lady, the first disciples and Saints. Every time you do, you will feel better, more Christian, nearer to Heaven and to the Heart of Jesus.⁵¹

2. It is the Way of Heaven for the dead.

The Way of the Cross is also a salvific practice for our dear departed.

By following Jesus on the road to Calvary, we gather each drop of His Precious Blood, every merit of His painful Martyrdom and we offer them to the Divine Justice of God in atonement for the debts owed by souls in Purgatory⁵²; it is a breath of joy, a relief. The Way of the Cross is especially salvific for the dead because of the precious indulgences which are attached to it and which are applicable to them. They are so numerous that we cannot number them as teaches St. Benedict. All we need is to be in a state of grace. We can do this exercise many times a day.

If you wish to comfort and deliver many souls from Purgatory, practice this devotion for them. You will find along this painful road, consecrated by the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the consolation which your heart needs to endure the loss of loved ones and the means of leading them on the road to Heaven. What a treasure for you and for the deceased you cherish! Make a commitment today to make the Way of the Cross weekly, especially on Fridays, a memorable day, which speaks so well of our gratitude.

⁵⁰"The Redeemer suffered in place of man and for man. Every man has his own share in the Redemption. Each one is also called to share in that suffering through which the Redemption was accomplished. He is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed. In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption. Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ" (Pope John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, 1984, 19).

⁵¹Jesus told St. Faustina that "there is no way to heaven except the way of the cross. I followed it first. You must learn that it is the shortest and surest way.[...] A suffering soul is closest to My Heart" (*Divine Mercy in my Soul*, 1487).

⁵²"The witnesses of the Cross and Resurrection were convinced that 'through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God'. And Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says this: 'We ourselves boast of you... for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you are suffering'. Thus to share in the sufferings of Christ is, at the same time, to suffer for the Kingdom of God. In the eyes of the just God, before his judgment, those who share in the suffering of Christ become worthy of this Kingdom. Through their sufferings, in a certain sense they repay the infinite price of the Passion and death of Christ, which became the price of our Redemption: at this price the Kingdom of God has been consolidated anew in human history, becoming the definitive prospect of man's earthly existence. Christ has led us into this Kingdom through his suffering. And also through suffering those surrounded by the mystery of Christ's Redemption become mature enough to enter this Kingdom" (Pope John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, 1984, 21).

least he would then be done with suffering. He died instantly and his soul was cast into the abyss of atonement. The compassionate Angel came to console him. Upon seeing the Angel, the poor soul cried out in a voice that was torn with pain:

"Seductive Angel, you deceived me. You assured me that I would only have one day to suffer in Purgatory and here I've been for twenty years suffering the most cruel torments".

"You are mistaken; only a few minutes have elapsed since your death and your body is not yet cold on your death bed", replied the Angel. *"Then ask God to allow me to return to earth to suffer anything God asks of me for a year",* said the deceased.

His request agreed to, the ailing man spent that year convincing everyone he met to accept wholeheartedly all the suffering of this world rather than to expose themselves to the torments of the next life.

He often said, *"Patience in one's suffering is the golden key to Heaven. Let us take advantage of this reality and offer our suffering"*.⁴⁹

He died at the end of the year as was agreed.

LET US PRAY - Be blessed, O my God who has willed that suffering and unceasing sorrows with which my life is sowed, become for me a source of abundant merit and a means of satisfying your Justice for the souls of my dear friends and relatives.

⁴⁹In the Body of Christ, which is ceaselessly born of the Cross of the Redeemer, it is precisely suffering permeated by the spirit of Christ's sacrifice that is the irreplaceable mediator and author of the good things which are indispensable for the world's salvation. It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls. Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of the Redemption. In that "cosmic" struggle between the spiritual powers of good and evil, spoken of in the Letter to the Ephesians (89), human sufferings, united to the redemptive suffering of Christ, constitute a special support for the powers of good, and open the way to the victory of these salvific powers" (Pope John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, 1984, 27).

Henceforth, far from complaining about my crosses, I will carry them with patience and resignation and You will grant me and my relatives your perfect Mercy. Oh Jesus, be their Conciliator! Call your dear children and our brethren to your kingdom of joy. May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY

Sixth means of relieving the souls in Purgatory - The Way of the Cross

1. It is the Way to Heaven for the living

This devotion, so great for the memories it awakens, so precious for the advantages it procures, is the most efficient means of conquering our passions and is the surest way of arriving at the summit of perfection. With every

TENTH DAY

The two paths that lead to Purgatory

1. The path of mortal sin

By its nature, mortal sin leads much further than Purgatory: it casts one into the pits of Hell. Souls, which are permeated with sin plunge into the depths of Hell¹⁵. They cannot stand the light of God, which appears to them at the time of their death¹⁶. But if the sinner repents and confesses, the grace of God descends upon him through sacramental grace. What happens then? The sins are forgiven, the friendship with God restored and all that remains is the hurt we have inflicted on God, which we must expiate: either in this world through penance, prayers, holy Mass, or in the next through the torments of Purgatory. After many years of separation, what a terrible and long purification awaits that soul!

¹⁵"The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, 'eternal fire.' The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1035).

¹⁶"God predestines no one to go to hell; for this, a wilful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end. In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, who does not want 'any to perish, but all to come to repentance':

Father, accept this offering

from your whole family.

Grant us your peace in this life,

save us from final damnation,

and count us among those you have chosen" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1037).

¹⁷"The doctrine and practice of indulgences in the Church are closely linked to the effects of the sacrament of Penance. What is an indulgence? An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints.' 'An indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin.' Indulgences may be applied to the living or the dead" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1471).

¹⁸"To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church, it is necessary to understand that sin has a double consequence. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the 'eternal punishment' of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the 'temporal punishment' of sin. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain.

The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but temporal punishment of sin remains. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace. He should strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as by prayer and the various practices of penance, to put off completely the 'old man' and to put on the 'new man'" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1472-1473)

What enormous debt will have to be expiated! It is true that sacramental penance reduces our debt but it is so seldom done and with so little fervour!

It is true that mortification and indulgences can preserve us and deliver us from Purgatory, but so few Christians make mortifications and fast! Those who are the guiltiest are the ones who make the least penance!

How many do not have sufficient contrition to earn indulgences¹⁷! How few are able to avoid that terrible purification! So many sins and so little atonement¹⁸!

If our past life has been tarnished by grave sins, that consideration must make us ponder and awaken in us the desire for penance. It must also lead us to pray for the souls in most need of God's mercy. Oh my God! Fill my spirit with a holy fear of your terrible Judgement!

2. The path of venial sin

Do you do penance? Christians, if you are innocent and have conserved the purity of your baptism, as did St. Louis, how numerous are the venial sins, which make you indebted towards God¹⁹! Truly, those sins are innumerable. Your life may well be strewn with venial sins such as useless thoughts, careless words, vanities, wasted time, and judgemental comments²⁰. Do you not offend God at times, with the pretext that your faults are slight? Are you not often guilty of certain venial faults which are near to being mortal²¹? Do you do penance regularly? If your life is full of debts and you make little retribution, you are obviously on the path that leads directly to Purgatory. How many days, months, years will you have to suffer in that terrible place of atonement! How long and painful will your Purgatory be! Think about it and say, "*I want to settle my debts towards God. I want to take the little time that is left to me through his Divine Mercy to satisfy his Justice; I*

want to settle the debts that are so easily acquitted with a little love and charity. Oh souls in Purgatory come to my aid. Pray that God gives me a spirit of penance and I will pray for your relief and your consolation."

Example

In 1848 there lived in London a 29 year-old widow, quite rich and very worldly. Among the regular guests in her home was a young lord of questionable conduct.

Late one night, this young widow was in bed reading a book when suddenly, a bright light started to fill her room with growing intensity. Astonished and quite worried, she saw the door to her room slowly open. The young lord who had been her accomplice in revelry stood there, all in flames. Before she could utter a word, he grabbed her wrist and shouted, "there truly is a Hell where one burns! Know this for certain!"

The searing pain in her wrist caused the young widow to pass out. When she came to about thirty minutes later, she called for her chambermaid. Upon entering the room, the servant could smell the strong odour of burned flesh. She noticed the burn on her mistress' wrist, which was seared down to the bone. The wound had the distinct print of a man's hand.

¹⁹"Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him. Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1855).

²⁰"Mortal sin, by attacking the vital principle within us - that is, charity - necessitates a new initiative of God's mercy and a conversion of heart which is normally accomplished within the setting of the sacrament of reconciliation: When the will sets itself upon something that is of its nature incompatible with the charity that orders man toward his ultimate end, then the sin is mortal by its very object . . . whether it contradicts the love of God, such as blasphemy or perjury, or the love of neighbour, such as homicide or adultery But when the sinner's will is set upon something that of its nature involves a disorder, but is not opposed to the love of God and neighbour, such as thoughtless chatter or immoderate laughter and the like, such sins are venial" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1856).

²¹"For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must together be met: 'Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1857).

2. Involuntary sacrifice

If voluntary suffering disturbs our courage, Providence imposes suffering which is more salvific for us and for our deceased, because they are not of our own doing. These are afflictions, spiritual grief, and physical afflictions, which are unavoidable in this world. We know this. We find these afflictions everywhere.

Our life on earth is a continuous struggle, a long daily martyrdom. Should we complain? No, for all that pain can become a means of salvation for us and for others. We can use it to soothe the cruelest pains of those suffering holy souls in Purgatory. Yes, through the cross which Providence places on our shoulders, with that thorn which pierces our heart, with a tear, a sigh, with an act of resignation, we can relieve the great torments in Purgatory and dry the tears of our loved ones.

Courage then! Let us put up with a bit of cold. We will thus cool the souls who are burning in the fire of Justice. Let us put up with a little heat. It will turn the ardour of the flame into a light mist. Let us put up with a bit of discomfort. We will deliver souls from the depths in Purgatory. Let us accept fatigue and listlessness. We will lift them on high to the glories of Heaven: a moment of sorrow for us, for them an eternity of joy!

Example

St. Antoin tells of a sick man who suffered the most excruciating pains. He begged God to relieve his suffering, but to no avail. One day, an Angel appeared to him, and said:

"The Lord has sent me to offer you a choice between a year of suffering and one day in Purgatory".⁴⁸

The sick man did not hesitate for an instant. One single day in Purgatory! At

⁴⁸"Down through the centuries and generations it has been seen that in suffering there is concealed a particular power that draws a person interiorly close to Christ, a special grace. To this grace many saints, such as Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Ignatius of Loyola and others, owe their profound conversion. A result of such a conversion is not only that the individual discovers the salvific meaning of suffering but above all that he becomes a completely new person. He discovers a new dimension, as it were, of his entire life and vocation. This discovery is a particular confirmation of the spiritual greatness which in man surpasses the body in a way that is completely beyond compare. When this body is gravely ill, totally incapacitated, and the person is almost incapable of living and acting, all the more do interior maturity and spiritual greatness become evident, constituting a touching lesson to those who are healthy and normal.

This interior maturity and spiritual greatness in suffering are certainly the result of a particular conversion and cooperation with the grace of the Crucified Redeemer. It is he himself who acts at the heart of human sufferings through his Spirit of truth, through the consoling Spirit. It is he who transforms, in a certain sense, the very substance of the spiritual life, indicating for the person who suffers a place close to himself. It is he - as the interior Master and Guide - who reveals to the suffering brother and sister this wonderful interchange, situated at the very heart of the mystery of the Redemption. Suffering is, in itself, an experience of evil. But Christ has made suffering the firmest basis of the definitive good, namely the good of eternal salvation. By his suffering on the Cross, Christ reached the very roots of evil, of sin and death. He conquered the author of evil, Satan, and his permanent rebellion against the Creator. To the suffering brother or sister Christ discloses and gradually reveals the horizons of the Kingdom of God: the horizons of a world converted to the Creator, of a world free from sin, a world being built on the saving power of love. And slowly but effectively, Christ leads into this world, into this Kingdom of the Father, suffering man, in a certain sense through the very heart of his suffering. For suffering cannot be transformed and changed by a grace from outside, but from within. And Christ through his own salvific suffering is very much present in every human suffering, and can act from within that suffering by the powers of his Spirit of truth, his consoling Spirit.

This is not all: the Divine Redeemer wishes to penetrate the soul of every sufferer through the heart of his holy Mother, the first and the most exalted of all the redeemed. As though by a continuation of that motherhood which by the power of the Holy Spirit had given him life, the dying Christ conferred upon the ever Virgin Mary a new kind of motherhood-spiritual and universal-towards all human beings, so that every individual, during the pilgrimage of faith, might remain, together with her, closely united to him unto the Cross, and so that every form of suffering, given fresh life by the power of this Cross, should become no longer the weakness of man but the power of God" (Pope, John Paul II, Salvifici Doloris, 1984, 26).

dressed in white and radiant as the sun. She said, *"I am now rising up to the eternal beatitudes!"* The next morning, Elizabeth went to church to thank God for her daughter's deliverance. Father Mendez saw her and told her he had celebrated the last of the 365 Masses the day before... At the very moment of her daughter's deliverance... Then Elizabeth remembered the hermit!

LET US PRAY - As guilty as the souls in Purgatory may be in your eyes, oh God of Mercy, allow yourself to be appeased and forgive them. Behold Your Son's Precious Blood poured out every day on the altar to cleanse them of their sins. Listen to the voice of the adorable Blood, which does not cry out for vengeance, but for grace and mercy. O Jesus! Lamb most pure, who takes away the sins of the world, be the Conciliator of my dear deceased brethren. May they be delivered and may they rest in peace by your side!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY

Fifth means of relieving the souls in Purgatory - Suffering

1. Voluntary suffering

"Let us relieve the souls in Purgatory", said St. Chrysostome; *"let us bring them relief through everything which grieves us; for God applies to the dead, the merits of the living".* Suffering! It is the great atonement which the Lord asks of those indebted to His Justice; we suffer for them in order that they suffer less. Oh! If our faith was stronger, our charity more alive, what mortification we would impose upon ourselves to relieve and deliver the friends whom we loved so much and who are suffering so intensely? Penance, fasting and austerity would become our daily exercises. Let us at least have enough courage to accomplish small sacrifices: refusing a small pleasure, a dangerous affection, a bad reading, sacrificing a bad habit, a luxury or a vanity. *"Choose the better victim",* said Father Felix, *"choose it from the depths of your heart. For those whom you loved the most, give up what is most dear to you; sacrifice your very selves and may the price of your sacrifice become the ransom for your loved ones".*

Those blessed souls rise up on the wings of our sacrifices, our merits, our suffering. They rise triumphantly and thank us for our generosity. When they are in God's Glory, they will give us back a hundred-fold what we have given them. What consolation and hope!

Oh Jesus crucified, help us to understand the price of suffering!

She also noticed that the carpet showed the imprint of a man's foot from the doorway to the bed and that those footprints had burned the carpet. The next day, the widow learned that the young lord had died that very night....

LET US PRAY - My God, how many faults do I allow myself to make every day without the slightest regret as if they were of no importance! If I considered the debt I will one day have to acquit, how much more vigilant I would be. Please strengthen my weaknesses and reanimate my failing courage. Please have mercy on my brethren of the triumphant Church! May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

ELEVENTH DAY

Holiness of the souls in Purgatory

1. They love God

St. Catherine of Genoa told us, *"Every soul, the moment it is in Purgatory is elevated to a degree of perfection and Divine union which could serve as a*

model for the most holy person here on earth." There are in Purgatory a multitude of predestined souls who have triumphed over their passions, who have conquered the world and the devil, who have practiced the most heroic virtues and have come out of that place of exile full of merit. They would shine like the brightest stars if their dress of innocence had not been soiled by the smallest of imperfections. The least of these souls is countless times more precious than the whole of our physical universe. They love God completely. That love makes them love their suffering and the Justice, which keeps them in that place of purification. Should we open for them the gates of Heaven, they would chose to remain where they are rather than to enter into eternal glory with the slightest imperfection. They cannot thank their Beloved enough for having prepared for them a place of atonement which allows them to acquire that gleaming purity which is worthy of their Heavenly Spouse. Like Job, amidst terrible affliction, they continually cry out, *"Blessed be the name of Jesus!"* Let us therefore be compassionate towards those holy souls, for more than ever they need our assistance. One day, the roles will be reversed: they will become our benefactors in Heaven, our mediators with God. They will then joyfully repay what we had done for them during their affliction.

2. They are loved by God

An author once said, "If God loves us poor mortal sinners, so imperfect, so devoid of virtue, how much more will he love the souls in Purgatory, they who are his forever and in whom He sees the glory of his chosen?" They are infinitely more dear to him. They are his brides, his dear children and the inheritors of his glory, called to praise him in Heaven for all

eternity. All are living stones destined for the eternal Church of the New Jerusalem and which the chisel of the Divine Sculptor prepares and polishes before setting them in the place He has prepared for them, since the beginning of time. He loves them tenderly. He contemplates them lovingly. He desires to be united with them. His paternal Heart suffers because of their sad exile, but his Justice keeps them in their prison until they have acquitted the smallest debt²². Also, what a joy it is for that tender and loving Father if a friend, a mediator, intervened between the chastisement and the fault to disarm his severity and to reconcile Him with his love child! How many reasons for loving those blessed souls and to exercise a great deal of charity towards them! They are so worthy of our affection! When we have compassion for the poor of this world, we have no idea if he or she deserves it, if he or she is guilty or ungrateful. But with the souls of the deceased, we can be certain that they deserve it. The soil into which we sow is invariably fertile: for each grain we plant, Heaven will reap a fruit and for us, a blessing.

Example

In a vision, St. Gertrude saw the soul of a nun she had known who had lived a life of great virtue. She stood before our Lord, dressed in a robe marked by signs

of her great charities but unable to gaze at the face of our adorable Saviour. She continued to stare at her feet with the look of a criminal, denoting by such a gesture the need to withdraw from the Divine Master. Stunned, St. Gertrude wished to know the reason for such behaviour, *"God of mercy, why do you not accept this sister of mine who did so much good in her lifetime?"* Our Lord stretched out his arms as though to greet this unfortunate soul but the latter went away from Him with deep humility. More and more surprised, St. Gertrude asked the soul of her friend why she was fleeing the embrace of such a tender spouse, *"Because I am not yet cleansed of every stain left on my soul by my sins. Even were God to allow me as I am to enter his Kingdom, I would not accept because as brilliant as I might seem in his eyes, I know that I am not yet a spouse worthy of my Saviour."*

Thus, those holy souls endure their suffering in perfect resignation. They are so transformed in God that they would not want to abstain from the slightest portion of their torment. They accept them with a joy, which grows more and more as they near their liberation. How worthy they are of our love, our sympathy, of all our charity!

LET US PRAY - Oh God, You forgive sinners and You want the salvation of

²²"Christ went down into the depths of death so that 'the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.' Jesus, 'the Author of life', by dying destroyed 'him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and [delivered] all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.' Henceforth the risen Christ holds 'the keys of Death and Hades', so that 'at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.'

Today a great silence reigns on earth, a great silence and a great stillness. A great silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. . . . He has gone to search for Adam, our first father, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow Adam in his bonds and Eve, captive with him - He who is both their God and the son of Eve. . . . 'I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. . . . I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead!' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 635).

have at your disposal the merits of the spotless Lamb. You can apply them to all those who are dear to you. You exercise the same authority on the Eucharic Jesus as did Mary and Joseph on the God-child. You become the master, the distributor of his merits. You can thus take His Precious Blood and spread it profusely on the blessed souls in Purgatory. You can apply the fruit of the Sacrifice as well as that of all the Masses celebrated throughout the world to the souls in Purgatory. Therein lies an enormous treasure which we ignore much too often; a treasure with which we can ransom our parents and our friends, opening for them the gates of Heaven.

We are guilty of neglecting a means, which is so available and efficient of putting an end to the torment of those dear souls. They ask us to think of them during the Mass when the petitions are presented and when prayers for the deceased are offered.

Example

The St. Cure of Ars related the following excerpt of his catechism to his parishioners, *"My children, a priest who had lost a dear friend prayed fervently for his soul. One day God revealed to him that his friend was in Purgatory suffering terribly. That priest could think of nothing else than to offer a Mass for his friend's soul. At the moment of consecration, he took the Host between his fingers and said, «Eternal Father, let us make a trade. You hold my friend's soul in Purgatory and I hold the body of Your Son in my hands. Good and merciful Father, deliver my good friend as I offer You Your Son with all the merits of His Passion and Death».* At the moment of elevation, the priest saw the

soul of his dear friend rise to Heaven in a blazing light. God had accepted the trade. My friends, when we want to deliver souls from Purgatory, let us do the same. Let us offer up to God His Son with all the merits of His Passion and Death. He will not be able to refuse". Let us follow the advice of the good Cure of Ars.

Another example

Masses for the dead

St. Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal, had recently lost her daughter Constance, Queen of Castille. She was on her way to Santarém on a road which led through a forest, when a hermit suddenly jumped out from behind a tree. He chased the royal coach asking to speak to the queen. In spite of protests from her guards, the Queen asked the driver to stop the coach. The hermit explained how her daughter Constance, covered in flames had appeared to him. She begged him to tell her mother that she was suffering indescribable torments in Purgatory and needed daily Masses to be celebrated for her during a whole year. The hermit left the Queen and was not seen again.

The courtesans who had seen him mocked him and treated him as a fool and manipulator. The Queen, however, felt it was better to do what had been asked by that uncommon man. *"After all",* she thought, *"to offer Masses for my daughter makes Christian sense".*

Father Ferdinand Mendez, reputed for his piety, was asked to celebrate the 365 Masses for the repose of Constance's soul. St. Elizabeth prayed for her daughter but soon forgot about the Masses she had commissioned. One day, Constance appeared to her mother,

LET US PRAY - O my God, Your Justice retains the souls of my loved ones, but You ask that I should eat the Bread of Angels so that You can open the gates of Paradise for them. Be blessed Father of Mercy and I promise that I will endeavour to receive Holy Communion often in favour of those blessed souls in Purgatory. You will then see Your Son Jesus in me and my voice, covered by His, will rise up to You and will more surely obtain the graces I am asking. O Jesus, be their Conciliator. May they rest in Peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY

Fourth means of relieving the souls in Purgatory - The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

1. It is offered by Jesus Christ

Of all the means we have indicated so far for the relief of souls in Purgatory, none is as powerful, as efficient as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is a very consoling article of our faith. The reason for this is that all the merit of the Divine Sacrifice comes from its being offered in

the person and in the name of Jesus Christ. At the altar as on Calvary, it is the same Victim, the same Sanctifier and hence has the same merit. There, Jesus in the Host offers His Father everything He is and everything He has. He offers the whole militant Church and the whole Suffering Church.

What joy there is in that valley of tears, what joy for those souls, victims of Divine Justice, when Jesus embraces them and offers them to his Father! And the Father receives His Son's offering. Through the flames of atonement, He recognises in them, even in their disgrace, His Son's adorable features and He forgives them, considering the merits of that spotless Lamb. How is it possible that in such a solemn moment every soul in Purgatory is not delivered? We do not know. We cannot penetrate the secrets of the infinite Justice and Holiness of God. What is certain is that they are all given some relief. A doctor of the Church affirms that after each Mass, many souls are delivered and rise to Heaven.

In a monastery in Rome, there is a painting depicting St. Bernard celebrating Holy Mass with souls rising to Heaven from Purgatory as the Sacrifice progresses. Why do we pay so little heed to these exceptional graces?

In most Christian families, Masses are offered for anniversaries of all kinds. Have you ever considered doing this?

2. We offer it with Him

If our resources do not permit us to pay for Masses very often, do not forget that in a way, you can offer Masses yourself, by attending with devotion and by uniting your prayers to those of the priest and those of Our Lord. Truly, when you are there near the altar, you

all mankind! Look favourably on the souls in Purgatory. They are your spouses, your children of predilection. They have loved You tenderly and served You courageously. Show them your divine Face. Oh Jesus, be their Conciliator! Lord, call your children, our brothers and sisters, to the eternal Kingdom and may the light that never dies shine upon them forever! May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

TWELFTH DAY

State of the souls in Purgatory in relation to us

1. They are united to us by the bonds of charity

Remember that we are bonded to those holy souls by a Divine spiritual chain. Just like us, they were created in the image of God, bought by the Precious Blood of Jesus, regenerated by the water of baptism. They have been carried by the same bosom as us, that of the Church: we are children of the same mother. Like us, and perhaps at our very side, they sat at the holy Table where

they received that sacred promise of eternal life. They brought with them into the next life the same hopes, which appease our own sorrow during our pilgrimage here on earth. Members of the same Body, inheritors of the same Kingdom, they shall one day be our eternal companions. But between them and us, there is that difference in that they are sad, captive, prisoners, martyrs, and powerless at relieving their own suffering. They now must wait for our help and consolation. We must assist them.

Do they not have the right then to expect our love and compassion? If the children of one family love each other tenderly, if the pains of one become the suffering of another, wouldn't it be the same for the members of the Church? Where would our charity be if we didn't love those poor souls, abandoned in their torment? Is it possible for us as humans and Christians to be insensitive to their plight? Let us love them as ourselves! Let us love them as Jesus has loved us. We will thus bring them relief and liberation.

"My dear children," wrote the apostle John shortly before his death, *"let us not only love by our words but truly, by our actions."*

2. They are united to us by the bonds of brotherhood

Among the voices calling us, do you not hear the voice of a brother, of a sister, of a child, a spouse whom love had united and death had separated, the voice of a mother, a father whose blood courses in your veins? That blood, that family, what do they say? *"Come to my*

aid: I have been calling you for so long. You are all I have and yet you do not come. Come then with your heart, with your prayer, with your charity, with your devotion. Come and remove me from this flaming pit. Come and give me Heaven, God, Eternity. Come!"

How can we resist that distress call, that urgent plea? Is it possible that we might have contributed to the increase of time spent in Purgatory of those who have loved us so much?

Example

In 1864 a Jewish artist converted during a homily on the Holy Eucharist. After being baptized he retired to a very austere monastery where he finally died. He spent many hours every day before the Blessed Sacrament and in his effusions of fervour, he asked Our Lord especially for his mother's conversion. He did not obtain it and his mother finally died. Pierced by a sharp and bitter dagger of remorse, that faithful son went and knelt before the tabernacle and giving way to his grief, said, "*Lord, it is true, I owe you everything, but what have I refused you? My youth, my hopes, my well being, family ties, a legitimate retreat. I sacrificed everything when you called me. I would have given even my*

blood had you asked. Now You, Lord, You eternal Goodness who promised to give back one hundred-fold. You have refused my mother's soul! My God, I am dying to that martyrdom, my breath escapes me".

Tears were strangling that poor heart. Suddenly, a mysterious voice struck the man's ear. It said, "*Man of little faith, your mother is saved. Know that prayer has all power over me. I gathered all those you offered for your mother and my Providence held an account of it in her final hour. As she was breathing her last, she saw me and cried out, «My Lord and My God!»²³ So gather up your courage: your mother has avoided damnation and your prayers and fervent supplications will soon free her soul from the prison of Purgatory".*

Father Hermann learned soon after in another vision that his mother was now in Heaven²⁴ Let us pray for our deceased parents!

LET US PRAY. Have mercy, Lord, on the souls you have united to mine by such close and tender bonds and by whom you commanded me to love and to honour. Yes Lord, have mercy on the souls of my parents, my benefactors and friends. Lord allow us to bend your mercy for them with our

²³ "Those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways."

The relationship of the Church with the Jewish People. When she delves into her own mystery, the Church, the People of God in the New Covenant, discovers her link with the Jewish People, "the first to hear the Word of God." The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant. To the Jews "belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ", "for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 839).

²⁴ Faith is a personal act• the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbour impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 166).

Here is the formula you can use:

"My Jesus! I believe that You are present; I love You. I desire to receive You in heart and spirit, and I await the moment when I will be able to receive You in the Eucharist. Bless me Lord and bless those poor suffering souls in Purgatory. Yes Lord, call your children and our brethren to eternal rest and may the light that never dies shine upon them! May they rest in peace!"

Example

Louis de Bois, famous master of the spiritual life and a man of remarkable wisdom, relates the following. A pious servant of God, whom he knew and loved, was visited by a soul from Purgatory and that soul showed him all the torments he had to endure. He was being punished for having received Holy Communion with very little preparation and with indifference.⁴⁶ That is why the Book of Wisdom had condemned him to

⁴⁶"The saving efficacy of the sacrifice is fully realized when the Lord's body and blood are received in communion. The Eucharistic Sacrifice is intrinsically directed to the inward union of the faithful with Christ through communion; we receive the very One who offered himself for us, we receive his body which he gave up for us on the Cross and his blood which he 'poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt. 26:28). We are reminded of his words: 'As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me' (Jn. 6:57). Jesus himself reassures us that this union, which he compares to that of the life of the Trinity, is truly realized. The Eucharist is a true banquet, in which Christ offers himself as our nourishment. When for the first time Jesus spoke of this food, his listeners were astonished and bewildered, which forced the Master to emphasize the objective truth of his words: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life within you' (Jn. 6:53). This is no metaphorical food: 'My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed' (Jn. 6:55)" (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 2003, 36).

⁴⁷"Invisible communion, though by its nature always growing, presupposes the life of grace, by which we become 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4), and the practice of the virtues of faith, hope and love. Only in this way do we have true communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Nor is faith sufficient; we must persevere in sanctifying grace and love, remaining within the Church 'bodily' as well as 'in our heart'; what is required, in the words of Saint Paul, is 'faith working through love' (Gal. 5:6).

Keeping these invisible bonds intact is a specific moral duty incumbent upon Christians who wish to participate fully in the Eucharist by receiving the body and blood of Christ. The Apostle Paul appeals to this duty when he warns: 'Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup' (1 Cor. 11:28). Saint John Chrysostom, with his stirring eloquence, exhorted the faithful: 'I too raise my voice, I beseech, beg and implore that no one draw near to this sacred table with a sullied and corrupt conscience. Such an act, in fact, can never be called 'communion', not even were we to touch the Lord's body a thousand times over, but 'condemnation', 'torment' and 'increase of punishment'.

Along these same lines, the Catechism of the Catholic Church rightly stipulates that 'anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion'. I therefore desire to reaffirm that in the Church there remains in force, now and in the future, the rule by which the Council of Trent gave concrete expression to the Apostle Paul's stern warning when it affirmed that, in order to receive the Eucharist in a worthy manner, 'one must first confess one's sins, when one is aware of mortal sin'" (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 2003, 16).

the flames, which devoured him. "*I am asking you who were my intimate friend and who must still be, to receive Holy Communion in my name and to do so with all the fervour and charity you can.⁴⁷ I am sure that that fervent communion will suffice for my liberation and will compensate for my guilty indifferences.*

This servant of God hastened to attend a holy Mass and to receive communion piously for the repose of his friend's soul. After prayers of thanksgiving, that soul appeared to him once again, bathed in an indescribable light, happy and full of gratitude, "*Be blessed my best friend, your communion has delivered me and I am about to see my adorable Master face to face".*

Let us remember the advice of St. Bonaventure, "*May charity lead you to communion often, for there is no more efficient means of obtaining eternal rest for the deceased".*

to the poor of the earth, serve to attract the effusion of Your Mercy on them. Sweet Jesus, grant them eternal rest!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY

Third means of comforting the souls in Purgatory - Holy Communion

1. Sacramental communion

When we have the joy of receiving communion, we become united to Jesus Christ in a manner so intimate that like the apostle, we can cry out, *"It is no longer I who live but Jesus Christ who lives in me"*. Our flesh becomes his flesh. His Heart makes ours beat. His Blood flows in our veins, his Divinity dwells in us. He looks through our eyes, He dilates our heart. In that happy moment, envied by Angels, even without words it is easy for us to speak to God, to tell him with even more confidence than the prophet. *"O God, Protector of the afflicted, look down on me. You will see the face of your Christ; it is no longer I who speak and who pray, it is Jesus, your own Son, who speaks and*

prays through me; it is He who is asking for my mothers liberation, the liberation of the poor abandoned souls. I am certain, O merciful Father, that you will not reject these just supplications, because the face, the prayers, the tears, the blood of Jesus Christ, have an all-powerful voice that appeases your Justice and obtains forgiveness!"

Let us often receive communion for those souls we love and who no longer share the joy of participating in the Eucharistic Banquet. How ardently they await a refreshing and liberating mist that only Christ's Blood can give. Soon will begin for them the eternal communion and they will go and contemplate the Saviour, the Bread of Life. They will adore Him and bless Him and will sing His praise forever.

2. Spiritual communion

If you cannot receive sacramental communion, that is to receive the Body and Blood of Christ during holy Mass, you can at least receive spiritual communion.

This consists in having an ardent desire of uniting oneself to the Divine Saviour and of receiving his Spirit and his Graces. It is such a salvific practice for the living and the dead that St. Liguori went so far as to say that we obtain as much and even more grace from this practice than if we received sacramental communion with indifference. It also has the advantage of being available to us every day, no matter the hour, no matter the place, be it profane or sacred.

It is a simple, easy and powerful means for us to bring relief to the deceased.

Make this spiritual communion every time you visit the Blessed Sacrament.

prayers and our tears. Oh Jesus! Oh Mary! Be their Conciliators! Call your children and our brethren to that land of refreshing light and peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

THIRTEENTH DAY

Abandoned Souls

1. Abandoned by their friends

Consider the fact that there are souls completely forgotten in Purgatory for whom no one prays and who suffer without consolation.

It is true that the Church does not forget any of her children. Those abandoned souls have a right to the prayers of our tender Mother who petitions the Lord every day for the souls of the deceased; but aside from those common prayers, no other prayers are offered for them from individuals. They are abandoned by those friends who had vowed an everlasting love. But as that love was purely human and often selfish,

it died along with the friend's last breath.

How much affliction must that abandonment add to the souls torment! Listen to the reproach they address to those who so quickly forgot the duties required by friendship"

"Have mercy on us, at least you who were our friends. We have shown you so many signs of our love and affection! You promised when we were breathing our last that you would never forget us! Yet you have often forgotten us without even a prayer, an offering, a tear, not even a sigh. Because we are far from the eyes, you have banished us from your heart".

Oh inconsistency of human affections, as noted by Bossuet, that fly away with time! Are those reproaches not addressed to you? Do you remember your childhood friends whom death has taken from you? St. Francis of Sales said, *"We too often forget our deceased even though they loved us so dearly during their lifetime!"* Let us be worried that we will also be forgotten when we die for it is written, *"he who forgets will be forgotten"*.

2. Abandoned by their parents

Abandoned by their friends, those poor souls are also abandoned by their family members, either because they are also dead or because they abstain from any prayer²⁵ or charitable works. Yes, their own father, mother, brother and sister have abandoned them. An abandoned life of which no one speaks, an abandoned name which no one utters, an abandoned grave which no one visits, abandoned suffering which no one prays

²⁵ "Prayer is a vital necessity. Proof from the contrary is no less convincing: if we do not allow the Spirit to lead us, we fall back into the slavery of sin. How can the Holy Spirit be our life if our heart is far from him? Nothing is equal to prayer; for what is impossible it makes possible, what is difficult, easy.... For it is impossible, utterly impossible, for the man who prays eagerly and invokes God ceaselessly ever to sin. Those who pray are certainly saved; those who do not pray are certainly damned" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2744)

to relieve, abandoned everywhere and in everything. Poor souls! Who knows how long their suffering will last in that place of terrible torment where they receive no help? How must that cruel isolation add to their suffering!

They are entitled to cry out with the Prophet, *"My friends have all left me and my family has forgotten me; my father and my mother have abandoned me; I have become for them a broken vase which they discard and forget"*.

Like Jesus, abandoned in the garden of Gethsemane, they can say, *"I sought consolation and found none!"*

Pray often, go to Mass during the week, for the dead and the forgotten. Become their mother and father, their brother and sister, their friend. Is there a cause more worthy of your zeal, of your charity? One day they will pray for you if, and it is most likely, your friends and family members forget you.

Example

In a rural parish, a horrible crime had been perpetrated. A young man, whose heart had been hardened by his passions, conspired with a cruel associate the infamous murder of his own mother. The two scoundrels pushed the woman into a muddy pond where she struggled, trying to catch her breath, reaching out to her son with the same arms that had once carried him. His human nature finally took over and he reached over to help her, but his partner in crime pushed him back and the woman drowned.

Purgatory is like an invisible lake where loved ones reach out to us with failing breath, grasping for their very survival. We may have helped in pushing them back down with our indifference and while we pursue our own passions,

they suffer and keep calling out to us. Will we do nothing to deliver them?

Holy souls! Allow us to be your friends, your family and your help. One day we will invoke your help.

LET US PRAY. Oh Jesus! Abandoned by all in the garden of Gethsemane, even by your apostles, have mercy on all the holy saints in Purgatory, especially those who receive no prayers and consolations from the living. Be their consoler, their liberator. Oh Jesus! Call to Heaven those dear children who are abandoned by their own family. May they rest in peace!

take care of orphans. In their name, let us console widows and wipe the tears of all those who are sad. Thus, our charity will diminish the suffering of this world, which is a Purgatory in the next life.

What can still prevent us from comforting those dear souls?

What excuse could we still invoke if we forget them? Who will come to our rescue if we do nothing for others?

Example

In Bologna Italy, a widow had an only child, a young boy who played in the public square with other children. One day, a stranger began harassing the children with evident malice.

The young boy yelled at him, asking him to leave them alone. Irritated by the comment, the man drew a sword and killed the lad. Horrified and surprised at the violence of his own outburst, the man ran away with the blood on the sword still dripping from his hand. He ran down an alley and entered a house, hoping to hide from the law. It was the very home of the child he had just slain. When the widow saw the stranger standing there, sword drawn and covered in blood, she remained calm.

When she heard the man beg for asylum *"In the name of God"*, she promised to hide him and not to reveal his whereabouts to anyone.

When police officers were told that he had entered the widow's home, they searched it but did not find him. As they were leaving, they asked the widow if she was aware that it was her son who had been killed. Stricken with horror, the

widow collapsed. So severe was the shock that those present feared for her very life. She finally came to and asked everyone to leave her alone.

Placing herself in the Divine Providence, she found the necessary courage and resolve to forgive her son's killer and what's more, to be charitable towards him.⁴⁵ She went to his hideout, gave him a sum of money and showed him a back door through which he could escape. There he would find a horse tethered and ready. As he left, she fell on her knees and prayed for the soul of her son.

She had scarcely begun, extending her arms like a cross, begging Jesus to have mercy on her son, when the boy appeared before her, shining like the sun. He said *"Dear mother, do not weep for me but envy my lot. The Christian Charity you demonstrated towards my assassin has liberated me from Purgatory. Divine Justice had condemned me to many years of purification; but your forgiveness brought an end to my torment instantly and I am with God with Whom I will remain for all eternity!"*

He then disappeared, leaving his mother filled with joy in spite of her loss. **LET US PRAY - With confidence in Your Word, Oh Lord, I will never see but your adorable Person, hidden in the beggar who pleads for my compassion. I will practice charity with those who come to me as though they were you. But I will not limit my charity to the living; I want to extend it to the dead. May the charity I offer**

⁴⁵Know that as often as you come to Me, humbling yourself and asking My forgiveness, I pour out a superabundance of graces on your soul, and your imperfection vanishes before My eyes, and I see only your love and your humility.

You lose nothing but gain much...." (Divine Mercy in my Soul, 1293)

Let us follow St. Augustine's example. Let us pray unceasingly for the souls of our dear loved ones. If our mother has died, let us never forget her! Even if she is already in Heaven, our prayers will be beneficial to her as she intercedes for our intentions before the throne of God.

LET US PRAY - Lord Jesus, You who said, "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it will be opened". I beg you, through the merits of Your Holy Wounds, have mercy on those poor souls who languish in Purgatory. Do not reject my prayers. Oh tender and loving Saviour. Hear my pleas and open the gates of Heaven to my unfortunate friends and relatives. May the light that never dies shine upon them! May they rest in eternal peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY

Second means of comforting the souls of Purgatory - Charity

1. Corporal charity

Charity is the virtue most often mentioned in the Gospels. St. Thomas

maintains that its power of satisfaction is even greater than that of prayer. The angel said to Tobias, "*Charity saves one from death; it erases sins; it releases souls from darkness and brings them to God's grace where they find eternal life*".

What more efficient means is there for comforting souls that are suffering in Purgatory? If in their name we practice charity, their grateful cries arise in triumph above all before God. It is a gentle dew which falls on the flames of Purgatory and which tempers its intensive heat. The mite, which feeds the hungry of this world may very well lead a soul to the banquet table of the Lord. So let us be as merciful as possible. If we possess much, let us give much. If we have little, let us give little but with great enthusiasm. Remember the psalmist's words, "*Happy are they who understand the plight of the needy: God will assist them in difficult situations, will be by their side on their death-bed and will reward them eternally*".

Let us therefore attend to the afflicted of this earth and thereby dry their tears. Place the widow's mite in the hand of the poor. The souls in Purgatory will be liberated.

2. Spiritual charity

If we are not rich, if money does not abound, we still have spiritual charity which can soothe the soul of those in distress. St. Thomas tells us, "*It surpasses physical charity as the spirit surpasses the body*". Spiritual miseries outnumber physical miseries and are much more deplorable. Divine Goodness allows our merits to be applied to our deceased brethren in Purgatory. In their name, let us attend to the sick and needy. In their name let us visit the dying and

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

FOURTEENTH DAY

Relief for the Souls in Purgatory

1. We can bring them relief

The Council of Trent decreed, "*We believe that souls detained in Purgatory are relieved by the suffrages of the faithful*"²⁶. That is how the Church, in its Divine and magnificent unity, includes Christians of all eras and all classes. The charity, which binds them and unites their spiritual wealth is shared not only among the living but beyond the grave, reaching those who have died in the peace of the Lord. "*Charity*", St. Paul tells us, "*is not like faith and hope that dies with our last breath. It survives our death and never dies*". Thus, those who

are just are not separated from the Church following their death, nor are they removed from the Communion of Saints. They are still our brothers, our sisters and our friends. Along with the elected in Heaven, the angels and the saints, we can also deliver souls from Purgatory. Moreover, angels and saints can only offer their prayers whereas we can offer acts of charity, of love and of good intentions. "*God has given us so much power on the fate of the deceased*", says Father Faber, "*that they seem to depend more on earth than Heaven. Such is the doctrine of the Church! Such is the touching mutual support of the Communion of Saints*"²⁷. What a joy this is for you who are mourning a father, a mother, a spouse, a child! You can still show them signs of your love through your devotion; you can be their liberating angel. Hurry then; break their chains and pay their debts that those dear souls may fly up to Heaven, to the bosom of the triumphant Church.

2. We must bring them relief

Not only can we, but we must come to the aid of those suffering souls. We owe it to God our good and tender Father. He loves them as his spouses and greatly desires to open the gates of Heaven to them but is opposed by his

²⁶ "Communion with the dead. 'In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; and 'because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins' she offers her suffrages for them.' Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 958).

²⁷ "The intercession of the saints. 'Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness.... They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus.... So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped. Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 956).

Justice. He thus turns to us and pleads for us to help them; He gives us the means and considers done to Him what we might do to the most guilty, the most suffering amongst them.

We owe it to those poor souls in exile. Some of them, perhaps a great many among them are there, suffering because of us, because of our negligence, our bad advice, our scandal. Yet, will we do nothing to alleviate their torment? Would we dare say, "I am innocent of the tears shed by that soul?" Finally, we owe it to ourselves. Let us not forget that one day, maybe sooner than we think, we will need to have acts of charity offered for us, acts which we could have done ourselves for others. St. Ambrosius told us, "*Everything which pity inspires us to do for the deceased turns into works of merit for us and at the end of our life, we will receive a hundred-fold what we have given*". Question your conscience. Have you understood this important duty and have you put it into practice to date? Do you often think, do you daily think of the suffering souls in Purgatory? Henceforth, have for them that charity which God commands and blesses; that charity which opens the gates of Heaven for those who practice it and for those for whom it is offered; that charity which is the Christian's passport to the next world.

Example

Catherine de Cortone was the daughter of a duke. As a child, her piety and her fervour were those of an angel. She was not yet eight when she lost her father. One day, he appeared to her burning with the flames in Purgatory. "*My daughter*", he told her, "*I will be in*

this fire until the day you do penance for me". Her heart filled with compassion, Catherine elevated her courage beyond the weakness of her age. She began from that day forth a life of austerity and penance, which astonished all who knew her. Her tears, her prayers, her mortification soon disarmed the Divine Justice and acquitted her father's debt. Her father, shining with the brightness of the blessed, once again appeared to her and said to her "*My daughter, God has accepted your acts of love and your prayers; I am now going to live in his Glory. Continue to offer your suffering for the salvation of the souls in Purgatory. It is the will of God that you do so*".

The heroic virgin was faithful to her sublime mission. For the rest of her life, she was an example of piety and severe austerity for the relief of the deceased. Her pious companions tried to make her diminish her acts of penance. She retorted in the words that reveal the secret of her life, "**When one has seen as I have what Hell and Purgatory are like, one can never do enough to save souls from one and prevent souls going to the other**". **We too have the same mission.** It is our mission and our duty to bring relief to the souls that Jesus has saved; let us never forget this.

LET US PRAY - Be blessed Oh my God, for having entrusted me with the relief of those souls whom You love so tenderly and who are so entitled to my compassion. How good it is for me to dry their tears and open the gates of Heaven to them! Remind me often of

with more fervour than He does for the living.

The Lord confirmed this with St. Gertrude in these words, "*My Mercy will accept a step, a piece of straw, a word, a greeting, a prayer for sinners and for the just, as long as there is good intent*". Let us make constant acts of love for God; those inner actions have an immeasurable value, as Father Faber says in his book, "*Everything for Jesus!*" Every act of love deserves eternal life. Thus it is easy to think and say, "*My God and my Father, I love you ... I want to love you more*". Such acts of love procure relief and assistance for the souls in Purgatory. Hence, we reap spiritual and temporal graces and our reward will be eternal. "*There is no more pious and holy mission than that of praying for the dead*", says St. Augustine.

The Church consecrated the psalm "De Profundis" as a special prayer and encourages us to recite it often for their intention. The words of that psalm are like many voices which express vividly the pain, resignation, love and hope of the poor souls who are burning in the depths of Purgatory. Let us make the firm resolution of reciting it at the end of our prayer.

Example

On her death-bed, St. Monica called for her son Augustine. "*My child*", she said, "*I am dying in peace. I have obtained from God what I have hoped for all my life. Yes, my child, I am dying in peace. Dear Augustine! When I have taken my last breath, do not forget in your prayers at the foot of the Cross the one who was twice your mother. Remember the soul of Monica*".

Overwhelmed, Augustine could only

answer with tears and his mother died in the joy of Christ. For the last twenty years of his life, he never ceased praying and celebrating Masses for the repose of the one whom he had so loved. He did even more. He asked all the priests he knew and all those who would read his works during the centuries to come to remember his mother Monica. That multitude of prayers would certainly open the gates of Heaven to her!

Prayers for the deceased have a powerful effect. A most revealing example is that which is reported in the Acts of Martyrdom of St. Perpetua. This African martyr died for Christ during the third century.

While Perpetua was in prison, she had a vision, she saw her young brother Dinocrates, who had died seven years earlier, appear in a gloomy field and approach a cistern, filled with water. That cistern was too high for him and unable to reach the water, he looked at his sister imploringly. Perpetua understood that her brother was suffering in atonement for sins he committed during his lifetime. She proceeded to offer prayers and sacrifices for that young soul.

A short while later, Perpetua was granted another vision. She once again saw Dinocrates, but this time he was most joyful. He was scooping buckets of water from the cistern, which had been lowered for him. The gloom in which he had been seen was replaced by a bright light, which radiated all around him. He had been delivered from his torments by his sister's prayers. The image of this vision is expressed by the Church when it asks God to grant to the souls of the deceased "that place of refreshment, light and peace".

light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

TWENTIETH DAY

First means of comforting the souls in Purgatory - Prayer

1. Simple means

After having studied the reasons, which urge us to relieve the souls in Purgatory, let us now examine the most efficient means we have of assisting them. The first one is prayer; it is accessible to everyone, young or old, rich or poor. No one can invoke a reasonable excuse for abstaining from prayer.⁴³ You are too ill to fast? You cannot practice charity? Then pray, pray often for your dead brothers and sisters. Pray in the morning and at night. Who is unable to practice this charity, praying to relieve sorrow? Who cannot find in his heart the slightest compassion for the souls in Purgatory? Who among us, mourning a loved one, a friend or a family member in pain, would not plead for God's intervention? Let us pray for our unfortunate brothers and sisters. Not only is this simple and easy to do but it is also consoling and agreeable. It is so

⁴³"The acts of faith, hope, and charity enjoined by the first commandment are accomplished in prayer. Lifting up the mind toward God is an expression of our adoration of God: prayer of praise and thanksgiving, intercession and petition. Prayer is an indispensable condition for being able to obey God's commandments. (We) ought always to pray and not lose heart" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2098)

⁴⁴"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.' But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or 'out of the depths' of a humble and contrite heart? He who humbles himself will be exalted; humility is the foundation of prayer. Only when we humbly acknowledge that 'we do not know how to pray as we ought,' are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. 'Man is a beggar before God'" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2559).

easy to speak to those we love and to tend to them!

Make a resolution to never let a day go by without praying for your deceased relatives.⁴⁴ Offer up in their favour the pain caused by distractions or by the aridity of your heart during this holy exercise. Repeat these short invocations, "*Sweet Jesus, be their Conciliator! Lord, grant them eternal rest! My God, may they rest in peace!*"

2. Efficient means

"*Prayer is the golden key which opens Heaven,*" said St. Augustine. Most powerful, it springs from the heart of man, rises on the wings of Angels to the throne of God and goes straight to his Heart. It embraces it, softens it and silences Divine Justice, allowing only Divine Love to flow from that perfect Heart. Conquered by prayer, Divine Justice gives way to forgiveness. Robed with forgiveness, prayer descends from the throne of God to Purgatory, where it quenches the thirst of those poor souls who are awaiting their hour of liberation. It douses the flames of purification forever breaking the bonds of captivity, liberating them and calling them to eternal happiness. Prayer for the dead knows no boundaries, obstacles, distances or duration: Heaven opens up before it and Purgatory closes behind it. It obtains everything. It triumphs over everything. St. Thomas assures us that God welcomes the prayers for the dead

this great responsibility of charity and help me to accomplish it. Oh Jesus! Be their Conciliator. Call your children and our brethren to eternal happiness and may the light, which never dies, shine upon them! May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

FIFTEENTH DAY

Forgetting the Dead

1. It denotes a great insensitivity

The Bible speaks of a man called Lazarus who was covered in ulcers, dressed in rags and lay on the doorstep of a wealthy man. He asked for very little: the mere crumbs, which fell from the rich man's table. He was refused even that.

What insensitivity! What hardness of heart! Are we to be surprised then if after the rich man's death, he went to Hell while Lazarus rose to the bosom of Abraham?

The memory of our deceased parents is present in our mind and our heart. The house we lived in, the name we bore, the wealth we enjoyed, everything reminds

us of them. Yet they do not shout, their grave is silent. But the Church, our Mother, teaches us:

Have mercy on the deceased. Allow a few crumbs to fall from your table to appease their hunger, a few drops to quench their thirst. Misguided servant, you must have pity on your brother!"

During his lifetime he laboured to feed you, to dress you, to raise you. Now that he asks you for a few crumbs of the inheritance he left you, why do you refuse?

If, like the rich man, we are insensitive to the cries of our distressed brethren, God will be insensitive to ours. How could he welcome us in his bosom?

2. It reveals a dark ingratitude

One of the Pharaoh's officers was thrown in jail with Joseph. Mild and compassionate, Joseph struck up a friendship with his partner of misfortune, soothed his grief, interpreted his dreams, and assured him of a prompt liberation. The only reward he asked of the officer was to be remembered when called by Pharaoh. Alas! That ungrateful officer, inebriated by his new prosperity, completely forgot his benefactor and Joseph had to languish two more years in chains.

Is that cruel selfishness not revolting? Then how can you forget so many relatives, so many benefactors from whom you received life, whose wealth you inherited and to whom you owe so much? When they were dying and begging you to pray for them, you answered with tears. Yet, time has dried your tears and you have abandoned them. You have for them, no regret, no

tenderness, no gratitude. You satiate yourselves, as did Pharaoh's officer with wealth you have acquired and you let them languish, like Joseph in the prison in Purgatory. Where then is your faith, your conscience, your heart, your memory? *"Lord, Lord, heal this strange forgetfulness and give our suffering and abandoned brethren rest and eternal glory"*²⁸.

Example

Chaganus, having put Maurice's army to flight, exacted a considerable sum of money from the emperor as a ransom for the many soldiers he held prisoner. Maurice refused. The conqueror reduced his demand, which was again refused. After having reduced to a mere pittance the amount claimed and being yet denied satisfaction, the irritated barbarian had all of the prisoners decapitated. A few days later, Maurice saw a terrible apparition: a multitude of slaves in chains. They cried out in vengeance to him. A sovereign judge appeared amongst them and cried out, *"You wretch. You must be punished. Do you prefer being punished in this world or the next?"* The stunned emperor replied, *"I prefer that it be in this world, Lordi"* The judge told him, *"As punishment for your cruelty toward these poor soliders whose lives you could have saved at such little cost, one of them will*

remove your crown, your reputation, your life and that of your entire family".

A few days later, the army revolted and proclaimed Phocas emperor. Maurice tried to escape on a small ship, but in vain. Phocas' partisans seized him and cast him in chains. That miserable father saw his five sons slain before his very eyes and was shamefully put to death.

Christian souls who are reading this work, think about it! These are not mere soldiers we are talking about. They are your very children, your brothers and sisters, your parents. They are weeping prisoners of God's Divine Justice. Our merciful God asks us to ransom them with prayer, Holy Communion, charity. Would you be hard-hearted and insensitive enough to refuse?

LET US PRAY - Lord how could I refuse those souls that were bonded to mine through friendship and kinship? How could I abandon to cruel suffering those loved ones who gave me so much love, devotion and affection during their lifetime? Every day of my life and to my dying breath, I will pray for them. Oh Jesus, be their Conciliator. Call your children and our brethren to your holy City! May they rest in eternal peace!

²⁸"Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.' Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, 'an upright heart', as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 30).

helped clothe them in the vestment of immortality and glory? Will they be able to forget us, when we have sent them to their place at the banquet table of the Lamb where they will finally be able to eat the bread of angels for which they hunger? No! Assuredly not! They will never forget us; they will be attentive to all our needs, they will watch over us like so many guardian angels. From their thrones, they will watch over our perils and woes, pleading endlessly with God to help us in our trials, to remove temptation from our senses. They will add their petitions to ours, pleading with God to keep us safe from temptations and asking Him to lead us to His Heart. What precious assistance! What relief from our torments! What consolation in our final hour! What powerful advocates at our final Judgement! Should we find ourselves in Purgatory, those souls whom we delivered will come to visit us and console us until we join them in the splendours of the eternal beatitudes.

My God! What benefit and consolation there is in our devotion to the souls in Purgatory! Happy and blessed then are those who pray for the dead. *"Everything you offer in charity"*, St. Ambrosius tells us, *"turns to grace. Following our own death, we will reap the benefits one hundred-fold"*.

Example

A pious and credible nun wrote the following, proving the power of prayers for the souls in Purgatory.

"I prayed fervently for my physical healing, petitioning Our Lady of

Lourdes, the Child Jesus, St. Joseph, without result. My prayers were answered after I begged the souls in Purgatory to intercede for me. I promised to offer prayers and Masses for them if I could renew my religious life. May those dear advocates be blessed forever! I was completely healed! I hastened to accomplish what I had promised. You can see how God desires the deliverance of the souls held captive. He forces us, in a manner of speaking, to pray for them by favouring the petitions we make through their intercession. I am convinced of this truth because I owe all the favours I've obtained from God to my good friends in Purgatory".

Learn from this example and be assured that you will obtain everything through the intercession of our friends, the deceased.⁴²

LET US PRAY - Holy souls in Purgatory, I pray to the Lord Jesus who died for you, to have mercy on your suffering. By his holy and precious Blood, may He soothe your torment! In return, dear charitable souls, please intercede for me. Your prayers are heard for you are in grace. Pray for the spiritual and temporal favours I need; pray that I may know a holy death and that I may one day join you in Heaven.

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing

⁴²"The mercy of the Lord is praised by the holy souls in heaven who have themselves experienced that infinite mercy. What these souls do in heaven, I already will begin to do here on earth. I will praise God for His infinite goodness, and I will strive to bring other souls to know and glorify the inexpressible and incomprehensible mercy of God" (Divine Mercy in my Soul, 753).

apparition, she saw her prayers answered as Our Lady herself was leading that soul to Heaven.⁴¹

Dear Mary, thank you for your goodness.

LET US PRAY - We hail you, Mary, Queen of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope, not only in this valley of tears but also in that place of atonement. We hail you, we cry unto you, oh Consoler of the afflicted; we weep, we sigh for our suffering brethren in Purgatory. Oh our Advocate, look on them with mercy and show them the fruit of your womb Jesus. We beg you for this grace, Oh pious Queen and sweet Virgin Mary!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

NINETEENTH DAY

Fourth Reason: The Gratitude of the Deceased

1. In Purgatory

Most theologians will agree that the

suffering souls intercede for those who assist them even while they are in Purgatory. They can obtain nothing for themselves and their prayers are fruitless when they ask for their own torments to be abated. Such is not the case for the prayers they offer for their benefactors. Those petitions are within the order of Providence. They touch God's heart and are not tainted by vice, which often renders ours fruitless. Those souls are pure and holy, dear to the Lord and always perfectly united to Him; they pray fervently without distractions, with perseverance. Their merit is so great that, without daily proof, we could scarcely believe this.

So we have everything to gain in exchanging our prayers with those of our deceased brethren. The best means we have of obtaining from God that for which we ask is to interest the souls in Purgatory in our cause by presenting it to them. In return, we must offer them our prayers, holy Mass and all the indulgences applicable to these. So let us pray for the blessed and grateful souls in Purgatory. They will pray fervently for us. They will offer to God, and for our intention, all the merits of their indescribable suffering. Truly, as Scripture tells us, it is a holy and salvific mission to relieve the souls in Purgatory.

2. In Heaven

Heaven is the homeland of gratitude. Liberated by our acts of love and our prayers, those souls will remain attached to us by bonds of eternal gratitude. Will they be able to forget us when we have brought them to eternal riches and

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

SIXTEENTH DAY

First reason for bringing relief to the Souls in Purgatory:

1. This devotion glorifies God

Our first motivation for hastening by every possible means the relief of those holy souls is the glory, which it gives God. Truly, nothing glorifies the Almighty, praises His holy Name, dilates his paternal Heart or contributes to the compliance of his adorable Will than the relief of the dead. Understand that by opening the gates of Heaven for those souls, we are giving God voices that will sing his praise, hearts that will love him and bless him²⁹. We are giving him souls that will consume themselves at the foot of his eternal throne in an ardour of love so pure, so perfect and so grand that it is beyond the possibility of our

²⁹"Communion in charity. In the sanctorum communio, 'None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.' 'If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.' 'Charity does not insist on its own way.' In this solidarity with all men, living or dead, which is founded on the communion of saints, the least of our acts done in charity redounds to the profit of all. Every sin harms this communion" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 953).

³⁰"In the communion of saints, 'a perennial link of charity exists between the faithful who have already reached their heavenly home, those who are expiating their sins in purgatory and those who are still pilgrims on earth. between them there is, too, an abundant exchange of all good things.' In this wonderful exchange, the holiness of one profits others, well beyond the harm that the sin of one could cause others. Thus recourse to the communion of saints lets the contrite sinner be more promptly and efficaciously purified of the punishments for sin" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1475).

comprehension in our place of exile. St. Augustine tells us that *"There is nothing more agreeable to God than the relief and deliverance of the faithful departed"*. Doudaloue would add, *"It is a more beautiful and greater apostolic action than the very conversion of sinners and pagans"*.

Let us hasten to satisfy the right of the Divine Justice to procure that glorification. Those souls will do everything for us once they are in Heaven and will do it much more intensely than we could ever do. They will be pure angelic voices who will sing our anthem, which we cannot sing in a strange land. It is by their songs of triumph that we will glorify our God of all glory and Majesty. Remember that God, who has promised not to forget even a glass of water given in his name will pour his graces on those who strive to grant him souls who love him so tenderly.

2. It is the joy of Saints

Let us remember that by liberating those souls through our acts of love, not only do we glorify God, but we also bring great joy to all of Heaven. The entry of a new saint into his beautiful homeland is cause for a family celebration which includes all the heavenly inhabitants, each greeting and congratulating him or her with fraternal joy. Mary, Mother of Mercy³⁰. Comforter of the suffering Church, moved with

⁴¹"I heard a few of the words that the Mother of God spoke to him [i.e., my confessor] but not everything. The words were: I am not only the Queen of Heaven, but also the Mother of Mercy and your Mother. And at that moment She stretched out her right hand, in which She was clasping her mantle, and She covered the priest with it. At that moment, the vision vanished" (Divine Mercy in my Soul, 330).

holy joy, joins Jesus in laying a crown of glory and immortality on the head of the victor³¹. His Guardian Angel and his patron Saint greet him or her with ineffable joy and praise him for his deliverance and happiness. The whole Celestial Court, which rejoices over the conversion of a single soul, rejoices even more at the elevation of an elected soul. It sings new hymns of praise to the glory of the Divine Lamb whose grace, victorious over human weakness, elevates the sons of Adam on the thrones of the fallen angels³².

Let us give priority to the devotion so agreeable to God and all his friends. Let us heed not the cries of the souls in Purgatory but rather the pressing invitations of Jesus Christ, the Holy Virgin and all the Saints who beg us to liberate our brethren to the City of Eternal Joy. Let us give those orphans to their Father who is in Heaven. One day soon, we will join them and share in their felicity.

Example

In the Book of Daniel, we read that Darius, King of Persia, had proclaimed a law that if broken would lead to the accused being thrown to the lions. The Prophet Daniel, unable to abide by that pagan law was accused of violating the royal will. The king, who loved Daniel, was devastated to learn of his arrest but rather than circumvent his own law, he

allowed Daniel to be cast into the lion's den. Yet as he was being led away, Darius told Daniel, "*Servant of God, go in peace! What I cannot do without offending my justice, I sincerely believe that the God whom you love will grant and He will deliver you through his Mercy*".

God did, in fact, deliver Daniel miraculously. He sealed the mouths of the lions and these became his guardians rather than his executioners. He then sent Angels to feed him. In this we can understand what happens to souls in Purgatory. Seeing them stained with sin and indebted to his Divine Justice, God cannot admit them into His Kingdom. He must leave them in the prison of Purgatory where He tells them, "*Go in faith, for what I cannot do because of my Justice, you Christian soul, ministers of my Mercy will become the liberators of Purgatory as Moses was the liberator of my people in Egypt. It is up to you to bring solace and to deliver these poor prisoners; it is you who must bring them the spiritual nourishment they await with impatience*". What a noble and holy mission!

LET US PRAY - Oh God of infinite love, I beg you to forget the right of your Justice and to remember only your Mercy; extend it to those suffering souls who are so dear to you.

³¹"This treasury [of the Church] includes as well the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They are truly immense, unfathomable, and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission the Father entrusted to them. In this way they attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in saving their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1477).

³²"We also call these spiritual goods of the communion of saints the Church's treasury, which is 'not the sum total of the material goods which have accumulated during the course of the centuries. On the contrary the 'treasury of the Church' is the infinite value, which can never be exhausted, which Christ's merits have before God. They were offered so that the whole of mankind could be set free from sin and attain communion with the Father. In Christ, the Redeemer himself, the satisfactions and merits of his Redemption exist and find their efficacy" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1476).

is honoured.

The Mother of God declared to St. Bridget, "*I am the Mother of all the souls in Purgatory and all the suffering they have merited is constantly soothed through my intercession*".

Mary's devoted ones are not sad in Purgatory; they are not abandoned. Mary is powerful but we must pray to her, especially with the rosary. St. Alphonse de Liguori said, "*If we want to deliver the Souls in Purgatory, we must always recommend them to our Blessed Mother, especially by offering her the rosary by which they are always comforted*".

Blessed Mother, have mercy on my suffering brethren and grant them eternal rest! Remember that they are your children and you are their Mother!

Example

A saintly nun had been caring for a poor young woman for some time. The latter was in a terrible physical and spiritual state. A scandalous lifestyle had led to a shameful disease, which made her an object of disgust for everyone. The infection she was spreading led her neighbours to force her to be confined to an isolation ward. Her character was so irascible that the only one who could overcome the nausea caused by her condition, was that holy nun, who, like an angel, visited her. She would bring her clean clothing and some nourishment. However, the only

compensation she received for these acts of mercy was insult. When the nun spoke to her about God, she would answer with curses.

One night, the young woman suffered a horrible seizure and died within a few minutes. On the verge of death, she remembered Our Lady's mercy, which she had invoked as a youngster. She said, "*You who do not shun even those whom the world forsakes, Motherfull of tenderness, come to my rescue; if you abandon me, I am lost*". Mary came to her, inspired her to make an act of contrition and saved her from Hell. The following morning, her hideous body was found on the floor of her cell. Everyone present considered her a lost soul. The nun who had been taking care of her was so convinced of her damnation that she erased her from her mind.

One day, that soul whom she thought damned appeared to her with God's permission and said, "*You are praying for everyone. Why have you forgotten me?*" "What" said the nun, "*Are you in Purgatory?*"⁴⁰

The miserable sinner told her of the miracle of salvation she had obtained at the time of her death. She begged for prayers that she might be delivered from Purgatory as she had been saved from Hell. The nun prayed to Our Lady fervently, and soon in a second

⁴⁰"Before heaven and earth, before all the choirs of Angels, before the Most Holy Virgin Mary, before all the Powers of heaven, I declare to the One Triune God that today, in union with Jesus Christ, Redeemer of souls, I make a voluntary offering of myself for the conversion of sinners, especially for those souls who have lost hope in God's mercy. This offering consists in my accepting, with total submission to God's will, all the sufferings, fears and terrors with which sinners are filled. In return, I give them all the consolations which my soul receives from my communion with God. In a word, I offer everything for them: Holy Masses, Holy Communion, penances, mortifications, prayers. I do not fear the blows, blows of divine justice, because I am united with Jesus. O my God, in this way I want to make amends to You for the souls that do not trust in Your goodness. I hope against all hope in the ocean of Your mercy. My Lord and my God, my portion - my portion forever, I do not base this act of oblation on my own strength, but on the strength that flows from the merits of Jesus Christ. I will daily repeat this act of self-oblation by pronouncing the following prayer which you Yourself have taught me, Jesus: 'O Blood and Water which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a Fount of Mercy for us, I trust in You!' (Divine Mercy in my Soul, 309).

rescue?³⁹

Would Our Lady, the most loving of Mothers, remain insensitive to the tortures of her children who are submerged in the expiatory flames of Divine Justice?

Oh no! A thousand times no! Full of compassion for them, she continuously comforts them. There is not a torment in that dark prison which she does not soothe. Not an hour passes without her breathing a refreshing breath on that purifying fire. *"Oh how good is Mary",* cried St. Vincent Ferrer, *"for the captive souls in Purgatory. Through her intercession, they are constantly assisted and relieved".*

Our Lady told St. Bridget, *"I am the mother of all who languish in Purgatory. All the suffering which is inflicted upon the deceased for the atonement of their sins is relieved by my prayers".*

Happy are Mary's true children. Her assistance does not merely accompany them in this world, but it consoles their torments in the world to come. How tender and consoling is that thought! How agreeable it is to hope in Our Lady's assistance during our final hours, to know that she will visit us and console us if we unfortunately find ourselves in Purgatory. What a powerful reason for loving her tenderly in this world! Oh Mary Mother of Mercy, Consolation of the afflicted, protect us, deliver us from Purgatory.

2. Mary delivers souls

Our Lady does not simply visit and

console the souls in Purgatory; she delivers them through her intercession. To hasten their deliverance, she encourages the living to alleviate their suffering and she begs her Divine Son to admit them into his kingdom of Peace. What Mary asks for, she always obtains. Consider also how many forgotten or neglected souls would linger for centuries in that place of indescribable torment if the blessed Virgin did not hasten the hour of their release! How many souls are taken up to Heaven on her wings of love, especially when the Church celebrates her touching solemnities!

Gerson tells us that on the day of her Assumption, a multitude of souls from Purgatory were delivered through her intercession.

St. Louis Marie de Monfort states that at that very moment, the joy in Heaven doubled. It is also a pious belief that on Saturday and feast days, our blessed Mother goes down to that place of Divine Justice to gather a great number of prisoners for whom she has obtained grace. She delights in bringing her children with her to unite them to her heavenly family. Yes, there is in Heaven a countless number of the elect who owe their deliverance from Purgatory to the August Queen of Heaven.

Oh Christian souls! Pray to Mary every day for your poor deceased loved ones! Ask for their relief. To that end, offer her some mortification, a communion, a visit to a chapel where she

Open your paternal arms to them and allow them to glorify you through thanksgiving and eternal praise. Holy Mary and all Saints in Heaven, intercede for them. Oh Jesus, be their Conciliator! Show them your Face in the celestial Jerusalem! May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

SEVENTEENTH DAY

Second Reason: The Love of Our Lord

1. How He loves the souls in Purgatory

Consider that Jesus has the same infinite love for the souls in Purgatory as He has for all the souls for whom He has shed His Blood. Everyone can say, *"He loves me and has died for me"*. If there are degrees to infinity, He must love them more than us because, as they are confirmed in grace, they can no longer sin. They will no longer offend Him and

they can praise and adore Him more tenderly than we can. Let there be no doubt, the eyes and the heart of merciful Jesus are constantly fixed on those martyrs, our deceased brethren. Far from forgetting them, from leaving them amidst their suffering, we might say that Jesus suffers along with them. He suffers as Redeemer for those souls, which He bought by His Sacrifice, as Father, as spouse and as Head of the mystical Body. Their suffering reminds him of his own Suffering, their love entreats His Love. If He could die again, He would in order to pay their debts and open the gates of Heaven to them; and to hold back the power of His Love. He must give way to His Wisdom and to all the merciful Justice of a God who abhors the slightest stain.

Let us ask for a heart like that of Jesus. Let us love our brethren of the suffering Church as He does³³. Let us love them tenderly for they are holy and their torment is so severe. Let us love them as ourselves, for the love of God; thus we will relieve them of a large part of their suffering and will help in their liberation.

2. Oh how Our Lord would like for us to comfort the souls in Purgatory

Jesus cannot deliver the souls from Purgatory; Divine Justice prevents Him from doing so, but from the tabernacle, where love keeps him captive, He encourages the faithful to pray for them and to bring torrents of refreshing peace and consolation to their place of

³⁹"Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men . . . flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it. No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 970).

³³"My daughter, if I demand through you that people revere My mercy, you should be the first to distinguish yourself by this confidence in My mercy. I demand from you deeds of mercy, which are to arise out of love for Me. You are to show mercy to your neighbours always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse or absolve yourself from it. I am giving you three ways of exercising mercy toward your neighbour: the first- by deed, the second - by word, the third- by prayer" (Divine Mercy in my Soul, 742).

atonement. One day, He told St. Gertrude, *"Every time you deliver a prisoner, it is as if you were delivering Me from captivity and I will reward you such as you deserve"*³⁴. On the altar where He offers Himself, He doesn't want his Sacrifice to be offered a single time without having the priest and his assistants remembering the suffering Church. He has combined in one precious treasure all His merits, all those of His Holy Mother and those of all the saints. He asks all the faithful to plunge their hands into that treasure chest of love³⁵ and to take as much as hands can hold and offer atonement for the debts of those suffering souls. From the Tabernacle, He cries out! *"Give me my children; deliver them with prayer, by holy Masses and by indulgences. Hasten the moment when I will crown them in glory and pour my eternal blessing upon them"*.

To stimulate our charity, He continuously repeats what He told his disciples when speaking to them about the poor, *"Everything you do for the least of my children, you do unto Me"*. He will reward us one day, as though He had been delivered.

Dear friends, what a powerful reason

for our burning with zeal for such a great and easily accomplished mission. What a joy it is to be able to so easily satisfy the burning desires of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Our Divine Saviour one day told blessed Marie Lataste, *"There is nothing you can do which is more agreeable to God than to deliver souls from Purgatory"*.

Among those souls, those of priests are not remembered often enough by the faithful.³⁶ Yet how great and numerous are the blessings which we owe to priests! From crib to grave, priests are the distributors of so many graces, consolations, support and advice. Our Lord one day said to Marie Lataste:

*"My daughter, pray constantly, pray for my priests for you do not pray for them enough; the faithful forget that it is their duty to pray for priests who are their fathers in regard to their salvation"*³⁷. The greater a person's dignity, the greater is his responsibility and more severe will be his judgement. That is why so many priests must spend time in Purgatory. Pray for their liberation, so that when they enter Paradise, they will become our powerful intercessor with God!

³⁴ "Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the souls suffering in Purgatory, who are enfolded in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. I beg You, by the sorrowful Passion of Jesus Your Son, and by all the bitterness with which His most sacred Soul was flooded, manifest Your mercy to the souls who are under Your just scrutiny. Look upon them in no other way than through the Wounds of Jesus, Your dearly beloved Son; for we firmly believe that there is no limit to Your goodness and compassion" (Divine Mercy in my Soul, 1227).

³⁵ Faith is a treasure of life which is enriched by being shared" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 949).

³⁶ "Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the company [of chosen ones] in Your vineyard- upon the souls of priests and religious; and endow them with the strength of Your blessing. For the love of the Heart of your Son in which they are enfolded, impart to them Your power and light, that they may be able to guide others in the way of salvation, and with one voice sing praise to Your boundless mercy for ages without end. Amen." (Divine Mercy in my Soul, 1213).

³⁷ "O priests, you bright candles enlightening human souls, let your brightness never be dimmed" (Divine Mercy in my soul, 75).

Example

In a letter written to a woman of the world, Father Lacordaire wrote about a Polish peasant who had died and was placed in the flames of atonement by Divine Justice. His pious wife prayed for his soul constantly. Believing her prayers to be insufficient, she wanted to touch the Heart of Jesus by having a Mass celebrated in His honour for the liberation of the soul that she was mourning. Being quite poor, she didn't have the necessary sum for that Mass to be celebrated. She approached a rich, atheistic philosopher she knew and humbly presented him with her dilemma. The latter, allowing his heart to be moved, gave her what she asked for. The widow immediately had a Mass celebrated in the Sacred Heart Chapel and participated with great fervour. A few days later, God allowed the deceased peasant to appear before the rich benefactor.

*"I thank you", he said, "for the offering you made for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. That offering has delivered my soul from Purgatory where it was held prisoner. Now, in return for your charity, I come on behalf of the Lord to warn you of your approaching death and your need to reconcile with God"*³⁸.

That rich man converted and died with the deepest love and affection for the Heart of Jesus!

LET US PRAY - Oh Jesus, full of mercy and goodness, You love humanity so deeply, You justify it by faith and You glorify it by grace. I beg

³⁸ "Praise the Lord, my soul, for everything, and glorify His mercy, for His goodness is without end. Everything will pass, but His mercy is without limit or end. And although evil will attain its measure, in mercy there is no measure. O my God, even in the punishments You send down upon the earth I see the abyss of Your mercy, for by punishing us here on earth You free us from eternal punishment. Rejoice, all you creatures, for you are closer to God in His infinite mercy than a baby to its mother's heart. O God, You are compassion itself for the greatest sinners who sincerely repent. The greater the sinner, the greater his right to God's mercy" (Divine Mercy in my soul, 423).

You through the merits of the Sacred Wound opened on your side by the soldier's lance, deliver the deceased from the fire in Purgatory and make them worthy of the glory of your saints. Be their Conciliator, Oh Jesus! Call your children and our brethren to Your Eternal kingdom. May they rest in peace!

LET US PRAY - Lord, hear the prayers we will offer up to you every day of this month for the consolation of our deceased brothers and sisters and grant them a place of refreshing light and peace! Hear also the prayers which those souls will offer up to you for our intention that we might ultimately obtain, through their intercession, the graces for which we pray for.

EIGHTEENTH DAY

Third Reason: The Love of Our Lady

1. She consoles the souls in Purgatory

Mary does not limit herself to consoling and encouraging her dear children on earth. She is also the Consolation of those whom Divine Justice retains in Purgatory. What mother, seeing her child fall into a flaming pit, would not rush to her child's