

A Message from Fr. Roberto

Why do Catholics pray for the dead?

On November 2nd, All Souls Day, and throughout this month of November, we Catholics traditionally pray for our deceased loved ones and for those we don't even know who are going through the process of purification we call purgatory (which signifies in Latin "a means of cleansing"). Why do we do this? There are several reasons. First of all, it is a tradition begun in Jewish times (see 2Mac 12:43-45) and continued by early Christians. Some of the earliest Christian liturgies included prayers for the dead. Many ancient Christian tombs were inscribed with requests to pray for the deceased.



Second, it is our scriptural and Catholic belief that "Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live forever with Christ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], #1023*; see also Rev 21:27)." However, when we die, many, if not most of us, are not quite as good as we could have been; we are not totally right with God. So the Church also says, "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 (*ibid., #1030*)."



Third, the Church's understanding of purgatory and of our need and desire to pray for the dead developed over many centuries of reflection and experience, and it simply makes a lot of sense. For example, let's say you seriously hurt someone's feelings; afterwards, you feel bad and apologize. God willing, the person forgives you, but you are not done yet. Shouldn't you also do something to make up for the hurt you caused? Perhaps spend some extra time with the person or write a note of apology or buy her or him an ice cream, etc. We call this reparation or satisfaction for our sins, and it is one of the things required of us when we go to confession, usually by doing the penance the priest gives to us (*ibid., #1459-60*).

So, considering all the things we've done wrong in our lives, in justice, it seems right that, at some point – either here on earth or after we die – we must make up for these bad things. If we die and we have not confessed our sins or have not entirely made up for them, we must be cleansed, healed and made whole before we can enjoy the perfection and total joy of being in God's presence forever. In the Book of Revelation, chapter 21, verse 27, John speaks about heaven and says: "...but nothing unclean will enter it, nor any (one) who does abominable things or tells lies." So, for those of us who are basically good people yet still "unclean" when we die, we must somehow be made clean (purified) before entering into heaven. This process of purification is what we call purgatory. In addition, all of us receive hurts throughout our lives – sometimes deep hurts – which affect us during all our time in this world. Thus, the "process of purgatory" is also a time of healing from those hurts so that we can enjoy complete happiness in heaven. Our prayers for the dead are meant to express our love for

them and our desire to help them through this process of purification. If we can pray to help our loved ones while they are alive, it seems reasonable that we can do so even after they die.

While the word “purgatory” is never mentioned in the Bible (neither, by the way, are the words “trinity” or “incarnation” which refer to important beliefs that all Christians accept), there are certain Scriptures that the Church has come to understand might refer to a cleansing after death: Mt 5:25-26; 12:32; 18:34; 1Cor 3:15. For more information about the Catholic understanding of purgatory, you can go to the old Catholic Encyclopedia online at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12575a.htm>.

Harvest Faire Results

Here is a financial report from our recent Harvest Faire and a comparison with last year. Thanks to all of you who help in any way. God bless you.

	2017 (three days)	2016 (two days)
Total income	\$70,572.25	\$56,725.75
Total expenses	\$41,017.24	\$34,739.90
Net income	\$29,555.01	\$21,985.85