



## The Saints, the Holy Souls and St. Joseph!

In following the Gospel exhortation to be perfect like the heavenly Father (cf. *Mt 5:48*) during our earthly life, we are called to grow in love, to be sound and flawless before God the Father 'at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints' (*1 Thes 3:12f.*). Moreover, we are invited to 'cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit' (*2 Cor 7:1*; cf. *1 Jn 3:3*), because the encounter with God requires absolute purity.

Every trace of attachment to evil must be eliminated, every imperfection of the soul corrected. Purification must be complete, and indeed this is precisely what is meant by the Church's teaching on *purgatory*. The term does not indicate a place, but a condition of existence. Those who, after death, exist in a state of purification, are already in the love of Christ who removes from them the remnants of imperfection (cf. Ecumenical Council of Florence, *Decretum pro Graecis*: DS 1304; Ecumenical Council of Trent, *Decretum de iustificatione*: DS 1580; *Decretum de purgatorio*: DS 1820).

We know purgatory exists, as it is a doctrine of our Faith and has been clearly defined in Ecumenical Councils as noted above. As St. Faustina has told us in her Diary, DIVINE MERCY IN MY SOUL, this purifying fire is an expression of God's mercy and not merely of His justice; it is more remedial than retributive, for it is intended for the healing and rehabilitation of the soul, a complete purification without which one could not enter into the presence of God, the All Holy and infinitely Pure One. The Church has never defined the pains of purgatory, but saints have defined its pain as more excruciating than anything possible on earth. Some say it is the same fire that torments the forever damned but is temporary for the souls in purgatory. This burning fire within, "the supernatural love of God with which they burn draws them with such violence to be united to God, that when they see the barrier which their sins have put in the way, they feel a pain so acute that if they were capable of death, they could not live a moment." (St. Alphonsus Liguori, THE GREAT MEANS OF SALVATION, Section 3.)

While some saints have been visited by souls from purgatory, St. Faustina recorded in her *Diary*, entry 20, being taken by her guardian angel to purgatory itself.

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 suffering 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. ...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.

The souls in purgatory cannot help themselves but they need our help for their release from these purifying fires, and they, in turn, can help us. St. Alphonsus reminds us that we not only should pray for these souls, but that we have a Christian duty in charity to do so. He wrote how St. Catharine of Bologna had recourse to the souls in purgatory whenever she had any need and was immediately heard. St. Catharine even testified that by the intercession of the souls in purgatory she had obtained many graces which she had not been able to obtain by the intercession of the saints. In his August 4, 1999 General Audience, St. John Paul II spoke how the holy souls in purgatory are not separated from the saints in heaven who already enjoy the fullness of eternal life, nor from us on earth still on our pilgrim journey to the Father's house, for we are all united in the Mystical Body of Christ; we are the Communion of Saints.

**Is there a patron saint of the holy souls in purgatory? Yes, in 1884 Pope Leo XIII declared St. Nicholas of Tolentino, during whose lifetime the doctrine of purgatory was defined, the universal patron of the Holy Souls.**

**Why?** As a young Augustinian priest, Nicholas had just begun to fall asleep when he heard a voice which identified itself as that of Friar Pellegrino of Osimo, whom Nicholas knew when he was alive.

**"I am tormented in these flames,"** Pelligrino lamented. **"God did not reject my contrition and instead did not destine me to eternal punishment, which I deserved due to my weakness, but to purgatorial punishment, in virtue of His mercy."** He begged Nicholas to **"celebrate a Mass of the Dead for me, so that I may be freed from my torments."**



But Nicholas could not because he was assigned to say the monastery's community Mass. **"Then at least come with me ... see our suffering ... pity these unfortunates who await your help...If you celebrate Mass for us, most of these people will be liberated,"** Pelligrino again pleaded. Nicholas was then shown a great sea of souls of all ages, sexes and conditions, and he prayed all night. In the morning the monastery's prior gave Nicholas permission to immediately say the Masses for the Dead. Seven days later, Pelligrino appeared again — this time, accompanied by a victorious multitude also freed. After that occurrence in the late 13th century, Nicholas spent his years praying and offering Masses for the souls in purgatory. He freed countless numbers. During one Mass, Jesus appeared, thanked him and showed him the souls his Masses had released.

<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/souls-from-purgatory-visited-these-saints#:~:text=Nicholas%20of%20Tolentino%20universal%20patron>. **What greater prayer is there than that of the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?**

**Padre Pio was also visited by a soul from purgatory who had died in a fire on September 18, 1908. The man said: "I am coming from purgatory. The Lord has allowed me to come to ask you to offer for me the Holy Mass of tomorrow morning. Thanks to this Mass I will be able to enter Heaven."** Padre Pio agreed as he led the man from the monastery but did not realize he was a holy soul from purgatory until the man suddenly disappeared. Records in San Giovanni Rotondo's registry office confirmed there indeed was such a fire and the man Pietro Di Mauro did in fact die in that fire.

On another occasion Padre Pio was praying alone in the choir loft one evening when he noticed a friar at the main altar, dusting. He thought it was Fra Leone and told him to go eat for it was supper time. "I am not Fra Leone," the voice answered, saying he had done his novitiate there and was assigned to the care of the main altar, but many times had passed in front of the altar without giving Jesus in the tabernacle the proper respect and bow. Hence, he was in purgatory. The friar said Jesus had sent him to Padre Pio who was to determine how much longer the friar must suffer in those flames of love. "Help me," the friar pleaded, but Padre Pio said he would have to remain there until the morning Mass. The poor friar screamed, "You are cruel." Padre Pio said his wailing over not being released from purgatory that night created a wound in his own heart that he would feel all his life, knowing he could have sent that soul immediately to Heaven and didn't.

[https://www.ncregister.com/blog/souls-from-purgatory-visited-these-saints#:~:text=Nicholas%20of%20Tolentino%20universal%20patron%](https://www.ncregister.com/blog/souls-from-purgatory-visited-these-saints#:~:text=Nicholas%20of%20Tolentino%20universal%20patron%20)

St. Gertrude the Great had a great empathy for the suffering souls in purgatory and prayed after every Holy Communion that Jesus might have mercy on them. During one Holy Communion she experienced the descent into Purgatory with Our Lord and heard Him say: "At Holy Communion I will permit thee to draw forth all to whom the fragrance of thy prayers penetrates." At another time Our Lord told St. Gertrude that the prayer shown to the right would release 1,000 souls from purgatory each time it is said. The prayer was later extended to include living sinners as well. <http://www.catholictradition.org/Gertrude/saint-gertrude7.htm>

The Prayer of St. Gertrude

Eternal Father, I offer  
Thee the Most Precious  
Blood of Thy Divine Son,  
Jesus, in union with the  
masses said throughout the  
world today, for all the  
holy souls in purgatory, for  
sinners everywhere, for  
sinners in the universal  
church, those in my own  
home and within my  
family.  
Amen.

Let us remember that St. Anthony, the patron of lost things, is also known as patron of miracles, of the poor, of lost people and lost souls, lost spouses. Lost, of course, does not mean forever lost.

St. Peter Basta of the Society of Jesus had a great devotion to the Holy Souls and prayed a rosary daily for them. Fatigue caused him to forget this pious duty one day. During the night he was awakened by a beautiful young man who put a Rosary in his hand and said: "The souls in purgatory await the pious alms which thou art accustomed to offer." Peter immediately arose and went to a Church of Our Lady of the Rosary to make amends. Later, at a street corner, he was accosted by some wicked men when some unknow persons came to his aid, put the aggressors to flight and then walked him



home. When about to inquire who they were, they disappeared. Then he realized they were the souls from purgatory for whom he had prayed.

After all these inspirational accounts of saintly souls with the Holy Souls in purgatory, we must reflect on the one above all dedicated to the souls on their way home to God—St. Joseph, Patron of the dying. While we have no specific accounts of his

encounters with the Holy Souls, **can we imagine for a minute that Joseph, who spent so much of his life ministering to the dying, and who had the most marvelous experience of being ushered into glory by Jesus Himself and His holy Mother, would abandon those souls whom he had assisted at their death? Never!**

November 1<sup>st</sup> is the feast of All Saints and it is also the First Wednesday of the month in which St. Joseph asks us to honor him in a special way in memory of his life with Jesus and Mary here on earth.

**“I am the protector of the Church and the home, as I was the protector of Christ and His Mother while I lived upon earth. Jesus and Mary desire that my pure heart, so long hidden and unknown, be now honored in a special way. Let my children honor my most pure heart in a special manner on the First Wednesday of the month by reciting the *Joyful Mysteries* of the rosary in memory of my life with Jesus and Mary and the Love I bore them, the sorrow I suffered with them. Let them receive Holy Communion in union with the love with which I received the Savior for the first time and each time I held Him in my arms.”**

**“Those who honor me in this way will be consoled by my presence at their death, and I myself will conduct them safely into the presence of Jesus and Mary.”**

(Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, OUR LADY OF AMERICA, Tiffin, Ohio, Pgs. 31-32, March 30, 1958.)

**I myself will conduct them safely into the presence of Jesus and Mary!**

Can any other saint have more privilege and favor with God than St. Joseph to be our sublime escort into the Presence of God, he who was himself escorted by Jesus, Mary and the angels?

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**Let us pray each day during November, after our rosary, the Litany for the Holy Souls in Purgatory.**

**<https://msf-america.org/blog/298-purgatory-litany>**