



Adsum

Adsum is published by the seminarians of **Mater Dei Seminary** for the enjoyment of our families, friends, and benefactors.

LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

With one month away from our upcoming ordinations, our seminarians will soon break from their classes to make their required retreat in preparation for their steps to the priesthood. For those seminarians receiving minor orders, they are required to make a three day retreat and for those to receive the subdiaconate and priesthood, they are required to spend six full days. Our seminarians are also required to write a letter of intention in order to clearly state that they understand the nature and the obligations of the particular order they are about to receive and that they freely and willingly accept the order with its duties and responsibilities. Please remember them in your prayers that they may become priests after the Sacred Heart of the Eternal High Priest.

This year of 2017 marks the 30th anniversary of Mater Dei Academy. One amazing aspect is that our first students back in the 1980's are now parents whose children are also attending this school. Also, a number of our priests, religious sisters, and seminarians who

now teach at Mater Dei Academy were also former students. There are many Catholic traditions in our school that are kept each year throughout the history of the academy, and it makes me smile when I consider how our students today are so much like their parents were way back then.

For those who have never visited Mater Dei Seminary here in Omaha, Nebraska, the property of our church, school, and seminary is located directly across the street from Mt. Hope Cemetery. Although only a few of our deceased parishioners have been buried there, we witness quite regularly throughout the year numerous burials, especially of military veterans (during which we can hear the percussion of their 21 gun salute and the bugle sound of taps).

Over the years, our seminarians will cross the road to go for rosary walks in the silence of the cemetery or to make private meditation and reflection while they browse the names and ages on the monuments of the deceased. When we see that those buried in the cemetery were of all ages and walks of life, we better appreciate the words of Christ to always be ready for death. It is truly a grace to visit a cemetery to be reminded of the



Our 30th Anniversary of Mater Dei Academy 1987-2017

four last things—death, judgement, Heaven, Hell.

Nevertheless, such reflections should never lead us to morbidity and depression. No, it should motivate us to live our lives to the fullest in the service and love of God, to count each day as a new opportunity to grow in grace and merit, and a new chance to atone for past sins by patiently bearing our crosses in life.

These thoughts remind me of an encounter I had during one of my missions with a certain flight attendant. She was probably in her mid-60's and was notably cheerful and charitable as she served everyone on the plane. When I commented to her about her positive spirit, she replied seriously, "Father, I had stage 4 cancer a year ago, and God has been so good to have it

go into remission. I have been given another chance at life, and I appreciate every day He gives me. And I will not sweat the little stuff! Life is too short!" I was so impressed at her wonderful attitude—let us not let the little frustrations and difficulties in life get us down; let us always count God's blessings in life, whether big and small.

As we prepare for this Thanksgiving holiday, I thank God for all of you, our friends and benefactors, who support the seminary, both spiritually and financially!

With my prayers and blessing,

Most Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI



Our Boarding Students for 2018



Why Do we Pray For The Dead?

by Fr. John A. O'Brien (1944)

"Why do Catholics pray for the dead?" is a question frequently asked by our non-Catholic fellow citizens. Since the practice of praying for the souls of the deceased is based upon the doctrine of Purgatory which was abandoned by the Reformers in the sixteenth century, and is now practically unknown among their followers, the latter are naturally at a loss to understand the Catholic custom of praying for their departed brethren, or as it is commonly called, "the devotion to the poor souls."

The Church keeps this devotion before the eyes of her children by setting aside the second of November as All Souls' Day, permitting her priests to celebrate three Masses on that day for the souls of the departed, and by designating the entire month of November as the month of special devotion for the poor souls. Let us invite our non-Catholic friends to investigate with us the basis of this devotion in Scripture, Tradition and reason.

The Scriptures encourage us to pray not only for one another on earth, and to invoke the intercession of the saints and angels, but they encourage us to pray for the souls of our deceased brethren as well. In the second Book of Machabees it is narrated that after Judas had defeated Gorgias, he came with his company to bury the Jews slain in the battle. "Making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead." He did not regard their sins to be grievous, "because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them." The sacred writer then expresses the doctrine involved herein: "It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." (12:43-46)

"Yet So As By Fire"

While our dissenting brethren do not acknowledge the Books of Machabees to be inspired, they must at least admit them to the faithful historical records that bear witness to the Jewish faith centuries before Christ. As a matter of fact, they rest upon the same authority as Isaias, St. John, and all the other books in the Bible—the infallible teaching authority of the church which has declared all the books in the Bible to be inspired.

Our Savior speaks of the forgiveness of sins in "the world to come" (Matt. 12:32) which refers to Purgatory according to St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great. In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul tells us that "every man's work shall be manifest" on the Lord's day. "The fire," he continues, "shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide," that is, if his works are righteous, "he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn," that is, if his works are faulty and imperfect, "he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." (I Cor. 3:13-15). In these words St. Paul tells us that the soul of such a man will be ultimately saved, though he will suffer for a time the purifying flames of Purgatory.

Voices of the Martyrs

This is the unanimous interpretation of the Fathers of the early Church and the continuing tradition of the intervening

centuries. It speaks to us from the tombs of the martyrs and from the catacombs where lie the bodies of the early Christians. In going through the catacombs of St. Calixtus under the hills of Rome, the writer saw a number of inscriptions echoing still the last words of the dying Christians: "In your prayers remember us who have gone before you." "Mayest thou have eternal light in Christ," was the answering prayer of those who remained behind. "Inscriptions such as these," reports Monsignor Barnes, "are found upon the tomb of many Christians in the first three centuries." (*The Early Church in the Light of the Monuments*, 149-157)

This Apostolic custom of praying for the dead is frequently referred to in the writing of the Fathers of both the East and West. Tertullian (160-240) in two different passages speaks of anniversary Masses:

"We make on one day every year oblations for the dead, as for their birthdays." (De Cor. Mil., 8)

"The faithful widow prays for the soul of her husband, and begs for him in the interim repose, and participation in the first resurrection, and offers prayers on the anniversary of his death." (De Monag., 10).

In his funeral sermon over the Emperor Theodosius, St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, said:

"Give perfect rest to Thy servant Theodosius, that rest which Thou hast prepared for Thy saints. I have loved him, and therefore will I follow him unto the land of the living; nor will I leave him until by tears and prayers I shall lead him wither his merits summon him, unto the holy mountain of the Lord." (*De Obitu., Theod.*, 36, 37)

Testimony of St. Augustine

One of the most touching incidents which have come down to us from the writings of the Fathers upon this subject is from the pen of St. Augustine, who lived in the beginning of the fifth century. This scholarly Bishop relates that when his mother was dying, she made this last request of him:

"Lay this body anywhere; let not the care of it in any way disturb you. This only I request of you, that you would remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you be." (*Confessions*, Book 9)

The memory of that request drew from her son this fervent prayer:

"I, therefore, O God of my heart, do now beseech Thee for the sins of my mother. Hear me through the medicine of the wounds that hung upon the wood... May she, then, be in the peace with her husband... And inspire, my Lord... Thy servants, my brethren, whom with voice and heart and pen I serve, that as many as shall read these words may remember at Thy Altar, Monica, Thy servant..."

In this incident there is reflected the universal custom of the early Church of praying for the dead, as well as her belief in a state called *Purgatory*.

Outlines of Moral Theology

by Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., LL.D., L.H.D.

VERACITY

Veracity is the virtue (potential part of justice) which inclines one to manifest the truth in word and in deed. It can be violated by excess, when one manifests a secret without sufficient reason, or by defect, when one tells a lie.

A secret may be natural, promised, or committed. A natural secret is one which is such by the very nature of things (e.g., the hidden faults of my neighbor). A promised secret is one which must be kept because a person promised to do so after he became aware of the secret. A committed secret is one which arises from a contract, either express or tacit, made before the manifestation of the secret. The most usual form of the committed secret is the professional secret (the doctor, the lawyer, the priest, etc., in reference to those matters coming within their professional scope), since everyone who practices a profession implicitly agrees to observe this manner of secrecy with respect to his clients.

It is *per se* a sin to divulge another's secret against his will, since a man has as much right to his own secrets as he has to his property. The natural and the committed secret bind out to justice, the promised secret out to fidelity (though often this is also a natural secret and in that event binds also in justice). The sin committed by the violation of a secret is either mortal or venial, in accordance with the gravity of the harm that is done. The harm done by the transgression of the professional secret is not limited to the particular case, but includes the general lessening of confidence on the part of the public that can be one of the consequences. If there is probability that a person regards some secret knowledge as very important, it would be a mortal sin to strive to get at it—e.g., by listening at the keyhole, by piecing together a torn letter. On the other hand, if a person has good reason to believe that his own great good is involved, he may read another's letter. Parents have the right to supervise the mail of their younger children, and even of the older ones, if they think some serious harm may thus be averted. Religious superiors have the rights given by the rule, but they should be mindful of the letters which Canon Law allows religious to send and to receive without any inspection.

A secret may be divulged if the consent of the interested party can be at least reasonably presumed, or if the matter has become public in some other way, or if the common good or the good of some individual requires it—provided that the good is sufficient to outweigh the evil that may come from the manifestation of the secret, particularly the professional secret. (It should be remembered that no reason, however important, will justify the manifestation of confessional knowledge.) An example of lawful manifestation of a professional secret is the case of the doctor who knows that a young man, infected with a social disease, is preparing to marry a girl if the young man will inform her himself.

A lie is a statement contrary to what a person believes to be true. It may be in word, in writing, or in deed. It is forbidden explicitly in Sacred Scripture, and also by the natural law. Some theologians base their argument on the fact that the purpose of speech is to manifest what one believes to be true; and hence it is against the primary purpose of this faculty to tell a lie. Other theologians argue that the primary purpose of the faculty of speech is to promote the welfare of mankind by mutual communication of ideas, so that a lie is wrong because it tends to disrupt the spirit of trust and confidence among human beings. However, they say, when a person is unjustly trying to force me to reveal a truth which I have a right to conceal, I do not sin if I say something to the contrary. In that event I am telling a falsehood, but not a lie. This opinion is truly probable, but those who accept it must be very careful not to abuse it.

Theologians distinguish three types of lies—helpful, jocose, and harmful. The first is that which is intended to render some helpful service to oneself or another, the second is that which is intended as a joke, the third is that which is aimed at causing harm. Generally speaking, the first two are venial sins, the third is mortal or venial sin in accordance with the measure of harm that is wrought.

Adsum, a publication by the seminarians of **MATER DEI SEMINARY** for the reading enjoyment of friends and benefactors, is sent free of charge to all who request it. If you are interested, please provide your name and mailing address to:

MATER DEI SEMINARY
7745 Military Avenue
Omaha NE 68134-3356
www.materdeiseminary.org