



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,

Throughout the month of November, we continue that spiritual work of mercy which was practiced in the Old Testament by God's Chosen People and in the New Testament by the Catholic Church—to offer prayers and sacrifices for the faithful departed.

Yes, the practice of praying for the dead “that they may be loosed from their sins” dates back to the Old Testament. Yes, the doctrine of Purgatory was held by the Catholic Church even from the earliest ages. Yes, our belief in Purgatory and our practice of praying for the faithful departed is very much a part of Sacred Scripture and Tradition. And why is this important today? The reason is that not only do the Protestants flatly deny the doctrine of Purgatory, but also the modern Church of Vatican II has downplayed it by the replacement of the Requiem Mass (the Mass of the Dead) with the new “Mass of the Resurrection.” The impression this new “Mass of the Resurrection” gives is that there is no need for atonement and expiation for sins.



When we consider the theological basis from Sacred Scripture and Tradition for the doctrine of Purgatory and for the spiritual work of mercy to pray for the dead, we begin with the Chosen People of the Old Testament. They offered prayers for their departed, and this ancient practice is even continued by the Jews of today.

We find reference for prayers for the dead in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was used by the Chosen People several centuries before the Coming of Jesus Christ. This Septuagint version was most often quoted by the Apostles and the early Church. In the Septuagint, we find the Second Book of Machabees, and we read that Judas Machabeus offered a large sum of money to Jerusalem so that sacrifices would be offered for his soldiers:

“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.” (2 Mach. 12:43-46)

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ taught that there are certain sins which would not be forgiven in this world nor in the next:

“And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Ghost, it will not be forgiven him, either in this world or in the world to come.” (Mt. 12:32)

Thus, Our Lord implied that some sins are forgiven in the next. This is the understanding of St. Augustine and Pope St. Gregory the Great on this passage.

St. Paul also makes reference to the sufferings in the next life whereby man’s sins are atoned for by fire. In his letter to the Corinthians, he 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 the catacombs of St. Calixtus under the hills of Rome, there are a number of inscriptions which still echo 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,” Monsignor Barnes writes, “are found upon the tombs of many Christians in the first three centuries.” (The Early Church in the Light of the Monuments, 149-157)

This custom of praying for the dead is frequently referred to in the writings 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., 3) “The faithful widow prays for the soul of her husband, and begs in the interim for his repose, and a participation in the first resurrection, and offers prayers on the

anniversary of his death.” (De Monag., 10)

In the “Confessions” of St. Augustine, we find that St. Monica had one last request of her son, St. Augustine:

“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)

And in response to her request, St. Augustine composed this prayer for his dear mother with the petition that all those who would read his “Confessions” might also remember her in their prayers:

“I, therefore, O God of my heart, do now beseech Thee for the sins of my mother... 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 Thine Altar, Monica, Thy servant...”

These are just a few examples to demonstrate that the early Church assisted the souls of the faithful departed by their prayers and sacrifices (especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass).

How important it is for us, the Church Militant, to have a lively faith—a faith that is put into practice. We believe in the doctrine of Purgatory. How often do we remember to pray and sacrifice for our departed relatives and friends? We believe in the doctrine of Purgatory. What are we doing to avoid Purgatory ourselves by voluntary penance to atone for our past sins? Purgatory and the souls suffering there are realities of our Faith which we cannot afford to forget. Let us be generous in our efforts to assist our departed brethren, and let us be solicitous to willingly suffer here on earth in order to avoid a long Purgatory.

Next month several of our seminarians will be ordained to the Diaconate and to the Priesthood. They would greatly appreciate your prayers for their worthy reception of these Orders. The ordinations will take place on Thursday, December 12th, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at 8:00 a.m.

With our prayers and blessing,

Most Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI

Your Cross

by St. Francis de Sales

The everlasting God has in His wisdom foreseen from eternity the cross that He now presents to you as a gift from His all-knowing eyes, understood with His Divine mind, tested with His wise justice, warmed with loving arms and weighted with His own hands to see that it be not one inch too large and not one ounce too heavy for you.

He has blessed it with His holy Name, anointed it with His grace, perfumed it with His consolation, taken one last glance at you and your courage, and then sent it to you from Heaven, a special greeting from God to you, an alms of the all-merciful love of God.



Father Connell Answers Moral Questions

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

ASSISTANCE AT MASS IN THE "CRYING ROOM"

Question: In some churches nowadays a "crying room" is installed—that is, an enclosed room, with a window looking to the altar, in order that parents can keep their young children there during the Holy Sacrifice without disturbing the congregation. My difficulty is this: If the room is soundproof, so that the priest cannot be heard at all, can we say that these parents are truly hearing Mass?

Answer: The questioner need have no fear that those who are in the "crying room" do not fulfill their obligation of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice. It fully suffices for the observance of this precept if the faithful *see* what is taking place at the altar, even though they cannot *hear* it. It is more correct to say that we must *assist* at Mass on Sundays rather than that we must *hear* Mass. Of course, it would be advisable if a room of this kind were equipped with an acoustic system whereby the parents who come there with their little ones will be enabled to hear the voice of the priest and to derive benefit from the sermon.

SUNDAY OBSERVANCE

Question: If the members of a Catholic family living far away from the church are unable on this account to attend Mass on Sunday, are they bound by the divine law, promulgated in the third commandment, to devote some portion of the Sunday to private worship?

Answer: The solution of this question goes back to the problem of the basis of the law prescribing the sanctification of Sunday. Under the Old Dispensation the divine law, contained in the third commandment, imposed on the chosen people the obligation to observe the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, as the Lord's Day. However, this precept, like the other ceremonial prescriptions of the Old Law, ceased with the promulgation of the New Law (Cf. St. Thomas, *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q. 103, a. 3). In the Christian Dispensation the Lord's Day has become the first day of the week. Some theologians have held that the sanctification of Sunday is commanded by divine-positive law, but it is the more common opinion that this duty arises from ecclesiastical legislation (Cf. Damen, *Theologia moralis* [Turin, 1947], I, n. 593).

For the due observance of Sunday the Church has commanded that Christians attend Mass and abstain from servile work as well as from certain types of activity, such as holding court. The people described by the questioner must abstain from forbidden work, as far as they are able; but, in the presumption that they are excused from hearing Mass by reason of distance from the church, they are not bound to perform any special acts of worship on Sunday—though they must pray, make acts of the theological virtues, etc., with sufficient frequency and regularity throughout the year. Needless to say, however, such persons should be strongly urged to set aside a period of time on Sunday for devotional acts, such as reading the Mass of the day in the vernacular and reciting the Rosary. It should be noted also that according to some theologians there is a divine-positive precept of hearing Mass several times in the year (Cf. Damen, *op. cit.*, I, n. 529), though others deny that such a precept exists. (Cf. Guiniven, *The Precept of Hearing Mass* [Washington, D.C.: C.U.A. Press, 1942], 56)

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