

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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One Body: Unity of Faithful

You may wonder why the feasts of All Saints and the feast of the Holy Souls follow on from each other so closely. You may also wonder if there is a difference between the two groups. After all St Paul talked about us as 'Saints' so why the distinction? Do we all not end up in Heaven if we are faithful? Are we not all part of the One Body of Jesus, People of God? Did Jesus not talk about 'The Father's House' having many mansions therefore even those perhaps who have not died in a state of great grace or sanctity will still be part of the Communion of Saints. Clearly the answer is yes, we are one Body and although we do not know fully when we will reach heaven that is where we are destined to go ... in the fullness of time. The emphasis of course here is on the faithful for there are those who choose not to be among that heavenly array and who condemn themselves.

So why two feasts? It would be a very brave or bold person or even a strongly judgemental one, and we are bidden not to judge, who claims to know the answer on an individual basis. That privilege belongs to the Father and at the end of time to the Father, Son and Spirit. Who would dare to guess who is, at death, destined to be defined as a 'Saint' and who goes to heaven upon death? We know that Jesus himself tells us to be very careful about making assessment and tells us that the most unexpected people receive this honour. Yet the others may also be Holy Souls. So who are they? The Church is defined as The Church Triumphant... The Church Suffering and the Church Militant... The Church Triumphant is those members of the faithful who have died and are already in heaven, they have triumphed over sin and death. The Church Militant are ourselves, those who are still struggling to become holy and are actively following Jesus as best we can and finally the Church Suffering is those who while achieving a great deal of goodness have not yet been able to shed all that bound them to error and are awaiting to go to heaven. This term is often used today to speak of those who suffer for their faith either in persecution or loss of religious freedom or indeed difficult service. This also includes those who perhaps are ill or have difficult crosses to carry. However the

original meaning was confined to the Holy Souls. In a curious sort of manner both are correct because it is often said that suffering can be used to purify and correct us and maybe therefore put us on the Path to Heaven. But those who have died await their final liberation in suffering. Waiting for good things is never easy. Patience does not come to most people readily. Waiting to join those who are already sanctified, saints, not necessarily those who bear that title, cannot be easy.

This leads us to the special call of the month of November to pray for all who have died. It is known as the month of the Holy Souls. Because unless someone is Canonised, deemed to be regarded as an extraordinary in holiness and regarded as already sharing the beatific vision we as *one body* are all united and in need of prayer. Thus we celebrate with those known and unknown who are saintly on the first feast, and then we pray for those who are so much in need of our help in prayer. Many Masses and prayer are offered for those who have preceded us on the path to eternal life. Although we hope that the people we know and love are, as we would hope, already enjoying eternal happiness we cannot be certain of this for everyone. We are therefore called to pray for our dead. This should not just be at the time of the funeral, or only for certain people but for *All* the faithful who have died. Many people who die have no one to pray for them. Is it not a worrying thought that one day we might be in that situation? There is also a bright side for the Holy Souls pray for us continually. They cannot pray for themselves for they have concluded their earthly journey but they can and do pray for us. Should we not remember that we are brothers and sisters sharing a common Baptism and part of One Body? Many of our family members intercede for us and keep an 'eye open for us.' Should we not do the same for them?



St Monica, St. Augustine's mother said to her son on her deathbed, "All I ask of you is that you should remember me".

There are many prayers that we can say for the Holy Souls and each other but perhaps an interesting prayer in this context is the Rosary. There are many stories of how effective this prayer is but in so many ways it is the perfect prayer because it contains the many elements of what has been given to us through Scripture. The Four Mysteries, Sorrowful, Joyful and Glorious remind us of the passage through life and that the end of everything is Hope and life eternal, the Mysteries of Light tell us about Mission and the importance of living the Gospel. The Our Father is Jesus' own prayer and the perfect prayer, the Hail Mary tells of the coming of Our Redeemer and that death is surely coming to all of us and that we need Mary the Queen of Intercessors. The Glory be to the Father reminds us to praise God in *All* things, the Creed of the tenets of faith and finally the Fatima prayer (if added) of the importance of praying for the dead and dying. It is a prayer that has brought comfort to those at the last stage of their journey and been a source of consolation for the Bereaved.



The following two stories show in their own way the importance of the rosary both involving Saints. Bl.Fr. Titus Brandsma, Carmelite was one of the holy priests of the Nazi concentration camps. After years of dedicated to the service of souls and to writing scholarly works on the Mystics Fr Brandsma was arrested and eventually sent to the camp at Dachau. Even here he was a channel of grace to the souls around him. Starvation and ill treatment soon broke down his frail health. Here he was subjected to medical experiments which he knew would kill him. The welfare of souls remained his first concern especially for his nurse who had abandoned her faith basically because of the scandal given to her by other Christians. She said prayer was impossible for her. Fr Brandsma gave her his rosary for the answer to scandal is not reproach but love. This made little difference and she held out against prayer saying that it was impossible for her to say the Hail Mary. Fr. Brandsma's reply to this was unromantic, no instant conversion here. He said "if you cannot say the first part, you can say the second, "Pray for us sinners,". She did not hesitate when the order was given to her to give the priest a fatal injection.

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Yet in time the Carmelite's gift did what he intended. The nurse made her peace with God. We have this story from her.

The next story is even more recent. An English student for the priesthood, a Deacon studying in Rome was invited to the Chapel of St Pope John Paul for early Mass. Attired in his best 'Bib and Tucker' he arrived early and was escorted to a front row opposite The Holy Father. He had taken great care with his appearance though still unsure why he had been invited. Pope John Paul did not wait for all to assemble and started his daily Rosary. To the young Deacon's horror he realised that he had forgotten his rosary and was very aware that the goodly Pope had noticed that his search through his pockets had not produced the beads. Mass followed and at the end Pope John Paul approached him and kindly showing his rosary made his position clear. He then handed the rosary to the astonished deacon with the words ... "have mine and you will not forget it again, eh" To this day he uses this Rosary. Surely a lesson well learnt and an important point made.

Maybe this month we can remember to pray even a decade of the Rosary for a loved one or even for someone not known to us, maybe a soldier who died in battle, or even someone we found difficult. H.H.

Pope Francis 1... Through Baptism and faith we become friends of God and receive sanctifying grace, the privilege of eternal life. This is all made possible by Christ's redemption of us. Unfortunately very serious sin - mortal sin - "kills" our friendship with God. By wilfully committing mortal sin, we reject God, and we lose this sanctifying grace. Now not all sin is mortal. Some sin is not serious enough to kill our friendship with God, but still it is harmful to us and neighbours. The mess (e.g. scandal) caused by our sin needs correction. This correction is temporal punishment. We can be corrected and cleansed through personal penance on earth or later in Purgatory - thanks to our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Purgatory is a temporary state for souls in friendship with God who need cleansing from the bad effects, mess, scandal and attachments (attraction to sin) still remaining from forgiven mortal sins and less serious venial sins. Such tainted souls, though saved, cannot enter heaven directly. As stated in the Bible: "But nothing unclean shall enter it (heaven)..." These souls need to be purged of all "uncleanness", no matter how slight before seeing God face to face. Eventually all souls in Purgatory will go to Heaven.

Rome 13.

Feasts in November. 1st All Saints, Holy Day of Obligation. 2nd All Souls (this year a Sunday) 11th St Martin of Tours. 22nd St Cecilia 23rd Feast of Christ the King.