

All Souls Day

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- Well...today is “All Souls Day”, sometimes called the “Day of the Dead” or “Dia de los Muertos.”
- It is always sort of a melancholy and bittersweet day for us as we remember, and pray, for our friends and relatives who have gone before us in death.
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- The Church teaches us that we cannot know who is in Heaven, Hell or Purgatory; only God can judge the soul, because only He knows all the secrets of the heart.
- We may say “Oh...Uncle Bob is in a better place”, and we certainly hope it is true, but we really cannot know for sure.
- It is not our place or privilege to judge. As St. Paul wrote: “*Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls.*” (Rom 14:4 RSV)
- And simply declaring faith in Christ is NOT sufficient for salvation; if we truly have faith, we will live an active faith, and live as He taught us.
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- The only saints who are certain saints are those so declared by the Church, because the Holy Spirit works within the Church.
- But we as individuals cannot judge Mother Teresa into Heaven, nor even Hitler into Hell.
- While we can at times judge actions (for instance, adultery and fornication, is always sinful), we cannot make final judgments—whether good or bad—of a person’s soul.
- NO human being can do that...whether they believe they can or not.
- And that is why we always pray—especially today—for our beloved dead...in case their souls are in Purgatory.
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- But where does the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory come from?
- Purgatory is a doctrine believed in Catholicism since the beginning of the Church... a doctrine also of the Eastern Orthodox churches... and so it is a doctrine of a large majority of ALL Christians.

- Purgatory is controversial today because the Protestant Reformers rejected it in the 1500s.
- There were some abuses concerning the doctrine of Purgatory in the 1500s—at the time of the Reformation. But they were localized abuses, not throughout the entire Church.
- But those abuses in Germany triggered Martin Luther to speak out... and eventually led him to reject the doctrine of Purgatory altogether—a doctrine held by the Church for 1500 years.
- Because of that rejection of Purgatory, the Reformers rejected certain books in the Bible in part because those books supported the doctrine of Purgatory, particularly 2 Maccabees.
- In that book, we read that, after some of his soldiers had died in sin: “[Judas Maccabeus] *took up a collection...to provide for a sin offering... if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.*” (2 Maccabees 12:43-45)
- So praying and sacrificing for eternal rest of the dead has been a custom of the Jews even before Christ...and they still do it today.
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- Those particular books rejected by the Protestant Reformers were considered inspired by the Catholic Church for almost 1500 years before the Reformation...and still are so.
- So when asked why Catholics “added” books to the Bible, the correct response is: “We did not add books; Protestant reformers rejected some books that had been considered scripture for well over 1000 years.” That may sting them a bit, but it is historically true.
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- So the doctrine of Purgatory IS in the Bible... not by name, but by description...a final cleansing—a purification or “purging”, from which the name Purgatory comes—of any remnants of sin left in our souls after death.
- We also see whispers of Purgatory in the NT. Paul writes: “...each

man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire... If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” (1Cor 3:13-15 RSV)

- And it is implicit other places...but for brevity's sake I will not refer to them all.
- But know that Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Jews all believe in at least a Purgatory of sorts, so it is really a minority of Judeo-Christians who do NOT believe in Purgatory.
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- But why is there Purgatory? Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient for the redemption of ALL sin, but we have to accept Jesus and His saving work for us...and whenever we sin—even slightly—there is in it at least a partial rejection of Christ if it has not been repented at the time of death.
- We read in 1 John 5: “*All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal*” (“deadly”), and thus not deserving of Hell. (1Jo 5:17 RSV)
- So...because nothing impure can enter Heaven, Purgatory is that place or condition by which those non-mortal sins are purged from the soul...the crucible in which we are purified—for God is all-merciful, but He is all-just as well.

- How can we help the Holy Souls in Purgatory?
- EVERY soul in Purgatory is eventually bound for Heaven.
- The Church teaches that we aid our beloved dead with our prayers, fasting and almsgiving...because, like those sacrifices of Judas Maccabeus we heard of in 2 Maccabees, our prayers rise as sin offerings to God for those for whom we pray...and through OUR faith and through OUR prayers, we intercede for them as the saints intercede for us—all in the one Body of Christ and that One Communion of Saints.
- So make it a daily devotion to pray for our beloved dead.

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- And in this way we help and aid each other in the communion of the saints...and practice the charity and love for each other which Christ has asked of us.

Reading 1

[Wis 3:1-9](#)

The souls of the just are in the hand of God,
and no torment shall touch them.
They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead;
and their passing away was thought an affliction
and their going forth from us, utter destruction.
But they are in peace.
For if before men, indeed, they be punished,
yet is their hope full of immortality;
chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed,
because God tried them
and found them worthy of himself.
As gold in the furnace, he proved them,
and as sacrificial offerings he took them to himself.
In the time of their visitation they shall shine,
and shall dart about as sparks through stubble;
they shall judge nations and rule over peoples,
and the Lord shall be their King forever.
Those who trust in him shall understand truth,
and the faithful shall abide with him in love:
because grace and mercy are with his holy ones,
and his care is with his elect.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6](#)

R. (1) **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

or:

R. **Though I walk in the valley of darkness, I fear no evil, for you are with me.**

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;

beside restful waters he leads me;

he refreshes my soul.

R. **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

or:

R. **Though I walk in the valley of darkness, I fear no evil, for you are with me.**

He guides me in right paths

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk in the dark valley

I fear no evil; for you are at my side

with your rod and your staff

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that give me courage.

R. **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

or:

R. **Though I walk in the valley of darkness, I fear no evil, for you are with me.**

You spread the table before me

in the sight of my foes;

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

R. **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

or:

R. **Though I walk in the valley of darkness, I fear no evil, for you are with me.**

Only goodness and kindness follow me

all the days of my life;

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

for years to come.

R. **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

or:

R. **Though I walk in the valley of darkness, I fear no evil, for you are with me.**

Reading II

[Rom 5:5-11](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Hope does not disappoint,

because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For Christ, while we were still helpless,
died at the appointed time for the ungodly.

Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person,
though perhaps for a good person
one might even find courage to die.

But God proves his love for us
in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

How much more then, since we are now justified by his Blood,
will we be saved through him from the wrath.

Indeed, if, while we were enemies,
we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son,
how much more, once reconciled,
will we be saved by his life.

Not only that,
but we also boast of God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom we have now received reconciliation.

or

Rom 6:3-9

Brothers and sisters:

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.

We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.

For a dead person has been absolved from sin.

If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.

We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him.

Gospel

[Jn 6:37-40](#)

Jesus said to the crowds:

“Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me.

And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day.

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day.”