

All Souls Day

2014

1

- Well...today is “All Souls Day”...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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- Why All Souls Day?
- Because the Church teaches us that it is not for us to know for certain who is in Heaven, Hell or Purgatory; only God can judge the soul, because only He knows all the secrets of the heart.
- And we may say “Oh...Uncle Bob is in a better place”...and we certainly hope it is true...but it is not our place or privilege to judge a soul...either for the good or the bad.
- 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 manifest in the actions of our lives...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 guides her in knowledge...
- ...and while we can at times judge actions (for instance, adultery and fornication are always sinful), we cannot make final judgment of souls.
- And so we always pray—especially today—for our beloved dead...lest they be Purgatory.
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- I always remember an anecdote from a book about St. Bernadette. She was afraid that she would, in her words, “sizzle in Purgatory” and feared no one would pray for her soul after her death.
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- But where does the doctrine of Purgatory come from?
- It is a doctrine continued from Judaism and held since the beginning of Christianity--a doctrine not only of Catholicism, but also of the Eastern Orthodox churches...and so it is a doctrine of about three-fourths of Christianity.

- Purgatory is controversial today because the Protestant Reformers rejected it...primarily because of some localized abuses of the “marketing” of indulgences in Germany...which spurred the priest Martin Luther to nail his famous 95 Theses onto the door of the church in Wittenberg...and eventually led him to reject the doctrine of Purgatory altogether—a doctrine which had been held by the Church for 1500 years...to throw out the baby with the bathwater, so to speak.
- And 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 which 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.
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- Those particular books rejected by Protestant Reformers were considered inspired for over 1000 years before the Reformation... and still are by the large majority of Christians.
- 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.
- Simply look at an online copy of the Gutenberg Bible—printed before the Reformation—and how ‘bout that! 1st and 2nd Maccabees!!...as well as Tobit, Judith and Baruch—other books that the reformers abolished from the Bible.
- So, young people...remember that when your non-Catholic friends ask you why the Church “added” books to the Bible. Challenge them

back, and ask (charitably): “Why does your church NOT believe in books that were considered scripture for over a thousand years?”

- But the goal is not a childish “gotcha’!”...but rather to get them thinking critically...and to arm you with knowledge of your faith.
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- So the doctrine of Purgatory IS in the Bible... not by name, but by description...a final cleansing or “purging” (from which the name Purgatory comes) of any remnants of sin left in our souls after death...as it suggests in the Bible, when Paul writes: “...*each man's work will become manifest...because it will be revealed with fire...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 so the Catechism tells us: “*All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven...[a] final purification of the elect...*” (CCC 1030-31)
- And so...Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox Churches and even the Jews all believe in at least a Purgatory of sorts, so it is again a minority of Judeo-Christians who do not believe in Purgatory.
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- Why is there Purgatory? Jesus’ sacrifice was certainly sufficient for the redemption of ALL sin, but whenever we sin—even slightly—there is 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) These are what we call “venial” sins.
- And...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.
- But remember that mortal sins are only forgiven in confession.
- Very common mortal sins these days are unnecessarily missing Sunday Mass and its attendant worship of, and thanksgiving to,

God...and any sexual contact other than between validly married spouses...which includes, by the way, that scourge of our day of pornography and self-stimulation—the “m” word (masturbation)—which are abuse of sexuality...one of God’s greatest gifts to man—meant to be a holy vehicle through which God brings to life new images of Himself.

- Young people especially often say: “It’s harmless!”...
- No, it’s not...and, sadly, our sex-obsessed culture even promotes such self-abuse.
- But it truly affects you mentally and your spirit, and affects your relationships. It defiles the holiness in which we are to keep ourselves as temples of the Holy Spirit and as images of God, and thus is its own sacrilege.
- It’s like throwing mud...or something worse...upon the image of a saint...and you are called to be saints yourselves.
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- But how can we help the Holy Souls in Purgatory?
- We aid our beloved dead with our prayers, fasting and almsgiving... because, like those sacrifices of Judas Maccabeus 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 the one Communion of Saints.
- So make it a daily devotion to pray for the departed. We thereby aid one other in the communion of the saints, and practice the last and perhaps best act charity and love for those who have gone before us.
- Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said: As we enter Heaven we will see so many of them coming towards us and thanking us. And we will ask: “Who are you?” And they will say: “We are the souls you prayed for in Purgatory.”

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

All Souls Day

2014

6

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.”