

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

160 Court Street, Buffalo, New York 14202

Traditionally Speaking by S. Casarotto, CS 6/14/09

Holy and Dutiful

The Church teaches that *"A perennial link of charity exists between the faithful who have already reached their heavenly home, those who are expiating their sins in purgatory and those who are still pilgrims on earth. Between them there is too an abundant exchange of all good things."* (CCC #1475).

This implies several truths:

- 1) Not everything is finished with physical death. The soul lives on and there is the judgment of God for everything we do on earth, good or bad, small or great, known and unknown. We do not know how this judgment will be for us and for others. God is more merciful and more just than we think He is.
- 2) Those who die in a state of serious sin without repenting will be condemned for all eternity in Hell. Salvation is not automatic and not everybody will go to heaven.
- 3) Only the souls worthy of God will enter into glory. All impurity must be purified in Purgatory.
- 4) On the Day of Judgment, God knows not only the personal deeds we have done, but also the prayers and good deeds that will be offered or not offered for us by friends and relatives, indeed by the whole Church in union with the merits of Christ and of all the martyrs and saints already in heaven.

We do not know how the treasure of grace will be shared with the souls in Purgatory but the Bible tells us that *"It is holy and dutiful to pray for the departed so that their sins may be forgiven."* (Mac. 12:36). Since the early days of the Church, the faithful prayed during the Mass also *"for those who died in the sign of faith"*. (Roman Canon of Prayer). Already in the 3rd century, Christians were giving an offering to the priests so that they would pray for the departed. Later, priests were allowed to celebrate 3 masses on all Souls Day to accommodate the number of faithful who wanted to pray for their beloved. On her death bed, St. Monica told her son St. Augustine: *"Only one thing I ask you: that you remember me at the altar of the Lord."*

Until recently, most Catholic parishes had a waiting list of mass intentions, especially for the deceased. Today, many priests do not have enough mass intentions (but perhaps this is one more reason why priests should pray!) However, the most evident reason is the loss of faith in the afterlife and the false belief in universal salvation. Here are some insightful words from the Fathers of the Church:

"Holy Communion, after the Sacrifice of the Mass, is the most sublime act of religion which is meritorious both for the living and the dead." (St. Augustine)

"At every mass many souls leave Purgatory. They don't feel any torment during the mass which is celebrated for them." (St. Jerome)

"It is opportune to help the departed not with our tears but with our almsgiving." (St. John Chrysostom)

"Must the grave be the only school where we learn humility?" (St. Chrysostom)

"After the game, the king and the pawn go into the same box." (Italian Proverb)