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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph, please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Motives and Means for Helping the Souls in Purgatory

“I have compassion on the multitude.” St. Mark 8:2.

The privations of these poor people who were almost dying of hunger bring before my mind the sufferings of the poor souls in Purgatory, who have to remain in that prison, not merely for three days, but in many cases for years and years, unceasingly sighing and crying out to heaven: “Have mercy, Lord, have mercy! Free us from this prison, that we may see thee whom we so long for!” And meanwhile that omnipotent and most merciful Lord, who was moved to compassion at the sight of the hungry multitude, so that He wrought a miracle to supply their wants, hears the sighs and lamentations of the suffering souls, and as far as He Himself is concerned, has the greatest desire to free them at once, and bring them to heaven; but His divine justice demands full satisfaction for the debt they owe Him on account of their sins, and to that end He recommends them to those who are still living on earth, and who can help them by satisfying for them. Hence they cry out to us in the words of Job: “Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends” (Job. 19:21). If our hearts are human they should easily be moved to compassion, and we should try in every possible way to help those poor souls in their extreme necessity.

- I. To help the poor souls is a most excellent act of the love of God;*
- II. By what means especially, can and should we help those souls.*

I. All souls in Purgatory are dear children of God; and they are more assured of that relationship than the most pious and holy souls in this life, whose conscience gives testimony, as St. Paul says, “that we are the sons of God, and if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:16, 17), but who are not certain, at all events infallibly, that they will always remain children of God, for they are constantly in danger of losing the grace of God by sin, and becoming children of eternal damnation. But the soul in Purgatory is beyond all danger, doubt, and fear, and is quite assured and certain that it is and will always remain a chosen child of God, and can infallibly expect to share in the eternal inheritance. Now if no father or mother on earth has such a tender love for his or her only son as the Lord God has for His children, even for those who being still in this life can become children of the devil, how exceedingly great

and tender must not be the love of God for a just soul in the next life? And, therefore, how great must not be the desire of the Almighty God to receive His beloved child into His own house, that is, into the kingdom of heaven, and to see him there? "My delight is to be with the children of men" (Prov. 8:31), He says Himself; as if their society were a source of new joy to him, and He could not be completely happy until they share in His bliss.

These dear children of God, as during their pilgrimage on earth they wandered from the right path, either by grievous sins of which they repented or by small daily faults and transgressions, have fallen into the hands of the enemy, and are kept imprisoned in a gloomy dungeon far from their Father's house. These spouses of Christ are suffering more than mortal pains, and cannot yet go to the feast prepared for them; for the infinite justice and holiness of God requires that they should pay the necessary amount of satisfaction. Our heavenly Father hears those dear children of His, Christ, hears His beloved spouses sighing and moaning in their prison, and longing to be released; He has the greatest desire to help them and bring them to Himself in heaven; but His justice does not permit it, and insists on full atonement for all, even to the last farthing.

Now, what a great act of charity it is, and how pleasing it must be to God, to satisfy the claims of His justice by prayers and other good works, and so to free those souls out of prison, and enable them to enter heaven, and to share in the glory of their heavenly Father and Spouse. Let it suffice to remember what He Himself says in the Gospel, namely, that He will accept that act of charity with as much joy and pleasure as if it were done to Himself: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (St. Matthew 25:40). These words are to be understood of the souls in Purgatory.

Beside the pleasure, what great honor and glory can we thus give to the Almighty! For by that act of charity we send to God souls that will praise His infinite majesty sooner than they otherwise would have done, and will most perfectly know, love, and honor Him in heaven.

We poor mortals, as long as we are wandering about in the darkness of this vale of tears, can neither know nor praise God properly: but when the soul, separated from the body, first sees the face of its God it receives a most perfect knowledge of that most supreme Good worthy of all love, and from that knowledge must necessarily spring seraphic flames of love that will burn incessantly for all eternity.

Should not this one motive be enough to animate us to help the Poor Souls in every possible way? Think of the countless benefits we owe the divine Goodness every moment of our lives; there we have a means of making a return for them, and of paying our own debts to some extent. Let us, then, make use of the means that are best adapted to free from Purgatory those souls that are so dear to God. What are those means?

II. Prayers and Masses and alms.

I. Immediately after the death of one of our loved ones we are wont to spend the time in giving way to grief and lamentation, in preparing a mourning dress and a respectable funeral, and in receiving visits of condolence, mostly from people who are little concerned about the death of our friend; they wish to show their sympathy out of courtesy alone, because such is the custom, and their visits are often wearisome enough to us under the circumstances. Amongst all those troublesome preparations, that are not of the least use to the deceased, we hardly bestow a thought on his or her soul, which is then most in need of help. That is, indeed, a selfish system of mourning, which is directed more to our own honor than to freeing the soul of the departed from Purgatory, for which latter object little or nothing is done.

The souls in Purgatory attach no value to magnificent funeral obsequies, and are not in the least benefited by them. How is it that pride can still find a place in the midst of mourning and lamentation? With all this useless extravagance, nothing is done for the help or consolation of the soul. Those people are not aware that they can show their love for the departed soul far better with a short prayer than with all that vain pomp. Do you wish to honor the dead? Then give alms; for what is the use of vain weeping? What advantage is to be derived from useless funeral pomp? You should rather put forth every effort to help the departed by alms, prayers, and Masses. Men must weep and show their sorrow; we cannot refuse them the consolation they find in shedding tears at the death of a dear friend, but with far greater earnestness, zeal, and care should they endeavor to help the departed soul by sacrifice, prayer, and almsgiving. In the Book

of his Confessions, St. Augustine praises his mother, St. Monica, because on the approach of her death she gave no instructions concerning the embalming of her body or her burial. "She left us no injunctions concerning matters of that kind; her only request was that she should not be forgotten at the altar."

2. Another still more powerful means of helping the Poor Souls is almsgiving and other works of mercy. Almsgiving has a greater power of satisfying than prayer.

3. The third means is readiness to forgive injuries and to love our enemies; for since this love is more heroic and makes man more like to God, so also it brings the departed relief more speedily and efficaciously. I prove this by an example. There was in Bologna a rich and noble widow to whose house an assassin, utterly unknown to her, had fled to escape the pursuit of the officers of justice. Through pity she concealed him, and even after she had learned that it was her only son, the sole hope of her declining years, who had been slain by him in the public street (I leave you to imagine, my dear brethren, with what grief she heard the news), she still continued to practice the duties of Christian charity toward the murderer; for she gave him her murdered son's best horse and a sum of money that he might more easily escape. After this heroic act, she went to pray for her son, when He appeared to her in glory, and said: Cease praying for me, mother; the heroic act of virtue that you performed in pardoning my murderer and doing good to him has freed me from Purgatory, in which I should otherwise have had to spend many years. O my dear brethren, love your enemies!

Do good to those that hate you, pray for those who persecute and do evil to you; and you will most certainly and efficaciously help the Poor Souls.

4. You can even help them with still less trouble? We have the means of doing that almost daily in the indulgences that the Church so frequently grants; that is, by the satisfaction for the punishment due to sin, which flows from the merits of Christ and His Saints as from an inexhaustible spring, whereby countless souls have been already freed from Purgatory, and been enabled to enter into the joys of heaven. Almost every time you receive holy Communion, or pray the rosary or litany, or do some work of charity, or attend morning devotions, you can gain an immense treasure, with which, if you wish to offer it for the Poor Souls, you can pay off what they still owe the divine justice. Think of this, and keep it constantly before your minds. Fasting, mortification, penitential works, patience in adversity, nay, all good works that are performed in the state of grace are also available to help and relieve the souls of the departed, but, according to the Council of Trent, there is nothing better for that purpose, nothing which the Poor Souls long for more eagerly, than the holy Mass, in which the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, that is, an infinite treasure of satisfaction, is offered to our heavenly Father for the living and the dead.

II. Hence they are very cruel who do not at once execute the pious legacies of the departed. He is guilty of mortal sin who, without just reason, through avarice or carelessness, defers for a notable period the execution of such testaments. The delay of six months, that is granted in Canon Law to executors, is only intended to save them from the punishment inflicted by external tribunals on those who are guilty of such negligence. But neither the divine nor the natural law, nor equity, nor justice, could tolerate such a delay in conscience, and they who are guilty of it commit a mortal sin. You defer for such a long time the saying of the Masses or the giving the alms willed by your former friend, and meanwhile he has to languish in the midst of frightful torments!

Christians, help the Suffering Souls; let your sighs and prayers intercede for them, and the sacrifices you offer satisfy for them. Help them by fervent prayer, by alms-deeds and works of Christian charity, by forgiving injuries, by indulgences, by patience in trials, but especially by the blood of Jesus Christ by hearing Mass, a means that we can employ daily. Imagine, when you are entering the church to hear Mass, that you see the Poor Souls standing at the door like beggars, and with folded hands imploring an alms from you; remember, too, that they are all dear children of God, who are kept away from their heavenly Father, and are sighing to be released from their prison. You should remember that the Poor Souls are deserving of compassion, and that you can help them without spending a penny, and give them a rich alms by hearing Mass. Amen.

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