

**‘Grant them, O Lord, we pray, and all who sleep in Christ,
a place of refreshment, light and peace.’**

from the Roman Missal: Roman Canon (Eucharistic Prayer I)

We pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory because they cannot pray for themselves. Death is the cut-off point after which we cannot contribute further to our own sanctification or salvation. We have had our time, here on earth, to shape our eternal destiny. We have used – or have failed to make use of – the time given to us to expand our capacity for God’s love whilst we are here on earth. St Therese of Lisieux said that our capacity for God’s love could be shaped and expanded by our growth in holiness during this life so that if you imagine your soul like a vase or glass jar of some kind, each person’s soul will be filled with grace in heaven, but each person’s soul will have a different capacity depending on what they have done with their soul during this life.

But death is the cut-off point. After that, the souls in Purgatory are completely dependent on the prayers of others, both the saints in heaven and our prayers here on earth.

As Catholics we are obliged to pray for the dead and to help those whom we love but who have gone before us in their suffering in Purgatory. But we must pray also even for those whom, in this life, we may not have had a particular affection for, or whom we never even knew! We must pray for all the Holy Souls in Purgatory, and especially those who have no one else left here on earth to pray for them.

Make sure you know how to pray for the Holy Souls, and teach others how to pray for the Holy Souls. It is quite scary that the practice of praying for the dead is no longer a habit amongst Catholics. It was customary to add the short prayer at the end of other prayers, at the end of the Angelus for example, or at the end of Grace After Meals: ‘May the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.’

Many people used to say the *De Profundis* – Ps 129 – as part of their evening or night prayers: ‘Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord. Lord hear my voice.’ We cannot restore a lost Catholic culture on our own, but we can make sure that we say the traditional prayers, and add to the relief of the suffering of souls in Purgatory whether other people do or not.

So I urge you, please pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory, today, during November, and throughout the year, and go out of your way to gain indulgences for them as part of your routine of prayers. It matters. Praying for the dead is one of the seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, and we contribute to the sanctification of others every time we do so, and to the building-up of the Kingdom of God more generally also.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

And may the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Amen.