

# The Holy Souls



*John Paul Kirkham*

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by

John-Paul Kirkham

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Front cover image: Basilica of Notre – Dame, Montligeon, France, Shrine of Our Lady of Montligeon

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*Though the Holy Souls cannot merit for themselves, they can obtain for us great graces. They are not, formally speaking, intercessors as the saints are but, through the sweet providence of God, they can obtain for us outstanding favours and deliver us from evils, sickness and dangers of every kind.*

*St. Alphonsus Ligouri*

## Introduction

The Holy Souls or the Souls in Purgatory is a subject often regarded today as something old fashioned belonging to the past and often associated with a church language of a bygone era. The term *Holy Souls* familiar to older Catholics perhaps but lost today on a new and younger generation and is a topic that is probably not even taught as catechesis.

It is true that there is a shortage of contemporary written material on the Holy Souls and the Church has moved forward considerably in how it presents matters of faith and doctrine and it is a long time since the popular short books on purgatory and the Holy Souls by Fr. Paul O' Sullivan were written in a post depression America of the 1930s, an age also when the same subjects were often portrayed by artists in a fiery and vivid way and although morbid, Catholics would often fear death and what was to follow.

However it is refreshing that Pope John Paul II in telling the faithful to pray for the souls in purgatory said by doing so they therefore come to encounter the living Christ (*Ecclesia in America: New Mexico 1998*) and Pope Benedict XVI in his *Sacramentum Caritatis* (32) and Encyclical *Spe Salvi* (44 – 48) both published in 2007 remind us of the importance of prayers for the dead, especially the offering of Mass for them, so that, once purified, they can come to the beatific vision of God and in helping those who have gone before us to be saved we will have done the utmost for our own personal salvation as well.

Devotionally and liturgically the dead have always been honoured during the Eucharistic Mass with prayers that their sins may be forgiven and with many individual Masses being offered for the repose of a particular soul we remember all those faithful departed that have gone before us. Each year in the Church's calendar we also commemorate all the faithful departed on November 2<sup>nd</sup> during All Souls and the month of November is given in a special way to remembering and praying for the dead. We should also be reminded that it is our solemn duty, one of the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy to pray for the living and the dead.

This short book which also contains a compendium of devotional prayers aims to describe in simple terms what the Catholic Church holds and teaches about the Holy Souls and purgatory and to provide the reader with a reflective view on life, death and what awaits us all in the heavenly realm.

John-Paul Kirkham

## Prologue

Within a short distance of the Vatican in Rome lies the Parish Church of the Sacred Heart. The beautiful multi spire façade was commented on when Pope John Paul II visited there in 1998. In July and August 1999 Pope John Paul II wrote and preached a three part catechesis on heaven, hell and purgatory which clearly defines the concept and basis of purgatory and complements the existing teachings of the Catholic Church on the subject and is well worth searching out in full on the Vatican archive website ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)). The church he visited nestles on the River Tiber promenade in Prati-Lungotevere. It is known also by another name: The Church of the Suffering Souls.

Inside the gothic church is one of the world's smallest and most unusual museums called the Holy Souls Museum which contains relics, various prayer books, articles of clothing including those of a religious and items of furniture that have been touched and scorched by Holy Soul's. The Holy Souls left their scorched finger and handprints on a variety of items; pillowcases, tables, books and paper.

These particular Holy Souls were allowed to leave purgatory to return to their families or religious orders to plead for Masses and prayers to be offered for them. The Church of the Sacred Heart's priest, curator and guide is Fr. Roberto Zambolin and he explains that "it is faith that is the key to understanding these relics".

We know that the existence of purgatory is real as it is defined as a dogma of the Catholic Church (*Councils of Florence and Trent*). Therefore it is obligatory for all Catholics to believe and accept this fact. Further more the Church Councils defined that the souls in purgatory are able to be assisted by the faithful on earth (ourselves) by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

## Who are the Holy Souls

For centuries people have wrestled with the same big questions that we all are faced with at some point in our lives sometimes to the point of anxiety - the meaning of life, suffering, death, a person's true destiny and what lies beyond or put another way how to live the great mystery of faith. Our faith is the victory over the world. We believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It is this faith in Jesus that helps us to overcome the world with its temptations and doubts. We have not seen yet we believe and we acknowledge that Christ is our Lord and our God (*Jn 20:28-29*).

Living this mystery leads us to understand what the meaning of life is and to accept what we are here for and for anyone who professes to be a Christian the answer to the above is: To love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul and all our strength (*Deuteronomy 6:4-6*) or to praise God, to love God and to Serve God or put even more simply: to love one another. And it is St. John of the Cross who reminds us that "at the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love".

Our lives do have meaning. We spend our time on life's journey and for those who believe in Jesus Christ this is a journey of faith. And at the end of this journey is the greatest reward of all, our homeland in heaven, the reward of eternal life.

So why is there suffering in peoples lives? Suffering in this world only makes sense to those who follow and believe in Jesus Christ and is seen in the light

of being a Christian. Nobody suffered more than Jesus, through his Passion, the agony, the condemnation, the torture of scourging, carrying the cross and finally the crucifixion. He did this for us. He died for our sins. Those who suffer in any way or form are following in Christ's footsteps, with our wounds, afflictions, diseases, pains and torments. By sharing in Christ's sufferings we become heirs to the Glory of the eternal Kingdom. To share His suffering is to share His glory (*Romans 8:17*) and what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory as yet un-revealed, which is waiting for us (*Romans 8:18*).

Throughout life we all experience many "small deaths", as a child the death of a pet, parents experiencing their children leaving home or family members moving to far away places. But nothing truly prepares us for the death of a loved one.

Every human being is created in the image of God and is both corporeal (physical) and spiritual (soul). The Church teaches that body and soul are truly one nature united together and whilst our bodies are corruptible and decay our souls that are created by God alone and not by our parents are immortal (*CCC 362-366*). Death therefore brings to an end human life. The New Testament affirms that each person will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with what they have done, for example by good works and by their faith and there is a destiny of the soul which can be different for some and for others. Each person therefore receives their eternal retribution (punishment for wrongdoing and sin) in their immortal soul at the moment of death in a particular judgement that refers to the life of Christ: either by

entrance to heaven immediately or through a period of purification or by immediate and everlasting damnation (*CCC 1021-1022*). The Holy Souls then are the souls of those who have died in a state of God's grace and friendship. They are assured of eternal salvation but after death because they are imperfect they need to undergo a period of purification that will allow them to gain the holiness needed to enter the joy of heaven (*CCC 1030*).

## Purgatory

Christians and many non Christians are familiar with the notion and belief of heaven and hell. To be in heaven is to be with Christ, this perfect communion of life existing with the Most Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed, it is being in a state of supreme happiness. It is beyond all our imagination, the sacred scriptures describe it in many ways: as a wedding feast, the Fathers house, the heavenly Jerusalem and paradise. Scriptural images portray life, light and peace and St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians tells us of “the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him” (1: Cor 9).

Hell on the other hand is the state of eternal separation from God. Jesus warns in the Gospel that those who shall be separated from him are those who choose to ignore the plight of the poor, the hungry, thirsty and also those who ignore the stranger, the sick and prisoners (*Mt. 25:31-46*). To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love and that includes those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe in God, then these willingly by their own free will exclude themselves from all communion with God and descend to hell where they suffer the punishments of hell, “eternal fire” (*Mt 25:41& CCC 1033-1037*).

God tells us that nothing unclean, loathsome or false can enter heaven (*Rev 21:27*). So if only the very good and holy go straight to heaven and the very bad deserve hell, then most people fall into a “somewhere in-between”

category and this state is called purgatory. The word purgatory was originally a Latin adjective “cleansing” and it must be stated that nowhere does church teaching mention any length of time that Holy Souls must spend in purgatory.

So those who believe and are open to God, but are still in some way imperfect require purification and this is what the faith of the Church teaches in the doctrine of “Purgatory”. St. Paul again in his letter to the Corinthians points to the fact that “the fire will test the quality of each man’s work”, therefore a person who has built up a good structure on a firm foundation of Jesus Christ will be saved but if a persons life’s work is burnt down they will be the losers but St. Paul affirms that even the loser “though he is saved himself, it will be as one who has gone through fire” (*1 Cor 3:14-15*). Purification means that every trace of attachment to evil must be eliminated and all imperfections of the soul corrected and although the thought of fire may sound distressing we must remember that in sacred scripture fire also represents the Holy Spirit and the fire which both burns and saves can be seen as Christ himself as part of the Blessed Trinity who is both Judge and Saviour. Pope Benedict XVI in his *Encyclical Spe Salvi* then goes on to describe this encounter with Him as it burns us, transforms us and frees us, (thus) allowing us to become truly ourselves ..... and that His gaze, the touch of His heart heals us through an undeniable painful transformation “as through fire” but it is a blessed pain ..... and the pain of love becomes our salvation and joy.

Pope Benedict’s encyclical (*Spe Salvi 44-48*) complements the famous Treatise on Purgatory by St. Catherine of Genoa (1447 – 1510) in which our saint describes *the peace and joy of the souls in purgatory* and that the

greatest pain suffered by the holy souls is not a physical pain but the *pain of separation from God* and that the *loving flames* are seen in the light of the *divine fire of love* remembering that *God is all mercy with His arms always open and extended to receive us into His glory.*

Purgatory is not a place in the true sense of the word but a condition of existence. The Ecumenical Councils of Florence and Trent confirm also that those who, after death, exist in a state of purification, are already in Christ's love who removes from them the remnant of imperfection and we know already that the Servant of the Lord, Jesus by his own suffering justifies many, taking their faults on himself and praying for sinners (*Is 52:11-12*) showing God's love and mercy.

Purgatory is not a static condition of existence it is also a process of purification that removes all sin and imperfection. Those who live in this state of purification after death are not separated from God rather they are immersed in Christ's love. Neither are they separated from the saints in heaven who already enjoy eternal life or from us here on earth who continue our pilgrim journey to the Father's house. We all remain united in the Mystical Body of Christ and that is why we can offer prayers and good works on behalf of all those souls in purgatory (*CCC 1032*).

## **Saint Nicholas of Tolentino (Patron Saint of Holy Souls)**

Compagnonus de Guarutti and Amata de Guidiani were into their middle age and childless. They made a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Nicholas at Bari in the heel of Italy to pray for the gift of a child. They returned home to the village of Sant' Angelo in Pontano and a son was born in 1245. In grateful thanks of their prayers being answered they named their child Nicholas. As a youngster he was moved by the preaching of the Augustinian Fathers in his local monastery and so he asked permission to join them and at the age of little more than sixteen made his noviciate and by eighteen was an Augustinian Friar and at the age of twenty five he was ordained to the priesthood.

He worked tirelessly as a peacemaker and preacher and he was heavily influenced by the local hermits of Brettino who embraced poverty and practiced fasting and abstinence and would devote their long days to prayer. These hermits came to form part of the community of Augustinians and Nicholas himself joined in with their ascetic practices. He started to experience heavenly visions of angels that mentioned the city of Tolentino to him and he took this as a sign to go there. He had already travelled and lived in several monasteries but in 1275 he was finally sent to Tolentino where he would spend the last thirty years of his life.

His devotion to penance and prayer and long fasts was so intense that his superiors had to impose certain limitations on him. At one point when weakened and ill through so much fasting he had a vision of the Blessed

Virgin Mary, the Child Jesus, St. Augustine and St. Monica. They told him to eat bread signed with the cross and dipped in water. This he did and his strength returned. Nicholas would then use this same method to administer to others over which he would pray and many were healed of their afflictions. To this day this practice continues and the blessing and distribution of “St Nicholas’ Bread” remains an Augustinian tradition.

In Tolentino, Nicholas worked to stem the moral decline and he ministered to the sick, the poor and prisoners and he actively sought out those who had become estranged from the faith and the church. He became known as a wonder – worker and many miracles were attributed to him; he brought one hundred dead children back to life including many who had drowned and he could quell storms at sea and put out fires. These and many other miracles led a great deal of people to the monastery in Tolentino to see and be near him.

Nicholas’ greatest devotion however was given over to the dead, praying for the souls in purgatory as he walked around late into the night through the deserted streets of Tolentino. On a particular Saturday night as Nicholas lay down trying to sleep he heard the voice of Fra Pelligrino of Osimo, a deceased friar whom he known personally. The friar revealed to Nicholas that he was in purgatory and he begged Nicholas to offer Mass and pray for his soul and the many other Holy Souls to be set free. For a whole week Nicholas every day followed this request and was rewarded with a second vision of Fra Pellegrino who gave thanks and assured Nicholas that a great deal of souls

were now enjoying the heavenly presence of God through his prayers. Once this became widely known many more people came to Tolentino asking for Nicholas' intercession on behalf of deceased relatives and friends.

Following a long illness and after touching the lives of many Nicholas died at the age of sixty on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 1305. His sanctity was recognised and on the Feast of Pentecost 1446 he was canonized as the first saint of the Augustinian Order by Pope Eugene IV with over 300 miracles being recorded by the Congregation. His Feast Day remains as the 10<sup>th</sup> of September and in 1884 Pope Leo XII proclaimed him officially as the "Patron Saint of the Souls in Purgatory".

For the modern day pilgrim Tolentino today retains all of its medieval charm as small city cradled in the rolling hilltops in the heartland of the southern-central Italian region of Marche and it is only a short twenty miles to the south west of Loreto. St. Nicholas can be venerated in his grandiose designed basilica adorned with beautiful and artistic masterpieces and peace and quiet can be found in its tranquil Romanesque cloisters.

## **Why we pray for the dead and what Church Indulgences mean**

When the Lord returns in glory, death will be no more, but at the present time Christ's followers are either alive as pilgrims on earth, have died and are being purified or are in the radiant beauty contemplating the full light of God himself and this Mystical Union with Christ as its head is what we profess in the Apostles Creed when we say "we believe in the communion of saints" which defines the eternal link that binds us all together, the living, the Holy Souls and those with God already. For those souls being purified, the Church has always from its earliest days honoured the memory of the dead as a holy and devout thing to do by praying that they (the dead) may be delivered from their sins (*2 Macc: 44-45*). In his message for the Millennium of All Souls Day John Paul II encouraged all Catholics "to pray fervently for the dead, for their family members and for all our brothers and sisters who have died, that they may obtain the remission of the punishments due to their sins" and so hear the Lord's call for their souls to be welcomed into the eternal repose of the Lord's arms and it is St. John Chrysostom who encouraged the faithful "not to hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them".

Ultimately our sins must be expiated (atoned for) either on this earth through the sorrows, miseries and calamities of this life and above all through death, or else in the life beyond (purgatory). With death, our life – choice (what we did when we were alive) becomes definitive – our life stands before God the judge. These trials are imposed by the just and merciful judgment of God for the purification and healing of souls which mature the soul for communion with God and it is therefore necessary to re-establish that friendship with God by

this reparation (the act of making amends) of sins. (*Spe Salvi 44 – 48 Pope Benedict XVI 2007*).

The Church apart for praying for the deliverance of souls commends us to give alms charitably and to offer works of good deeds and penance and to gain indulgences. An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which as a minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints. There are two types of indulgence: A *partial indulgence* removes part of the temporal punishment due for sins whilst a *plenary indulgence* removes all of the punishment due for sin. The faithful can obtain indulgences for themselves or the souls in purgatory and in doing so cultivate an act of charity (*CCC 1471*).

Indulgences for many Catholics remain a mystery and quite often the facts surrounding them may be misunderstood especially when one comes across older indulgence prayer books or cards. These older publications will have a certain number of days attached to a partial indulgence which is usually a particular pious act of prayer. For example the number of days might read 300. The misunderstanding occurs when a person thinks that this number of days relates to a corresponding shortening of the time a soul will spend in purgatory. This is not so and never has been the case. The number of days relates back many hundreds of years to when sinners were given a public

penance to do for a certain number of days; the number of days of the penance could be reduced or dispensed with altogether by gaining an indulgence. In 1967 Pope Paul VI revised the number of indulgences to seventy with the publication in 1968 of the *Enchiridion* (a Vatican Handbook of Indulgences) and abolished the former determination of days and years that were previously attached to partial indulgences therefore establishing a new measurement that takes into consideration the action itself of the faithful Christian who performs a work to which an indulgence is attached. From time to time later Pontiffs have decreed additional plenary indulgences, for example, pious acts associated with Divine Mercy Sunday and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

To gain a plenary indulgence it is necessary to perform the pious work or prayers to which the indulgence is attached and also to fulfill the following three conditions:-

1. Sacramental Confession
2. Holy Communion
3. Prayer for the Holy Father (one Our Father and one Hail Mary)

It is also a requirement that all attachment to sin, even venial sin be absent. Failing to satisfy the above requirements will result in the indulgence being partial only.

With regard to partial indulgences these are granted to the faithful who:-

1. In the performance of their duties and in bearing the trials of life, raise their mind with humble confidence to God, adding -- even if only mentally- - some pious invocation.
  
2. In a spirit of faith and mercy, give of themselves or of their goods to serve their brothers in need.
  
3. In a spirit of penance, voluntarily deprive themselves of what is licit and pleasing to them.

It is surprisingly not difficult for Catholics under the usual conditions to gain a plenary indulgence for example reciting the rosary (5 decades only) in a church, public oratory or at home with the family will suffice. A partial indulgence is gained by reciting the rosary privately. The reading of Sacred Scripture for half an hour grants one also a plenary indulgence. All indulgences can be gained for the holy souls but there are indulgences that are specifically for the souls in purgatory, namely a devout visit to a cemetery to pray for the departed gains a plenary indulgence if the visit is on any day between November 1<sup>st</sup> and November 8<sup>th</sup> and a partial indulgence is gained for the holy souls by praying the familiar prayer "Eternal Rest" (*see chapter 8.*) It is also worthy to remember that when we pray for the holy souls our prayers are not only capable of helping them, but also it makes their intercession for us effective (CCC 958).

## **The Thirty Gregorian Masses for a Holy Soul**

The ancient Catholic tradition of the thirty Gregorian Masses is a practice that was founded by Pope (Saint) Gregory the Great in the year 590 AD and that it originated in Benedictine Monasteries. People would arrange for 30 Masses to be offered on 30 consecutive days without interruption except for Christmas, Easter and the Holy Week Triduum, for an individually named soul in purgatory with the belief that the specific soul would leave purgatory and enter the heavenly realm.

How this came about is as follows: After Gregory the Great was elected Pope in 590 AD a monk by the name of Justus became ill. Justus who was previously a physician admitted to a friend that he had hidden three valuable coins with his medication when he was a professed monk many years before. Sure enough the monks discovered the precious metal when searching for Justus' medicine. The monks founder (St. Gregory the Great) upon hearing of this sin against poverty ordered the Monastery Abbot to impose a penalty of solitary confinement on Justus even though he was terminally ill and that he should be buried not in the cemetery but in a rubbish dump. The brothers were then given instructions to recite over his grave the words from St. Peter to Simon the Magician "May your silver be lost forever, and you with it" (Acts 8:20).

A swift response was received: Justus repented and then died but the incident was not laid to rest. Thirty days later Pope Gregory returned to the Monastery

because he was very concerned that Justus would now be suffering the bleak temporal punishment of Purgatory for his sins. Pope Gregory put in place with the Abbot a charitable act to help Justus escape this chastisement by directing that thirty consecutive Masses be arranged for Justus' soul.

Some time later Justus appeared in a vision to the friend he had originally confided his sin to and revealed that he had received pardon and release from Purgatory because of the Masses said for him. The monks calculated that it was exactly thirty days since the thirty Masses had begun and they shared this wonderful news with Pope Gregory. This tradition of offering thirty Masses continued for centuries and although not widely known or propagated today the practice is still prevalent as part of how the Catholic Church acknowledges the important role and benefits that praying for the dead incurs.

The consecutive Masses can be said by any priest and a change of priest within the thirty days is also permitted. One may find that in most parishes that it is difficult to arrange a timetable of thirty Masses however it may be the case that a retired priest could be sought who would offer the Masses privately. Alternatively the priests at a local monastery could be approached and may be willing to accept the request and by searching online there appears to be a number of religious orders who can offer the saying of thirty Gregorian Masses and it is also possible to pre - arrange the above Masses for ones own self in the future when ones earthly time has been fulfilled.

## Holy Souls Associations

In the year 998 St. Odilo, the fifth Abbot of Cluny in France established on November 2<sup>nd</sup> what he called All Souls Day by urging his monks to pray for the dead. This Benedictine practice gradually spread from the Abbey of Cluny and this *Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed* is now celebrated throughout the universal Church on that same day each year.

On the anniversary of a deceased family member or friend the faithful will often request a Mass to be offered for the repose of that person's soul and during the celebration of every Eucharist, through the prayers of intercession and *Memento* for the dead, the gathered community presents to God those who have died, so that through the trial of purgatory they will be purified, if necessary, and attain eternal joy. We can also pray privately for the departed and there are various associations that have a widespread membership across the globe.

One such association is the global shrine of prayer for the dead which has at its centre the only basilica in the world dedicated to the departed souls in purgatory. Situated in a quiet atmosphere by a tranquil lake on the edge of one of the most beautiful forests in France, the basilica and holy site of pilgrimage is centered in the village of La Chapelle – Montligeon, Normandy, and it is placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Montligeon who shows the face of a consoling Church, like a Mother who is attentive and close to the suffering of all her children, especially during their most sorrowful moments. It

is a place of peace, silence, reflection and listening where consolation is to be found. It is a place where prayers are said for the dead and each year many thousands of names are added to the books in the basilica which are then prayed for and have Masses offered in perpetuity. Montligeon is also the place where the official response of the Catholic Church can be heard concerning the human destiny and the Shrine of Our Lady of Montligeon is, therefore, a place where Christians come to proclaim together their hope in eternal life, an eternal life which begins now, here on earth. In 1910 Pope Pius X placed the expiatory work of Montligeon under his own special protection and his successors.

Our Lady of Montligeon prayer groups are established across the world and in joining this spiritual fraternity a person is united with the Masses offered daily and to be a member is to make an act of faith in eternal life. To pray for the dead and especially those Holy Souls who are forgotten is fulfilling an act of spiritual mercy and there are three elements that are essential in the Montligeon prayer groups: the Rosary, prayed wholly or in part, meditation (private or group) on a Bible text and shared prayer intentions.

Another worldwide fraternity is the Association of Holy Souls which originated with the Dominican Nuns of the Perpetual Rosary in Fatima, Portugal and is approved by the Cardinal Archbishop of Lisbon and may be familiar to those who have made a pilgrimage to Fatima. The Association encourages a person to request Mass to be offered in a member's parish or other church, to pray for the Holy Souls – especially the Rosary and to promote and encourage others

to pray for the souls in purgatory. It is also possible to write the Carmelite Holy Souls Society and receive a collection of daily prayers and prayer cards for the Holy Souls which are available from the Friars in Faversham, Kent.

If your diocese or parish does not have a prayer group dedicated to praying for the Holy Souls why not consider starting one yourself. Some useful contact addresses are given in the appendix. Remember the words of St. Ambrose *“We have loved them in life let us not forget them in death”*.

## Compendium of Prayers for the Holy Souls

Our Father ....

Hail Mary ....

Glory Be ....

The Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy are all prayers that can be prayed at any time for the Holy Souls as we recall the words of St. Monica on her death bed *“One thing only I ask you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be”*.

*De Profundis (Psalm 130)*

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,

Lord hear my voice!

O let your ears be attentive

to the voice of my pleading.

If you, O Lord should mark our guilt,

Lord, who would survive?

But with you is found forgiveness:

for this we revere you.

My soul is waiting for the Lord,

I count on his word.

My soul is longing for the Lord

more than watchman for daybreak.

Let the watchman count on daybreak

and Israel on the Lord.

Because with the Lord there is mercy

and fullness of redemption;

Israel indeed he will redeem

from all its iniquity.

Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord

And let perpetual light shine upon them.

May they rest in peace. Amen.

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

*Prayer of Cardinal Newman*

O most gentle heart of Jesus, ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, ever consumed with burning love for the poor captive souls in purgatory, have mercy on the souls of Your servants.

Bring them from the shadows of exile to Your bright home in heaven, where we trust You and Your Blessed Mother have woven for them a crown of unfolding bliss. Amen.

*Prayer of St. Gertrude for the Holy Souls*

Eternal Father, I offer you the Most Precious Blood of your Divine Son, Jesus, in union with all the Masses said throughout the world today for all the Holy Souls in Purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the Universal Church, those in my own home and within my family. Amen.

*Prayer for the Intercession of St. Nicholas of Tolentino*

St. Nicholas, you were attentive to the pleas of many needy souls and through your prayers and penance you hastened their enjoyment of the vision of God. Look with compassion on our beloved deceased, and obtain for them by your prayers the full forgiveness of their sins so that they may experience the happiness and peace of the Father's Presence. Saint Nicholas of Tolentino pray for us.

(Repeat 3 times)

Jesus and Mary I love you, save souls

*Prayer for the Deceased*

Lord, God of holiness and light.

You do not allow any shadow of darkness or evil in Your sight,  
and so in Your mercy You grant to those who have left this world burdened  
with sin, a time of purification, applying to them the spiritual treasures of Your  
Holy Church.

Hear my prayer

and through the merits of Christ,

the Blessed Virgin, the saints,

and all Your faithful people

bring to an end this time of waiting

for our beloved dead, especially (.....)

In your providence

you have chosen Saint Nicholas

as a special intercessor

on behalf of the departed.

Hear also his fervent prayer for those whom I recommend to you through his  
intercession. Amen.

*Prayer to Our Lady of Montligeon*

Our Lady of Deliverance,  
have mercy on all our departed loved ones,  
especially those who are most  
in need of the Lord's mercy.

Intercede for those who have gone before us,  
and may the purifying love of God  
lead them to full deliverance.

May our prayer,  
united with the prayer of the whole Church,  
obtain for them joy beyond all their desires,  
and bring consolation and relief to our loved ones  
in their suffering and distress.

Mother of the Church, help us, pilgrims on earth,  
to be better in living  
each day of our journey towards the Resurrection.  
Heal the wounds of heart and soul.

Help us to become witnesses of the Unseen God,  
seeking already what the eye cannot see.

Grant us the grace to become apostles of hope,  
like those who keep vigil awaiting the dawn.

Refuge of sinners and Queen of all Saints,  
gather us all, one day, in our Father's House,  
for the eternal Easter,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Our Lady of Montligeon,  
pray for the souls in Purgatory.

**St. Gemma Galgani (the Flower of Lucca)**  
**and the Souls in Purgatory**

Maria Gemma Umberta Pia Galgani born 12<sup>th</sup> March 1878, died 11<sup>th</sup> April (Holy Saturday) 1903 aged 25

St. Gemma's zeal for the Holy Souls in Purgatory was extraordinary. She would regularly offer fervent prayers united with her own bodily sufferings for all of the souls in Purgatory and frequently offer prayers for a particular named soul.

The Lord desires to bring all Holy Souls to Himself and would move His servant Gemma in different ways to atone for the sins of the souls. Gemma said that *"The Angel has told me that this evening Jesus will let me suffer a little more for a soul in Purgatory, that is for two hours beginning at nine o'clock"*

A Passionist Nun by the name of Mary Teresa of the Infant Jesus had died in the Convent at Corneto (now called Tarquinia), Italy. In death her soul full of sorrow appeared to Gemma imploring help as she was undergoing anguish in Purgatory. From that moment Gemma prayed with tears and petitions to Our Lord in the words *"Jesus, take Mary Teresa to Paradise without delay. She is a soul most dear to You. Let me suffer much for her, I want her to be in heaven."*

Gemma then affirms in her own diary that dressed in white Mother Maria of the Infant Jesus visited her to thank her because eternal happiness was

beckoning but asked for continued prayers. After sixteen days her soul was released. Gemma then describes how it seemed that the Blessed Mother herself came to tell that the hour was approaching. Then almost immediately how Mary Teresa dressed as a Passionist seemed to come towards her accompanied by her Guardian Angel and Jesus Himself. Smiling now she came close to Gemma and said *“I am truly happy, and I go to enjoy my Jesus forever”*. And during the early hours of the morning well before dawn after a final farewell how Mary Teresa with Jesus and her Guardian Angel flew to heaven.

St. Gemma Galgani, saintly Virgin of Lucca ..... Pray for us and intercede for those departed ones / Name .....

## Epilogue

One thing in life is for certain, death, which comes eventually to everyone. But the faithful are fortunate as we have been very well prepared for this part of the journey of faith, the journey home. We began our life with the Sacrament of Baptism, which sealed a new life in us, and then the Sacrament of Confirmation, which strengthened us for life's combats. The Sacrament of the Eucharist fortifies our earthly life and at the end of life the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick provides a solid rampart for the final struggles before entering the Fathers house in heaven.

Jesus said "he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day" (*Jn 6:54*). And so as the final shadows lengthen, Viaticum, the Eucharist as Holy Communion is given. This is the seed of eternal life and the power of the resurrection according to Our Lord Jesus Christ's words. There is no need to doubt; Jesus tells us directly "I am the resurrection and the life ..... whoever believes in me will never die" (*Jn 11:25-26*).

People sometimes still ask how can we know what happens after death, when no one has come back to tell us. Well someone did come back; Jesus Christ. He came back from the dead, his resurrection and his first words to those who followed him, after his greetings were "do not be afraid" (*Mt 28:9-10*). We too are invited to believe and accept by our faith that what is true for Jesus Christ will be true for us and after our purification "*How great will your glory and happiness be, to be allowed to see God, to be honoured with sharing the joy of salvation and eternal light with Christ your Lord and God, ..... to delight in*

*the joy of immortality in the Kingdom of heaven with the righteous and God's friends" (St. Cyprian CCC 1028).*

## **Appendix – Selected resources, further reading and useful addresses**

All Scripture texts are from *The Jerusalem Bible*, 1966, Darton. Longman and Todd Ltd.

### *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Vatican Archives and Liberia Editrice Vatican:-

*Indulgentiarum Doctrina* Pope Paul VI (1967), *The Enchiridion* (handbook) of *Indulgences* (1968), *Letter for Millennium of All Souls Day* Pope John Paul II (1998), *Ecclesia in America* Pope John Paul II (1999), *General Audience* Pope John Paul II (4<sup>th</sup> Aug 1999), *Sacramentum Caritatis* (32) Pope Benedict XVI (2007). Encyclical *Spe Salvi* (44 – 48) Pope Benedict XVI (2007).

*The Treatise on Purgatory*: St Catherine of Genoa (1447 – 1510)

[www.Augnet.org](http://www.Augnet.org) The Official website of the Augustinian Order

Sanctuaire Notre – Dame de Montligeon, 26 rue Principale, 61400 La

Chapelle – Montligeon, Normandy, France: [www.montligeon.org](http://www.montligeon.org)

Association of The Holy Souls: Dominican Nuns of The Perpetual Rosary,

Pius XII Monastery, Rue do Rosario 1, 2495 Fatima, Portugal.

Carmelite Holy Souls Society: c/o The Carmelite Friars, PO Box 140, ME20 7SJ, England.

The Holy Souls Chapel in Westminster Cathedral, Victoria Street / Ambrosden Avenue, Victoria, London SW1. This beautiful Chapel with its stunning mosaics is the only one in the Cathedral which was completely designed by its architect John Francis Bentley himself. In this Chapel you are invited to pray and light a candle for your loved ones, and all the dead, to assist them on their journey to Heaven.