

# FROM THE PASTOR'S



31st Sunday in Ordinary Time – November 4, 2007 C

## REMEMBERING DECEASED LOVED ONES

Even though we pray for the deceased at *every* Mass, our church family prays in a special way for the deceased during the month of November. Why November? Because November is the final month of the *liturgical* year and the scripture readings during this month often focus on what we call the “last things”; death, judgment, heaven, purgatory and hell.

During this month of November we especially pray for the souls in purgatory - our brothers and sisters who are on the final stage of their journey to heaven.

### Purgatory

The Catholic Church’s teaching on purgatory is twofold: Purgatory exists and our prayers *do help* the souls in purgatory. The *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* states.

*Those who die in the state of friendship with God but who are not fully purified and perfected are assured of their eternal salvation. However, they must undergo a purification to obtain the perfection of love and holiness needed to enter heaven, where they have a heart that is totally open to him. This process is called Purgatory.*

*It is impossible for us to imagine what Purgatory is. Traditionally, it has been described as a purifying fire. Since the human soul cannot be touched by earthly flames, the image serves to recall that perfect love is achieved by a gradual and painful spiritual detachment from selfishness and self-centeredness. The Church assists those in Purgatory through prayer and especially the Eucharist in their final process of purification. Offering Masses for the deceased is a most powerful way of aiding them. November 2 of each year, the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls Day), is a day for special remembrance and prayer for the dead.*

Since few if any of us die perfect, it is safe to assume that all of us will do some time in purgatory. During this time, God will be seeking to purify us of all sin and any form of selfishness that we carry in our hearts.

So purgatory is *not* so much about punishment for sin but about *purification* from sin. The goal of purgatory is to prepare our hearts to *fully enjoy* the joys of heaven.

Whether we are aware of it or not sin and our *excessive attachments* to people and the things of this world *do* prevent us from *fully* enjoying the joys of this life. For example, any form of self-absorption blocks us from fully appreciating the beauty of nature. Too often we do *not even notice*, not to speak of enjoying beautiful sunsets, sunrises, the ocean, flowers, trees, the moon and stars because we are too preoccupied with our own stuff. If self-absorption prevents us from appreciating the joys of this life, it will also stop us from enjoying the joys of heaven. Hence, the need for the purifying fires of purgatory.

The best way for us to cut short our time in purgatory is to cooperate generously with God’s grace as he seeks to free us here and now from all forms of selfishness. A simple way to describe our spiritual journey here on earth is by the well-known phrase:

*“Let go and let God”.*

The more we learn to let go of control and let God take charge of our lives, the less time we will need to spend in purgatory. Life here on earth is a training ground for life in the next life.

### Comforting Thoughts as we ponder our own death and the death of a loved one.

Recently, I attended the funeral of a friend in Titusville, the family had the following two pieces on his funeral Mass program.

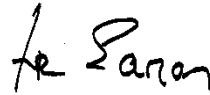
*Think of stepping on the shore  
And finding it Heaven;  
Of taking hold of a hand  
And finding it God’s Hand;  
Of breathing a new air  
And finding it celestial air’ of feeling invigorated  
And finding it immortality;  
of passing from storm and tempest  
To an unbroken calm;  
Of waking up and finding your Home!*

## ***Giving Back to God***

***Your dear Son have taught us that life is eternal  
and love cannot die,  
so death is only an horizon  
and is only the limit of our sight.  
Open our eyes to see more clearly  
and draw us close to you  
that we may know we are nearer to our loved ones,  
who are with you.  
You have told us that you are preparing  
a place for us,  
prepare us also for that happy place,  
that where you are we may also be.  
O dear Lord of life and Death.***

out the Ministry Form in today's bulletin and bring it to church next weekend. If there is something we are not doing, feel free to suggest that we consider starting this new ministry.

Have a blessed week,



## **Support for Those Dealing with a Loss**

As we remember those who have died this year, we also remember all who are dealing with the loss of a loved one. Dealing with loss is surely one of the toughest challenges in life. I can't imagine the emotional pain that people go through as they try to adjust to life without the physical presence of a loved one. It is a loving thing to keep in prayer all who are seeking to cope with a loss in their lives.

At Ascension parish we have three Grief Support Groups support groups that meet weekly. Monday at 1 PM and Thursday at 1PM both meet in the church library. I am grateful to Carol Gessler, a parishioner and retired counselor, for facilitating those two groups. On Monday evenings Deacon Sergio facilitates a grief support group in the parish office at 7:00 PM. For more information about any of these groups, contact Carol at 779-7850 or Deacon Sergio at 254-1595 ext. 3082.

Also, you may want to check our parish website for articles dealing with loss. See Catholic Beliefs and Practices. Then click on Pastoral Issues.

## **Next Weekend Stewardship Sunday of Time and Talent**

Next weekend we will give thanks for the hundreds of people who give of their time and talents to our parish. We will also give all who wish to participate in one or more of our parish ministries opportunity to sign up. Next weekend we will have in the pews a list of our parish ministries. This same form is also in today's bulletin page ten. Please take a look at it. If you are moved to join one or more ministries, feel free to fill