



Shrine of Saint Jude Thaddeus Dominican Friars

October 15, 2017

The Holy Souls

“Belief in Purgatory has declined in just the proportion that the modern mind forgot the two most important things in the world: the Purity of God and the heinousness of sin.” Archbishop Ven. Fulton J. Sheen



Dear Friend of St. Jude:

To the modern mind, Purgatory seems at once the most inhuman and demonic thing possible. Why would a Poor Soul suffer so in the next life? What kind of God would want to inflict such pains upon souls? But when we consider both man and God, Purgatory becomes the most human and most divine thing possible.

Part of the problem is that we have become so desensitized to sin and its presence, and at the same time so beholden to it, that it becomes difficult to imagine ourselves without sin. We often identify ourselves with our sin. “What kind of person would I be,” a man might ask himself, “if I stopped spreading terrible rumors about others and delighting in the misery of my enemies?” Or, “How could I go back to my husband,” a woman might ask herself, “after I have been in this adulterous relationship for so long?” We who might see these two from the outside would simply counsel them, “*That* is not who you are. That is what is holding you *back* from what you are called to be.” But when you are in the middle of the dense and dark forest, it is difficult to see a way out.

Yet in order to be released from sin, the old man must die, and the New Man, Christ, must be born again in us. And birth, as we know, is not always a simple, pain-free process. When some attachments to sin are so ingrained in us, the birthing process to eternal life can be quite difficult indeed for the Poor Soul. To be filled with sin is like the newborn infant whose lungs are still filled with fluid – that has to come out, and the infant has to breathe in the life-giving air to live, as much as the soul in Heaven breathes in deeply of the Spirit to truly live.

In Dante’s vision of Purgatory, the souls undergo this arduous process by first having to unlearn all the vices that handicapped them in this life, and then learn how to live, perhaps *truly* live, for the first time. Yet, this is not a desolate landscape, but a land filled with hope and joy as well. For the soul has already faced her God, and knows her ultimate destiny, Heaven, and thus pushes onward and upward, knowing she is ever closer to the fulfilment of her heart’s desire. If only that soul had a little help....

Ah, but by God's gracious will and wisdom, He has not only *allowed* us to participate in this process, but *calls* us to help our brothers and sisters in this birth to eternal life. This benefits not only the Holy Souls, but *us*, since we can act out of charity for these souls, and thus grow in virtue and love. St. Gertrude the Great tells us that "The Holy Souls in Purgatory are our friends. If everyone had to adopt a Holy Soul to pray for, Purgatory would be empty in no time."

And so, we enter this month of November dedicated to the Holy Souls. We remember not only the friends of St. Jude who passed away last year, but also those loved ones whom you wish us to pray for. All of their names are placed on the altar and prayed for throughout the month of November. Please don't forget to send in your petition slips with the names of your beloved deceased. We will entrust them to our Lord's mercy through the intercession of our patron.

Let us be true spiritual friends of St. Jude, of the Holy Souls, of each other, and support one another in prayer. This is a great and wonderful work, and it is ours, thanks be to God!

Gratefully yours, in Christ our Lord and St. Jude our friend,

Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P.

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Director

