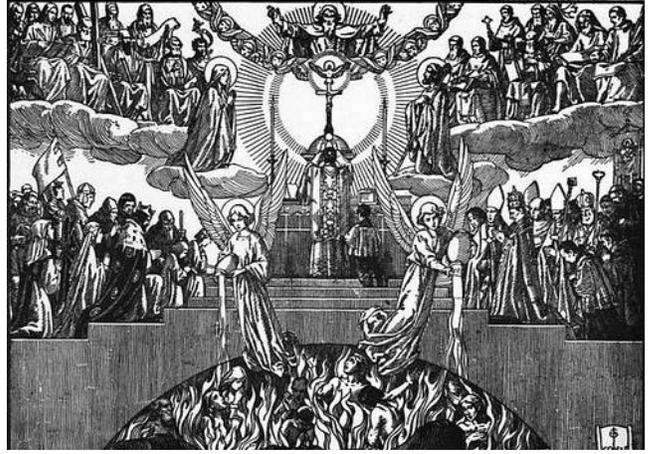


# How to Help the Holy Souls in Purgatory



## ***What is the best devotion to help the souls in purgatory?***

1. The holy sacrifice of the Mass is the chief source of devotion for the holy souls. The most powerful means to relieve or release a soul from purgatory is through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. You'll find that in the Catechism. It says it in 1032: "From the beginning, the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God."
2. After the Mass, the next most powerful way to help the souls is the Rosary, the most powerful Marian prayer on earth — in her approved apparitions, Mary says pray the Rosary for peace in the world, in your hearts, in your family — and the Stations of the Cross, because they're indulgenced. You have to be in the state of grace to help the souls in purgatory.

When we pray for the souls, we've got to remember we're giving them paradise, the face of God, when we get them out sooner from purgatory. Our prayers are shortening this horrible suffering of being without God. They then show us their gratitude in the same proportion to their joy.

## ***Gregorian Masses may be offered for souls. What are they, how did they come about, and why are they important?***

Gregorian Masses are absolutely the best way to help souls out of purgatory. The background behind them is a fascinating story.

Pope St. Gregory was a sickly man and had a physician who took care of him throughout his life. The physician, named "Justus," was also a Benedictine monk in Rome, where the Church of St. Gregory remains today. When Justus was dying, St. Gregory told Justus' blood brother to take care of him because he also was a physician. While taking care of him, the brother found three gold coins in Justus' cell. Benedictines took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

The brother told the monks, and they told St. Gregory. He was really upset because he expected the monks to take the vow seriously. Because Justus violated the vow of poverty, Gregory would

not allow any of the monks to visit him during his last illness and console or pray with him. Justus was crushed. He wept and was repentant for keeping the coins.

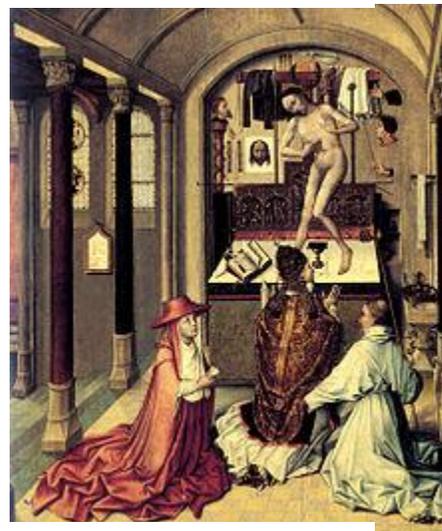
Gregory knew he was in purgatory. He ordered 30 Masses to be said for the soul of Justus. Why 30? Why not 40 or 50 Masses?

The reason is: Gregory was bringing back the tradition from the Old Testament — Israelites mourning for the dead 30 days, such as for Moses and Aaron.

After the 30th Mass, Justus appeared to his blood brother and said he was released from purgatory. The brother had no idea Masses were being said for Justus. He ran to the monastery and told the monks, who told St. Gregory, who already knew because he already had a private revelation that Justus was released from purgatory.

Word spread all over Rome. People came to the monastery to have Masses said for their loved ones — then priests from France and Spain, and then priests from all over came to Rome to offer Masses at that altar for their loved ones. That altar still exists to this day in the Church of Sts. Andrew and Gregory in Rome. These first Gregorian Masses were offered at this altar.

The altar has three panels, all in relief carvings and engraved in Latin saying St. Gregory had freed the soul of this monk by 30 Masses. The middle panel shows our suffering Lord appearing to Gregory at the altar. The third panel says, in Latin, that St. Gregory is offering Masses in this room to release souls from purgatory.



### ***Is there a guarantee a soul gets released after the 30 Masses?***

Although the practice is approved by the Church, there is no official guarantee. Still, it is a custom that underscores the power of the holy Mass.

### ***A parish normally will not be able to offer 30 consecutive Masses for the same soul. Where can we get Gregorian Masses said?***

This is a good resource for finding Gregorian Masses: [www.susantassone.com/masses/](http://www.susantassone.com/masses/)

***Why do we need constant reminders to have Masses said for the dead and offer prayers for them? Why pray for the holy souls?***

Because God's justice demands expiation of their sins. Christ told St. Faustina that his mercy didn't want to send a soul to purgatory, but his justice demands it (*Diary* 1226, 20). He places in our hand the means to assist them. We are their only resource. We have an obligation to pray for our loved ones.

Can we say that one goes straight to heaven? Can we say that soul was totally pure and holy and in line with God's will to go to heaven at once? We don't know what the state of the soul was at the hour of death, and we tend to canonize everybody. Only God knows the state of the soul, if it is totally in line with his will. He's all-holy and majestic and pure. But we're given this great power and privilege to release souls from purgatory. Only we are the deliverers. Christ turns to the Church militant. Heaven encourages us. For whatever reason, we've been given this great honor and privilege. We're responsible to pray for our dead.

***But what happens if the soul then gets to heaven and you continue to have Masses and prayers offered?***

The common answer is that God will apply those Masses to other souls in purgatory or to the most in need or souls in your family. But there's more: If the soul is already in heaven, and you continue to have Masses said for them and continue to pray for them, what they get is a term we get from Thomas Aquinas — "accidental glory." The soul gets an increase in its intimacy with God and an increase in its intercessory power. So the lesson is this: Never stop praying for your dead, no matter how long they've been gone. You continue to push them up higher. The prayers are never wasted. God is never outdone in generosity.



***Why do you often point out the importance of having Masses offered while the person is alive, including Masses for yourself?***

I asked Father Edward McNamara, well-known professor of liturgy at the Regina Apostolorum in Rome about that. There are three main reasons why Masses should be offered for loved ones while alive.

- First, it's an infinite gift. It never stops giving. A living person is still capable of growing in sanctifying grace, so the effect of this incredible grace is they may willingly receive it to be more Christ-like. You have to respond. When you have Masses offered for loved ones and you pray, they respond to the grace.
- Second, if it's offered as intercession for a person in the state of actual mortal sin, it may supply the grace necessary for conversion.
- Third, it also fits in the sanctity of healing people.

Who do you miss the most? Who do you wish you could have done more for? Who helped you spiritually and temporally? Who had a major impact on your life? Your enemies or those who hurt you: Have Masses said for them. Have Masses said for yourself. Mass heals the living and deceased. Pray for the living now, for their eternity.

Purgatory points to the seriousness of sin and points out we have to pray and do penance in our own lives. The Catechism says, in 958, "Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective." They can't help themselves, but they can pray for us. So, the more we pray for them, the more effective their intercession is for us.

***Why are they called poor souls and holy souls?***

They're called poor because their poverty is the loss of the sight of God. They're called poor because they can no longer merit; they can't help themselves. They rely totally on us. We're their only resource. Nothing is done alone. The Church Militant reaches out to the Church Suffering and joins them to the Church Triumphant. And they're called the holy souls because they can no longer sin. They know they're saved. They know heaven is awaiting them.

## ***How can we avoid purgatory?***

St. John of the Cross said, "God provides." So avoid sin. Pray the Rosary. Go to monthly confession. Accept trials. Forgive. The more you pray on earth — constant, fervent prayer throughout life — the closer you will be to getting out of purgatory if you go there.

## ***Do the souls in purgatory help us in this regard?***

Because of their great love for us, they're not only anxious for leaving purgatory, they're most concerned about our salvation, especially the salvation of their loved ones. They can intercede for us while in purgatory. Their prayers help us recognize our sins and help us understand the malice of sins. And so they reproach us through inspirations of the Holy Spirit. They want us to become holy and saints here. They don't want us to go to the true purgatory.

We need to learn from purgatory, avoid purgatory and empty purgatory.

*Excerpted from the National Catholic Register staff writer Joseph Pronechen.*

