

2. November 2019

“Commemoration of all the dead”

2 Macc. 12, 43–45

After this he took a collection from them individually, amounting to nearly two thousand drachmas, and sent it to Jerusalem to have a sacrifice for sin offered, an action altogether fine and noble, prompted by his belief in the resurrection. For had he not expected the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead, whereas if he had in view the splendid recompense reserved for those who make a pious end, the thought was holy and devout. Hence, he had this expiatory sacrifice offered for the dead, so that they might be released from their sin.

After the feast of All Saints, the commemoration of all the dead follows. They belong to the so-called suffering Church, that is to say to the brothers and sisters who are still waiting for the whole vision of God, so they are in the state of the last cleansing!

Unfortunately, we usually think of them too rarely, because they should actually be given our daily prayers, because their condition is in some ways painful, even if they know that they are saved!

The Purgatory is waiting for us when we have not responded enough to the love of God in our own lives for our own fault! We have already begun to love, but not given the whole answer to God. This may be especially the case for those who may have known the Lord and called Upon His Name shortly before their death! Or they have awakened late from a life of spiritual mediocrity and now know in the light of God what they have missed!

This is indeed a painful condition and that is why the name "poor souls" that we use in Germany is well chosen!

Let us imagine it personally: out of negligence, we have not taken advantage of the many opportunities to practice the love that the Lord gives us! Perhaps our prayers could have saved people! We may be shown them, those who would have needed our prayer! What pain can this cause! A pain of love, of having missed good things, and especially when we still understand that in the souls waiting for help, God himself stands up for these souls! That is why one of the spiritual works of mercy is to pray for the deceased!

But we can also just imagine that we have awakened in love for Jesus, longing for Him, but cannot totally be united with him.

But the place of purification is not only a place of pain according to the teaching of Saint Catherine of Genua, whose teachings were laid down by her disciples. There is also much comfort.

St. Franz von Sales summarizes this teaching:

The thought of purgatory is far more suited to instilling comfort than fear. If the sufferings of the place of purification are so great that the extreme pains of this life cannot be compared with it, then the inner bliss there are so wonderful that no bliss and lust of this earth is equal to them. For 1. souls are in constant union with God; 2 They have submitted themselves there completely to His holy will; their will is so intimately remodelled in the will of God that they only want what God wants, so that even if the gates of heaven are open to them, they would not dare to appear before God while they still perceive traces of sin in themselves; 3. They cleanse themselves there voluntarily and in love, only to please God; 4 They will be there in the way God pleases, and as long as they please him; 5. They also do not have the slightest emotion of impatience and do not make the slightest mistake; 6 They love God above all things, with perfect, pure, and unselfish love; 7 They are comforted there by the angels; 8 They are sure of their salvation, and in a hope that will never be ashamed of their expectation; 9. Their most bitterness is in the deepest peace; 10 If this place is also a hell in terms of pain, it is also a paradise concerning the love God pours into their hearts: a love that is stronger than death and more powerful than hell; 11 This stand is more to be longed for than to fear, for the flames there are flames of holy longing and love; 12 But they are nevertheless terrible because they delay our completion, which is to see and love God, and to praise and glorify him throughout all unreachable eternity. (some points are worthy to reflect a bit deeper - will follow another time)

On the missionary journey of the choir Harpa Dei in Mexico we had a touching experience in this context! We were in Queretaro and sang the Holy Mass! The priest, who is the exorcist of the diocese, suddenly said during the predication that poor souls are in the Holy Mass, who ask that Holy Communion can be sacrificed for them! They would have been attracted by the holy music because the music sounds like they hear it from afar from heaven!

For us at Harpa Dei this was a wonderful word to know better that these souls love our music, but also a reminder to think of them more and pray for them.

Prayer for the poor souls should not be forgotten for various reasons! For one thing, it is the will of the Lord to help them, a commandment of charity! But it is also an act of Christian wisdom to support the poor souls in love! They will pray for us and certainly not forget us when they reach faster eternity with our help! So we can entrust our concerns to them and also ask them to help us.

Lord, give the dead eternal rest, and the Eternal Light shine upon them! Lord, let them rest in peace! Amen