

Homily: 30th Sunday: Cycle A: 2023: Ex 22:20-26; Ps 18: 2-3, 3-4, 47, 51; 1 Thes 1:5c-10; Mt: 22:34-40

“Spiritually helping the Souls in Purgatory”

1. We should all know that **the doctrine of Purgatory is part of the Deposit of Faith that we must believe as Catholics and that we who are living can help the souls there immensely.** According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, *Purgatory is a state of final purification after death and before entrance into heaven. It is experienced by those who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified. The purpose of purgatory is to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven* (paragraph 1030). We go to Purgatory, and it's not just Catholics, but any person who is saved by Jesus at the end of their earthly life, if we die not in the state of mortal sin (then the soul would go to Hell), but still not a saint in terms of holiness and virtue. It can be because at the end of our earthly life we still have venial sins in our being that we have not given up and detached from the deceptive pleasure of sin and/or mortal sins that were forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but not sufficient penance was done to undo the spiritual damage they caused to ourself and others. **Remember the Mystical Body of Holiness vs. Mystical Body of sin/evil,** as St. Pope Paul VI pointed out years ago; which means everything we do or don't do in this life either helps us and others - since we are all connected in Christ to grow closer to God or farther away. It's not just me and Jesus!
2. A very insightful and fascinating book that I recommend you get and read is called: ***My Conversations with the Poor Souls*** by Eugenie von der Leyden. You can get it on Amazon for \$5. I read it earlier this year. It tells the true story of the Bavarian Princess Eugenie von der Leyden (1867-1929) by her spiritual director and her own spiritual Diary, and how for the last 8 years of her earthly life God permitted the poor souls in Purgatory to visit her: to ask for Masses, and other prayers and acts of Penance to help them get closer to Heaven and finally to be released from the pains of Purgatory. *The greatest of which is the pain of not being able to see God in His full Splendor and realizing the damage and destruction their sins caused to them and others when still living on earth.* Some amazing things: *a couple of the souls told Eugenie that right now they cannot benefit from the special graces of the Mass offered on earth as they didn't appreciate or fully believe in the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament on earth and so now as*

part of their purification in Purgatory, they cannot benefit from what they didn't believe in. It seemed though as they got further along in their purification God would allow them to benefit from the graces of the Holy Mass = so continue to offer Masses for your departed loved ones and God will figure out what is best for each person. Also, it was revealed to Eugenie by a soul of a lady who appeared to her and who everyone thought was a saint and in Heaven already, that “*God's standards are very different than us sinful human beings.*” A good reminder to strive for holiness in worrying about what God thinks of us not what other humans think in their imperfect evaluations. Always put God and living the Catholic faith 1st in your life as I preached about the previous two weekends.

3. **The supernatural world is all around us** – even though most of us don't perceive like we should. Just like at Mass, when the Consecration occurs, all the Heavenly Court is surrounding us adoring Jesus the 2nd person of the Trinity who offers Himself mystically at every Mass for the salvation of the Living and the Dead who accept that gift. So also, with the souls in Purgatory. Eugenie would see the souls in Purgatory every day the last 8 years of her life, except when she was sick and then God would give her a break to rest in His thoughtfulness and great kindness. She would see ppl, many whom she knew in life, but also people who were dressed differently coming from other centuries asking for her prayers. **Sometimes the souls were permitted to speak with her and sometimes not** as part of their purification for sin. As they got closer to Heaven, they were able to speak more, but not to answer questions of mere curiosity, but only if it helped Eugenie to grow in her love for the souls and helping them. Interestingly, her little great nephew was living at the castle too, and the 2- or 3-year-old toddler would sometimes see the souls in Purgatory like Eugenie, but he would just stare at them or point or yell. There was a Dominican priest who had died and came to ask Eugenie to have a Mass said for him and then left. Suddenly she heard her little great nephew yelling, and so went in his room and saw the Dominican priests looking at him. She said to him: *why are you bothering him?* And the priest said, *his innocence comforts my soul.* A beautiful reminder to always cherish children and teach them the ways of God and form them in the holy faith. *A dog, a chicken, and a cat in the castle also saw the souls* - amazing God's creatures are and their hidden senses, and again to respect God's creatures and care for them. Let's do more praying, offering acts of reparation/penance, and works of charity for the poor souls. †