MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

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HAVING MASS OFFERED

By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM



Notre Dame Cathedral of Paris, France

One thing I admired about my mother's sister, my Aunt Minnie Echeveste, is that she was very attentive to and faithful about having Mass offered for members of our immediate family. The main anniversary, which was the reason for a Mass being offered, was the day of the person's death. After my Aunt Minnie died on November 7, 2022, I was reflecting on who of her brothers and sisters would follow in her footsteps. It did not seem that any were doing so. It dawned on me that maybe I, as the oldest of my generation, should take on this family responsibility and tradition. It has given me deep joy to have Masses offered for my grandparents, aunts and uncles; and now my own parents, my youngest brother and a very young nephew.

As Catholics, we believe in the reality of purgatory. What exactly does that term mean? We have to be perfectly pure when we die to enter heaven. Who of us believes we are that holy? It is a reassurance that God wants to save us all by providing a temporary place of purification so that we can eventually enter heaven. I well remember our founding Bishop of Boise, Bishop Sylvester W. Treinen, would often say: "When I die, I am going to appreciate my enemies the most! They are the ones who will say, 'He was such a son-of-a-gun. I should pray for him in purgatory.' My friends will say, 'He was a saint and is in heaven' and not pray for me and leave me languishing in purgatory." This used to make Sr. Rebecca Mary and me laugh, but Bishop Treinen was not joking. He really meant it.

Sister Rebecca Mary, a convert, also had a strong devotion to praying for the holy souls in purgatory. She died almost three years ago. I can well believe she is in heaven, but I still have Masses said for her regularly and pray for her because she would want me to do so.

Is praying for the dead a custom of the Catholic Church? Yes, but it has a long-standing tradition from Scripture and from our elder brothers and sisters, the Jews. Read the dramatic story from the Old Testament in 2 Maccabees 12:38-46, where Judas Maccabeus takes up a collection to be sent to the temple in Jerusalem for prayers and sacrifices to be made by the priests for the soldiers slain in battle. "In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection of the dead in view; for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death." (2 Mac.12:43-44) Judas Maccabeus lived about two thousand years before the time of Christ. God had obviously been teaching his people to believe in the resurrection of the dead and to make offerings for sins, so that the deceased were purified and ready to be taken up into heavenly glory. The Church has continued this belief and tradition from the Word of God for over two thousand years.



Pope Saint John Paul II at the consecration of Mass.

A question on this topic, which people have, is what happens when you have a Mass offered for a person who has died and he/she is in heaven? Are the graces wasted? The explanation I have heard is derived mostly from the teaching of the saints and mystics of the Church. In the simplest terms, the explanation is that the graces of that Mass are for that person. If they are in purgatory and need graces to be released, you are helping them. If they are already

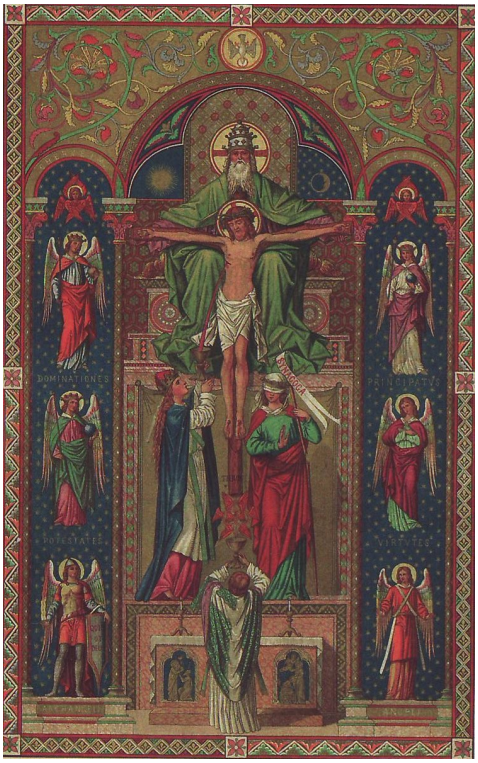
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in heaven, then you have given them a gift, which they can give to someone else who does need it. It is a beautiful and consoling concept.

The reason Mass is our greatest prayer is that it is the



prayer of Jesus to the Father in the Holy Spirit. At Mass, we try our best to enter into Jesus' prayer and self-offering by our own surrender to the Father's will, living in Jesus' Spirit. That is precisely what the documents of Vatican II, especially the one on the Liturgy, mean by "active participation of the congregation at Mass". Our Holy Father Pope Leo IV is currently giving a series of Wednesday audiences on the teaching of the Vatican II documents. With regard to the souls in purgatory, certainly they benefit by our poor prayers given to them as gifts of love. Then how much greater is the perfect prayer of Jesus our Savior, who gave his life, so that we all could be with him in the eternal embrace of the Father who is Love?

As an encouragement to you, I want to share that even my local, non-Catholic friends, many of whom are unchurched, respect the awesomeness of Mass. When someone shares tragic news, such as the suicide of a young niece, and I say, "I will have a Mass offered for her", that friend is deeply touched. How non-Catholics have such a deep regard for the power of the Mass is a mystery of God's grace! A conversation like this could be an open door to the faith of the Catholic Church for some people. A small exchange like this can be an occasion for great graces. Never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit!

As I write, today is November 1, the feast of All Saints. We celebrate all who are in heaven and who are eagerly waiting for us to join them there. Tomorrow, November 2, is "All Souls Day", the day of the dead. We traditionally pray for the holy souls in purgatory all during this month. My hope is that you will love the custom of having Mass offered for the dead and extend this spiritual gift-giving by having Mass offered for those who are living. Your intentions can be many reasons, such as the success of an upcoming surgery, consolation at news of a terminal diagnosis, a wedding anniversary, or a birthday. The only information a priest needs to know, when you ask him to say a Mass for your intention, is the name of the person and whether he/she is living or deceased. This is because the formal prayer at Mass is composed for either of these two cases. The last custom I want to mention is that it is usual, if possible, to offer the priest a stipend. In the Diocese of Boise, the suggested Mass stipend is $10. Obviously, we do not "pay" for Mass, which is infinite. You can think of this as a gesture of gratitude.

One result of my own meditation on the topic of having Masses offered is that for the most part now, when I want to give money, like a tithe for charity, I often have a Mass said for someone who has come to my mind in prayer. Also, as it states at the bottom of page 2 of every newsletter, Mass is offered once a month for the benefactors of Marymount Hermitage by an Idaho priest. In Jesus, God the Father gave us his greatest gift. With Jesus at Mass, we give him and ourselves back to the Father in union with the Holy Spirit. I will close with the prayer for Mass on November 2:

"Listen kindly to our prayers, O Lord,
and, as our faith in your Son,
raised from the dead, is deepened,
so may our hope of resurrection
for your departed servants also find new strength.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen."

COMMUNITY NEWS

CORRESPONDENCE: Expect my Christmas post card the week after Thanksgiving. Please know that if you send a donation for Marymount Hermitage, I appreciate your gift and will send with my thank you note a tax acknowledgement letter which you can use for deductions. Those who send donations monthly will receive in the US mail in late December an acknowledgement letter for the total of the year. For monthly meditations and news, please visit the website after the 15th of each month. Click on the section entitled "News". Since expenses are prohibitive, printed paper newsletters cannot be sent in the US mail any more, neither are they sent by email.

CONSTRUCTION: Fred and Cindy Mattivi and their son, Casey, worked all summer on the exterior renovation of St. Helen's hermitage. Fred and Casey dug out new steps down the side of the building to make

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access so much easier, especially when it is the muddy season. Casey also sanded the deck and Cindy installed new sealer for it and the railings. The gravel for the steps was brought in last when Ray Groves was bringing in more gravel to repair the roadway where the new water pipe trenches crossed over. Jack Roberts and Ray did a great job filling in the steps and leveling off the surfaces. The railroad tie frames for the steps will last for years!

From left to right, the photo is of Fred Mattivi, Jack Roberts, and Cindy Mattivi in front of the living room fireplace in the Jubilee Guest House. It is the only photo I have of these three friends together. They were not working on the landscaping of St. Helen's at the same time.



Casey Mattivi (at R) trimmed the tree behind the hermitage, so that the branches will not rub on the roof. We all depend on Casey's size and strength when we have heavy work to do! God bless the three dedicated and generous Mattivi volunteers!





The photos above and to the left show the newly finished deck of St. Helen's hermitage. We have hopes of installing new pavers next summer. The old ones are too small and not adequate for the space from the steps to the deck. We are still working on the goal of not having to negotiate mud to enter the building and having safer footing, so the chance of falling down is lessened.



This photo above shows railroad ties which frame the gravel steps going down to St. Helen's hermitage.

The new gravel driveway comes down a steep hill from the road to the new parking pad directly behind the hermitage. Below you see my little Jeep parked there.





Lastly, the circle driveway is complete by driving up a more shallow hill to connect with the main road. Those retreatants who have parked here before and gotten mudded in will appreciate this improvement the most! God bless benefactors who make this work possible.

