

Tomorrow afternoon at
4:45 -- the Holy Hour
in Sacred Heart Church.

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
November 3, 1954

Public Recitation of the
Rosary, and Benediction
at 5:15.

The Month Of The Poor Souls

While many of you were fast asleep early yesterday morning, the priests were beginning to offer three Masses -- a distinct privilege granted to them Nov. 2, and Christmas.

Monday we commemorated the members of the Church Triumphant -- the heroes of God now enjoying the Beatific Vision, never to be separated from the company of the blessed. Yesterday we were mindful of the Church Suffering -- the faithful departed. They persevered in the Faith. Their souls will be saved. Someday, they will attain the Beatific Vision, and be numbered among the saints, and so become the Church Triumphant.

Why are they Poor Souls now? Because they died without having sufficiently atoned for their venial sins, or because they have not yet atoned sufficiently for mortal sins forgiven them. The debt they still owe to God is called the temporal punishment due to their sins.

And they are Poor Souls at this moment because, although they are holy enough to be assured of going to heaven someday, they are not holy enough to go there at once. They are poor because they can do nothing for themselves -- because they need our assistance, our help, our prayers and good works. They can no longer help themselves in their dire need. And that is why our sympathy goes out to them; why they hold their hands aloft to us and cry out: "Have pity upon us, at least you, our friends!"

Our sympathy for them is shown best by giving them the alms of our prayers and good works. The Church, looking with pity upon their plight, sets aside the month of November as a special time of praying for them.

They are poor Holy Souls; they are holy Poor Souls. Although they are assured of heaven, they cannot help themselves. They can only pray for us who are still in the way! That fact alone should prompt us to invest our best effort in their behalf, that we may receive, in turn, the grace of final perseverance.

All theologians are agreed that the souls in purgatory bear their suffering patiently because they see clearly God's justice in their regard, and because they are assured of the happiness of heaven to come.

What suffering do they undergo? First, they suffer the pain of loss inasmuch as they are deprived of the Beatific Vision. This causes them intense pain, for they clearly understand the great happiness that comes from seeing God; and they burn with an ardent desire to see and possess Him. They realize, too, that they have only themselves to blame for their suffering. And they are acutely aware of the fact that it was their own cowardice that caused them to miss a much higher degree of heavenly glory, which they now see clearly lay open to them.

It is reasonable to presume that you have relatives and friends in Purgatory. It is also reasonable to presume that they depend mightily upon your charity to hasten their deliverance from this Cleansing House of God's Justice. That is motive enough for you to make the most of November and the numerous opportunities it holds for you to merit indulgences and other spiritual riches -- and to be generous in your distribution of this wealth. And why shouldn't you -- for isn't it reasonable to presume that they will not forget you, once they attain Heaven! Maybe you can stand a few saints praying for you. And once you arrive at Purgatory, it will be comforting to have their assistance hastening your release from pain which theologians tell us is virtually as severe as hell -- except that there is no despair.

Coming -- The Novena for the Poor Souls. Later Bulletin will give details.