Pray for the Holy Souls in purgatory with your family

As Catholics we believe, “All who die in God’s friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death, they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven” (**Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1030**). The Church teaches after death, the holy souls can no longer earn merit through prayer or good works; therefore, they cannot pray their own way out of purgatory.

It is our duty and privilege to be able to assist them through our prayers, good works, and especially, the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Therefore, the Church has always **taught us to pray** for the souls in purgatory, and while we can do this anytime, November is dedicated specifically to praying for the dearly departed.

After being a Catholic for more than 30 years, when I thought I knew all things Catholic, I was introduced to a magnificent devotion for the faithful departed. A plenary indulgence, applicable only to the souls in purgatory, may also be gained from Nov. 1 to Nov. 8 by devoutly visiting a cemetery and praying for the dead.

Overcoming Fear for a Good Cause

Fascinated by this important spiritual work of mercy, I pushed past my uncomfortable feelings around cemeteries, rounded up my family, and made daily pilgrimages during the first week of November to local cemeteries to pray for the dead.

It was incredibly moving to be walking among the graves, reading names of the people we knew and those we did not know. To pray for people who died long before our lifetimes or a few whose lost was still fresh upon our hearts.

The grace of offering **these eight November days of prayer** for souls definitely changed my faith life forever. My once gripping fear of death was replaced with overwhelming compassion for these precious souls and compels me to this day to pray daily for the dead. This devotion, according to many saintly accounts, comes with a sweet side benefit of heavenly intercessions from grateful souls. Who can't use extra prayer and intercession support for their family?

When we make these pilgrimages of prayer to help our friends and even strangers in purgatory, we are in good company of many saints who also shared **a commitment to this devotion**.

St. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer had much to say about having a special friendship with the holy souls. He wrote in "**The Way**," "Out of charity, out of justice, and out of excusable selfishness – they have such power with God! – remember them often in your sacrifices and in your prayers. May you be able to say when you speak of them, 'My good friends the souls in purgatory." He added in "**Furrow**," "Purgatory shows God's great mercy and washes away the defects of those who long to become one with him."

Ideas for Praying for the Holy Souls With Your Family

- Attend Mass Nov. 2 for the feast of All Souls' Day to pray for deceased family members, for those who have no one to pray for them, and for those who will die in the upcoming year.
- If you can, attend Mass each day from Nov.1-8 to pray for the holy souls, either in general or for specific souls.
- Visit a cemetery each day from Nov. 1-8. My family makes field trips out of this devotion, visiting a different cemetery each day. We will travel (usually on the days that fall during the weekend) to special cemeteries such as ones specifically for the military,

non-Catholics, or just because we thought it was architecturally fascinating.

- **Pray the rosary** during the month of November for the holy souls.