The holy souls in purgatory • Monthly devotion for November

Back in the Middle Ages, many Catholics began observing special devotions around a particular theme each month – the Holy Name of Jesus in January, for instance. Today, many families are reviving this practice as part of the way they observe the liturgical calendar at home. By practicing monthly devotions, the core values of the faith will become more alive within your family. The beauty of monthly devotions is that there is no set way to celebrate. So, be creative, make it fun, and adapt your celebration to your own family.

Here are some ways to celebrate the popular devotion for November, the holy souls in purgatory.

Talking with kids about the holy souls in purgatory

Sin is real. When we sin, we are taught to go to confession, repent and strive to avoid sin in the future. God, in his bountiful mercy, forgives us. Yet at the same time, our relationship with God is not fully healed simply because we ask him to forgive us. The Church teaches that a stain is left on our soul and that this stain must be fully erased before we are to enter heaven.

For example, let's say you purposefully ate your little sister's cookie without asking her. Your sister is sad; she cries. You apologize to her and she forgives you. This doesn't change the fact that you still ate the cookie. Your parents ask you to "make things right" with your sister. And so, you bake a dozen cookies just for your sister. You have made a genuine effort to make amends with your sister; your relationship is on its way to being restored.

We know that we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven unless our

souls are pure. This means that any sins which have not been “made right” in God’s eye must be reconciled. Purgatory is a place, a sort of rest stop, where we wait for our souls to be purified. The souls in purgatory cannot pray their way out. Instead, these souls rely on you and I, the living, to pray for them. By remembering the dead, praying for them and offering sacrifices on their behalf, these souls are able to enter the kingdom of heaven more quickly.

Feast Days & Memorials

The following days can be connected to this month’s devotion. Click to learn more.

1 All Saints’ Day

2 All Souls’ Day

3 St. Martin de Porres

10 St. Leo the Great

13 St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

15 St. Albert the Great

16 St. Gertrude

17 St. Elizabeth of Hungary

21 The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

23 Blessed Miguel Agustin Pro

25 Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

30 St. Andrew

Bible Verse

A take away for kids to memorize and/or include in their daily prayer.

“So for one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, it is a sin.” (James 4:17)

Prayer Prompts

Questions to help propagate the faith with your children.

1. Who do I know has died?
2. Which sins have harmed my relationship with God the most?
3. What is God asking me to do? Have I fully embraced his calling?

Live It

Incorporate this month’s devotion with the virtues of faith, hope and charity.

Faith

Recite the following prayer as a family.

In practice, it is common for Catholics to recite a prayer for the departed. This is especially true when one learns of someone’s death or when we pass a cemetery or funeral procession.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
May they rest in peace.
Amen.

Hope

Learn about God's infinite mercy.

St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina was an Italian priest who live from 1887-1968. He was canonized by St. John Paul II in 2002. In 1918, St. Padre Pio began to receive the stigmata, which are the wounds Christ received. These wounds would cause St. Padre Pio much pain and suffering. He received the stigmata for 50 years.

St. Padre Pio quickly became a popular pastor. Hundreds of thousands of people made pilgrimages simply to be present during a Mass said by him. But God had even more work for the saint to do.

As Mary has taught us, many souls are lost to hell while many others remain in purgatory. God desperately wants us to be purified and united with him in heaven. God chose to use St. Padre Pio as an intercessor for those souls in purgatory. St. Padre Pio received many visions and, at times, was even able to converse with the souls in purgatory. Often, these souls would ask him to say a Mass for them, that God might grant them passage unto heaven. St. Padre Pio frequently reported seeing souls freed during the Mass offering.

St. Padre Pio was a very humble person. He felt so much sorrow for the souls in purgatory, that he often prayed through the entire night. The sacrifices that he endured show us his love and desire to serve God and to build His kingdom.

Charity

Help the church to grow within your own community.

There are countless ways that you can pray and sacrifice for the souls in purgatory. Have a family brainstorming session and come up with a plan that works for your family. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Attend a daily Mass
- Recite the divine mercy chaplet
- Pray the rosary
- Pray at a cemetery
- Volunteer in your community
- Fast/abstain from foods
- Give up electronics
- Refrain from eating out at a restaurant
- Drink only water

What can your family commit too? Remember that extra prayers and sacrifices should be realistic, yet not easy. For families with children in a large age-range, consider an age-based and personalized plan.

For more information about monthly devotions, see the Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: #20, #32, #190-191 and the Catholic Encyclopedia: Special Devotions for Months