**PASTORAL LETTER**

*St. Claude, October 27, 2022*

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

The archdiocese of St. Boniface has recently launched a new pastoral program called “Households of Faith”.

**What is a "Household of Faith"?**

A "Household of Faith" is a small group of 6 to 10 people from a variety of backgrounds and life journeys who come together on a regular basis, at least once a month, in-person or online, for 60 to 90 minutes. **The purpose of this time together is to get to know one another and grow in new friendships*,******while sharing the Holy Scriptures*** *and* ***some reflection using a simple process.***

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:15).

In our parishes of St. Claude and St. Denis-Haywood, we expect to begin the new pastoral initiative beginning the first Advent Sunday. More details will be shared with you.

**What can we do now to prepare for this program?**

**SUBSCRIBE to LIVING WITH CHRIST.**

This monthly missalette uses NRSV lectionary readings approved by The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Just about $50 a year, this missalette is very helpful for us in nourishing our spiritual life by the Word of God.

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It is my desire that you will participate in this new pastoral initiative “Households of Faith” to nourish your faith with the Word of God, to put your faith into action and to become the witnesses of faith for our brothers and sisters.

May God bless you and keep in all in His love.

Fr. Peter Le Van Ngu

P/S: Living with Christ: <https://en.novalis.ca>

Households of Faith: <https://www.archsaintboniface.ca/main.php?p=1150>

**Why do we pray for the souls in purgatory?**

#### Question:

I have never really understood purgatory and why we are to pray for those who are there?

#### Answer:

This is an excellent question and a common one: because other Christians—Protestants, specifically—do not believe in purgatory, they often have questions about the Church’s teaching, which can persist even if they become Catholic. So, thanks for asking it. Let me try to explain what the Church believes about purgatory and praying for those who are there.

In short, purgatory is the word the Church uses to describe a state of spiritual “cleansing” which occurs after we die. We are told in Scripture that nothing impure will enter into heaven (Rev. 21:27), but we are also told there are sins which we commit which are not “deadly” (or mortal) to our relationship with God, meaning, they do not completely break our relationship with Him (1 John 5:17).

Purgatory lies at the intersection of those two scriptural teachings: that we need to be completely cleansed of sin before we enter heaven, and that we can have sins on our soul when we die that do not damn us, as mortal sins do.

From the very beginning of the Church, Christians have believed that when we die, we will either go to hell, or to heaven directly, or to heaven after our soul is cleansed of any non-mortal (venial) sins. That third option is what we mean by purgatory: it is the spiritual “place” where we are cleansed of any and all spiritual flaws which remain, so that we can enter into heaven in a state of perfection, as Revelation tells us.

The existence of such a state is already found implicitly in the Old Testament, in 2 Maccabees 12, which speaks of Jews praying for the deceased. As the Church would later teach, prayer for the dead only makes sense if there is a temporary “place” after death in addition to heaven and hell. After all, our prayers are useless for anyone who’s in hell, and they are unnecessary for anyone in heaven. From very early on, then, Christians took up their Jewish ancestors’ practice—bolstered by what would be written down in the New Testament in places like 1 John and Revelation as well as 1 Corinthians 3:15 and 1 Peter 1:7 which speak of a cleansing fire—and prayer for the deceased. Already in the middle of the second century A.D. we find explicit reference to praying for the deceased, implying that this temporary after-death state must exist.

Before speaking directly about praying for the souls in purgatory, I want to emphasize that purgatory is a temporary place. Sometimes people misunderstand the Church’s teaching to mean that it’s a permanent destination for those who go there after death, but that is most definitely not the case. Once all remaining spiritual flaws and faults have been cleansed, they will enter into the glory of heaven.

Now let’s turn to the question of praying for the souls in purgatory. As we have seen, this is a practice which predates Christianity and which was taken up by the early Church. In fact, both purgatory and praying for the dead were beliefs and practices held by all Christians up until the time of the Protestant Reformation. Throughout the centuries, Christians have prayed for souls in purgatory or for “the dead,” which means the same thing. We do so for the same reason that we pray for the living: because in the mystery of God’s plan and of His goodness, our prayers are able to aid and benefit them.

Think about a time when you prayed for someone you knew. In so doing, you had confidence that God would hear your prayer and give your loved one the grace they needed for whatever reason you were praying for them. The same thing applies to our prayers for the souls in purgatory: we have confidence that God will hear our prayers and give them the grace they need, which is to be cleansed of their remaining faults.

When we do so, our prayers are somehow able to shorten their time of purification. Just as God desires that we pray for the living, even though He could grant them the graces they need without our prayers, so too does He desire that we pray for the deceased, even though they will eventually get to heaven regardless. Somehow, our prayers are able to hasten that time of spiritual purification and help the deceased enter more quickly into heaven.

Source:

<https://www.sfcatholic.org/bishopsbulletin/why-do-we-pray-for-the-souls-in-purgatory/>