

## All Souls Day Homily 2018

In March, 2001, my brother and his wife suffered the tragic loss of their three year old son and my nephew Geoff in a fatal car accident on Route 206 in Tabernacle that claimed the lives of two others.

As most of you know, it is a very common practice for Catholics to have Masses offered for the dead. At every Mass, the intention of the Mass is announced. "This Mass is offered for Geoffrey Swift. This Mass is offered for Michael Murphy, etc."

My brother was bothered by the Mass cards he received for his son and he chose to attend very few of them, and with good reason. "Dan," he said, "I always thought that when a Mass was said for someone who died, we were praying for them to get into heaven in case they were in purgatory." And he is right. There is no need to pray for those who are in heaven because they have no need of our prayers. There is no need to pray for those in hell because they cannot be helped by our prayers. When we pray for the dead, we are praying for those in purgatory. Today, on the Feast of All Souls, we do just that. We are praying for those in purgatory. So what exactly is purgatory?

The best way to explain purgatory is by way of example. Mr. Murphy, like most people, died a good man, but was far from perfect. Upon his death, Mr. Murphy enjoyed the Beatific Vision. Mr. Murphy came face to face with Almighty God who loved him infinitely more than he was ever loved on earth. God and Mr. Murphy reviewed Mr. Murphy's life and everything was explained in the most perfect way. God explains why he was born, why he grew up where he did, why he married his wife, why he had four children, why his oldest died of leukemia, why he struggled with alcoholism, why some things on earth happen in accord with God's plan and why other things happen against God's plan.

God's explanation was so comforting and so perfect that Mr. Murphy said, "God, you make such perfect sense. Knowing what I know now, I would go through the terrible pain of losing my son to leukemia. I would struggle through my alcoholism all over again because I know now how you used me to further your kingdom on earth."

As God and Mr. Murphy came to the end of his judgment, Mr. Murphy said, "God, I just don't feel as if I am ready to live with you forever. You have been so good to me. You have loved me so much. I need to purify myself first. I need to make up for

my sins. I need to expiate my sins and then I'll feel better about living with you in heaven.”

Those who die in the state of grace but need some purification will enter heaven after that of purgatory. The precise suffering in purgatory is not defined by the Church except that the greatest pain is that of separation from God.

However, the Church is very clear to explain that purgatory is not the only way to expiate sin. All the trials, sufferings and miseries of this life expiate sin and earn a person a very high place in heaven. After witnessing all the trials, sufferings and miseries my brother and his wife lived through since the death of Geoff, they have already earned a high place in heaven.

So what about all those Masses said for Geoffrey that he did not need? Within the teaching of the Church is a belief called the Treasury of the Church.

The Treasury of the Church is the infinite value, which can never be exhausted, which Christ's merits have before God. They were offered so all of mankind could be freed from sin. This treasury includes as well the prayers and good works of the Blessed Mother. They are truly immense, unfathomable and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of

Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission the Father entrusted to them.

Also added to this treasury are the prayers, good works, trials, sufferings and miseries of God's people on earth. When prayers are offered for those who do not need them, in this example, prayers offered for my nephew who does not need them, these prayers are placed in the Treasury of the Church and are applied to those who need them most.

I look around this Church this evening and I see families of the deceased who are most definitely in heaven. In those homilies, I might have included "Sometimes we bury sinners. Sometimes we bury saints. Today we bury a saint." Any prayers offered on their behalf are placed in the Treasury of the Church and are applied to those who need them most.

Eternal Rest Grant Unto Them, O Lord. And may perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen. May their souls and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.