

# Dear Padre,

## I'm a non-Catholic church secretary who receives questions about a Purgatorial Society. What is it?

**T**hose who die in God's grace and friendship imperfectly purified, although they are assured of their eternal salvation, undergo a purification after death, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of God" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1054). This process of purification is known as purgatory. Saint Gregory the Great (540–604) wrote "certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come" (see *Dialogues* 4, 39). This forgiveness of sins granted after death is also suggested in Matthew 12:32 and 2 Timothy 1:18.

Because Catholics believe we're in communion with one another through an active relationship that transcends death, our prayers and sacrifices benefit the deceased (see 2 Maccabees 12:38–46). Thus, a Purgatorial Society is a formal association of Catholics who offer prayers, Masses, and other works of charity to benefit the souls in purgatory. Souls that get to heaven, in turn, offer their prayers to benefit the living. This mutual assistance affirms our belief in an earthly and heavenly Church forming one body in Christ.

Purgatorial societies were especially prevalent from the Middle Ages through the previous century, but they're currently seeing a revival in some church parishes and religious communities. Societies generally maintain a

registry to enroll names of the deceased so that Masses are regularly offered for the holy souls in purgatory—especially during the month of November.

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### A WORD FROM *Pope Francis*



*By visiting the tombs of our loved ones we remember that we have a multitude of saints who before God intercede for our needs. Let us not forget, however, that so many deceased also await our spiritual support. Let us remember them in our prayers...asking that they be welcomed into the ranks of the elect in heaven.*

GENERAL AUDIENCE, OCTOBER 31, 2018

## Calendar

- Monday**  
MARCH 22  
*Lenten Weekday*  
Dn 13:1–9, 15–17, 19–30, 33–62  
or 13:41c–62  
Jn 8:1–11
- Tuesday**  
MARCH 23  
*Lenten Weekday*  
Nm 21:4–9  
Jn 8:21–30
- Wednesday**  
MARCH 24  
*Lenten Weekday*  
Dn 3:14–20, 91–92, 95  
Jn 8:31–42
- Thursday**  
MARCH 25  
*The Annunciation of the Lord*  
Is 7:10–14, 8:10  
Heb 10:4–10  
Lk 1:26–38
- Friday**  
MARCH 26  
*Lenten Weekday*  
Jer 20:10–13  
Jn 10:31–42
- Saturday**  
MARCH 27  
*Lenten Weekday*  
Ez 37:21–28  
Jn 11:45–56
- Sunday**  
MARCH 28  
*Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord*  
Mk 11:1–10 or  
Jn 12:12–16  
Is 50:4–7  
Phil 2:6–11  
Mk 14:1–15:47  
or 15:1–39



March 21, 2021

Fifth Sunday of Lent (B)

Jer 31:31–34

Heb 5:7–9

Jn 12:20–33

## Do I Have to Die?

**W**ho has not asked this question, at least to oneself? It's a valid question, because at the core of every living being is the drive to live. Jesus also must have asked this question. Today's Gospel account implies this in John 12:27. ("I am troubled now.") Despite his passion for living, Jesus was more passionate about the transformation that would take place later. The example of the grain that must die if a harvest of wheat is to be produced is a perfect metaphor to make this point. Just as the grain is insignificant compared with the possible harvest, so—our faith assures us—there is no comparison between this life and the wondrous transformation that awaits us. And yes, in order to move from this life to that splendid future, we will have to die.

Our Lenten meditations will soon focus on the suffering and death of Jesus. However, to concentrate solely on suffering and death is like examining the

death of the grain without any thought of its transformation and the bountiful harvest that will come. We must not minimize Jesus' suffering. However, it was precisely by means of his having been lifted up on the cross in suffering and death that he was lifted up in glory and exaltation. This is why we claim that death is not the end of life but the gateway to new life. So, as difficult as it might be to leave the life we love, like Jesus we have to die in order to enter that new life.

*Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA*

### For Reflection

- ★ *Begin to place yourself in God's hands with little things so that you are better able to do so in bigger things.*
- ★ *The second reading reminds us that Christ is the source of our eternal salvation. Spend a moment in gratitude for this great gift.*



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*[Jesus asked,] "Yet what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour."*

JOHN 12:27