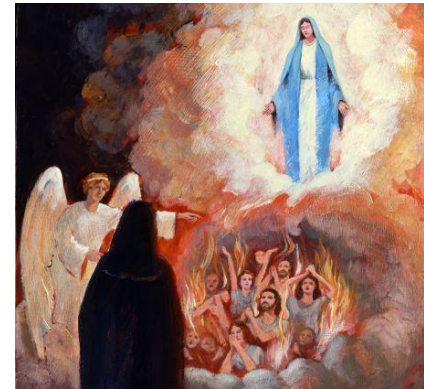




By FR. JOHN LARSON, MIC

The message of Divine Mercy given through the Scriptures, Church Tradition, and the writings of St. Faustina is a message that extends to everyone in need of God's mercy. This includes the souls in purgatory. A quick glance at the spiritual works of mercy reminds us that the seventh work is "to pray for the living and the dead."

In preparing for Divine Mercy Sunday, we are called to perform a work of mercy. Most people in the weeks prior to the feast day think of doing corporal works of mercy, but we could also focus on the spiritual work of praying for the Holy Souls. We are especially called upon to perform an act of mercy on the feast day, and this spiritual work of mercy could be a perfect option as we attend the Divine Mercy Sunday celebration at our parish. We could also recommend this approach to others to remind them of the good their prayers could do on the feast day for the Church Suffering.



Further, as preparation for the feast day, we are encouraged to pray the Novena to The Divine Mercy. Here, we can be mindful that the eighth day of the Novena is dedicated to praying for the souls detained in purgatory. As Jesus tells us in the prayer for the day:

**Today bring to Me THE SOULS WHO ARE DETAINED IN PURGATORY, and immerse them in the abyss of My mercy. Let the torrents of My Blood cool down their scorching flames. All these souls are greatly loved by Me. They are making retribution to My justice. It is in your power to bring them relief. Draw all the indulgences from the treasury of My Church and offer them on their behalf. Oh, if you only knew the torments they suffer, you would continually offer for them the alms of the spirit and pay off their debt to My justice** (*Diary of St. Faustina*, 1226).

Jesus clearly does not want us to forget the Holy Souls during our preparations for Divine Mercy Sunday. Indeed, He encourages us to "draw all the indulgences from the treasury of [His] Church and offer them on their behalf."

Let's also not forget ourselves either. After all, the special graces promised by Jesus for Divine Mercy Sunday can only be received for oneself. They come through worthily receiving the Lord in Holy Communion on that day. This involves making a good confession beforehand and then remaining in a state of grace. The special graces promised are nothing less than the equivalent of a complete renewal of baptismal grace in the soul: "complete forgiveness (remission) of sins and punishment" (see *Diary*, 699).

Now let's take a moment to consider this in light of purgatory for ourselves. If we receive these special graces on Divine Mercy Sunday and die soon after—assuming we then remain without sin—we would avoid purgatory. So, as you prepare for Divine Mercy Sunday, remember to avail yourself of these special graces. Depending on when the Lord calls you home, they may just keep you out of purgatory.

Remember how Jesus on the eighth day of the Divine Mercy Novena encourages us to offer indulgences for the Holy Souls? It's fitting, then, that the Church has granted a plenary indulgence specifically for Divine Mercy Sunday. Thus, in addition to special graces for ourselves, the feast is also a day when we can gain a plenary indulgence and apply it to a soul in purgatory. A plenary indulgence is granted under the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer for the intentions of the Pope) to the faithful who, on Divine Mercy Sunday, in any church or chapel, in the spirit that is completely detached from the affection for a sin, take part in the prayers and devotions held in honor of Divine Mercy.

After we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday this month, there are still other ways we can incorporate devotion to Jesus, The Divine Mercy, into our prayer life for the souls in purgatory.

If we look at the life of St. Faustina, her desire that all souls know of the mercy of God definitely includes the souls in purgatory. In the Diary, the word "purgatory" appears 24 times. Later in the Diary, Jesus says to St. Faustina, "Enter into purgatory often, because [the souls] need you there" (1738).

She would, on occasion, receive visits from souls suffering in purgatory, who were asking for her prayers. [...] As apostles of Divine Mercy, we should be mindful of the Holy Souls' need for us in the context of our prayers and practices.

One example is to invoke God's mercy for them at Holy Mass. During the Prayers of the Faithful, we can call to mind the souls in purgatory. We can also remember them in a special way during the Eucharistic Prayer. Each of the Eucharistic Prayers, in fact, has a place that mentions praying for the dead.

In Eucharistic Prayer I, there is even a place where the priest pauses for the remembrance of the dead: "Remember also, Lord, Your servants who have gone before us with the sign of faith and rest in the sleep of peace. Grant them, O Lord, we pray, and all who sleep in Christ, a place of refreshment, light, and peace." The priest often pauses during this prayer, and it is a chance for us to think of deceased souls we want to commend to God's mercy.

Another opportunity to be mindful of the Holy Souls can be when we formulate intentions for a Rosary or a Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Perhaps we could dedicate a decade of the Rosary or the Chaplet for the souls in purgatory, or pray for particular souls during particular decades. Praying the Chaplet in such a way can be like a cry of mercy to heaven on their behalf.

We can also consider lifting up brief prayers for the Holy Souls throughout the day. Saint Faustina mentions that, rather than talking so much, she sometimes said short indulgenced prayers for the souls in purgatory (see *Diary*, 274). One of the short pious invocations mentioned in the 1986 Handbook of Indulgences is "Lord Jesus, in Your mercy, grant them eternal rest." The Handbook does not limit pious invocations to a particular set but allows for adaptation. You could say, "Have mercy on the souls in purgatory, Lord," or "Grant them eternal repose." To any of these, a partial indulgence is granted.

All of these practices relate to devotion to The Divine Mercy, for we are thus being devoted to the concerns of Christ Himself. He leads St. Faustina to a greater awareness of the need to be mindful of the souls suffering in purgatory. As the words of Christ in the Divine Mercy Novena stress, "It is in your power to bring [the souls] relief."

Fr. John Larson. "For the Souls in Purgatory." April 3, 2012. *The Divine Mercy*: <http://www.thedivinemercy.org/news/For-the-Souls-in-Purgatory-4880>.