St. Anthony Mary Claret

HELP FOR THE DEPARTED

Socorro a los difuntos

From the Spanish of the Colección de opúsculos, vol. III (Barcelona, 1860)

English translation

Contributed to Mind of the Church by a friend of the library who wishes to remain anonymous

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About this translation

Translated from *Socorro á los difuntos*, with the *Novena en sufragio de las santas almas del purgatorio* printed with it, in the *Colección de opúsculos* of Claret, vol. III (Barcelona: Librería Religiosa, 1860). The translation is complete.

The notes give the references to Claret's sources and the notes he printed himself; the modern editors' commentary and the translator's own remarks are not reproduced.

Help for the Departed

Prologue

Dearest brethren in Jesus Christ: the great love I bear you dictated the counsels and warnings I have written so far for all of you and for each one in particular, so that by fulfilling the duties of your respective states you may be happy now in this world and afterwards eternally in the next. This same love or charity now obliges me to exhort you to try, as far as you are able, to help the souls of our forebears and of our dear departed brethren. They have died, dearest brethren; they have vanished from among us! But must they also have vanished from our hearts? In dying, did they commit some crime, or do us some injury? Certainly not; and so they do not deserve to be forgotten by us. While they lived here with us, we visited them, consoled them and cared for them in their illnesses; and now, when perhaps they are in greater straits and need our good offices more than ever, shall we fail to lavish them on them?

We know that the One who judges souls is that Lord whose justice is like the mountains (Ps 35 \[36\]:7), who judges even justices themselves (Ps 74 \[75\]:3), who finds blemishes even in the Angels (Job 4:18); and faith assures us that nothing defiled shall enter heaven (Rev 21:27). Who, then, can assure us that there was no fault in those souls to keep them back in purgatory? Human frailty is so great... It is true that they received the holy Sacraments, and that through that of Penance, as we all know, mortal sins are forgiven, the divine mercy delighting to pardon whoever implores it with a contrite and humbled heart. But this pardon, which remits the eternal punishment, does not exempt from the temporal satisfaction that divine justice requires, as we see happen in human affairs too: for when a crime is pardoned here, the offender is not always exempted from the whole penalty; the rights of justice are relaxed in part, but they are not taken away or ignored altogether. It is true that we do not see the pains that souls suffer in purgatory; but will those pains be felt any less by them for that, and will the souls deserve any less that we relieve and console them? I will not deny that seeing our relatives and friends suffer, while they lived here, was a powerful spur to help them. But I cannot persuade myself that we would have failed to do as much for them if, though we did not see them, we had known for certain that they were shut up in some dark dungeon. Why, then, should not seeing them suffer now in that darkest dungeon of purgatory be a reason for forgetting them, when we have plenty of reasons to fear that they are in fact there? Shall we fear that our suffrages will be wasted if, happily, they are no longer there? Vain pretext! Ah, if they are there, they will receive the relief; but whether they are there or not, all the good we do will always turn to our own profit and advantage.

Therefore, seeing you all aflame with this charity, but knowing that heresy has sown much cockle concerning this article of our faith, I have judged it very fitting, after giving you some proofs of the existence of purgatory, to show you how great a work of charity it is to help the souls of the departed, given the great pains with which they are afflicted; and what in fact we ought to do to relieve them, so that, drawing them out of those pains, we may see one another together in glory. So may it be.

§ I. The Existence of Purgatory

Just as, according to Saint Paul, the first thing one must do to draw near to God is to believe that he exists, and that he rewards the good and punishes the wicked (Heb 11:6), so whoever is to try to help the departed must first believe that there is indeed a place called purgatory, and that very terrible pains are suffered there. We must know, then, that God, having created us and placed us in this world to love and serve him and afterwards to make us eternally happy in the other, created us free to do good or to leave it undone, to do good or to do evil, so that in this way we might have occasion to give him proofs of our fidelity and to merit rewards or punishments. And since God is just, he will reward the good with all equity with the glory of heaven, and punish the wicked with the eternal pains of hell.

It is a truth of faith that those who have done good works will go to eternal life, but those who have done evil works and end their life in them will go to eternal fire (Matt 25:46).

It is another of the truths of the holy Catholic faith that only he will go up the holy mountain of glory whose hands are innocent and whose heart is clean (Ps 23 \[24\]:3–4); that no one will enter there who has blemishes or anything defiled. From this it follows that all whosoever die with some venial faults, or with some guilt \[*reato*, the debt of punishment remaining\] of mortal sins already confessed, will be held back, because they bring with them what is repugnant to the infinite holiness and perfection of God. And even though the charity or love of the Lord desires them, they cannot be united with him until they are clean of all dross and filth; and for this reason divine justice will put them in a crucible, in a place that we Catholics call purgatory. Let not the heretics come and tell us that the just man pays with his death whatever debt he still owes to divine justice, and that by the anguish of that passage he is made clean of every stain. For though it is true that if God chose to be satisfied with this and freely to pardon the dying just man, he could very well do so, it is also true that the heretics will never prove that things happen as they claim, at least commonly; for the sacred Scriptures, where we are taught not what our imagination may expect God to do but what he really does, clearly assure us of the contrary.

In fact, so many authorities could be cited in proof of purgatory, from both the Old and the New Testament, that one author gathered no fewer than ninety-four. The passage of chapter 12 of the second book of Maccabees (2 Macc 12:43–46), which the Church reads in one of the Masses for the dead, could not be more explicit. And though the heretics of our times refuse to admit those books as canonical Scripture, it is also certain that in this they act out of stubbornness \[*por tema*\] and against reason; for all the Christian churches have regarded them as canonical since the earliest times, as is easy to prove with irrefutable documents.[1] And when in chapter 12 of Saint Matthew Jesus Christ says that the sin against the Holy Spirit is not forgiven either in this age or world, or in the age to come (Matt 12:32), does he not show us very plainly that there are sins forgiven in the other world, and that therefore there is a place of purgation? Saint Paul, in chapter 3 of his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:13–15), could not be clearer on the matter, especially if one reads the explanations of it left us by Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Saint Ambrose, Saint Gregory and other Fathers. And as for the holy Fathers, it must be said that from Tertullian, who wrote some 135 years after the death of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, all who speak of this matter teach us the same truth, not so much as their own doctrine as because it was the universal belief of the Church in their time. And since the universal belief of the Church, especially in matters of faith, can only come from the Apostles, even if the Scriptures were silent, this alone would prove to us that the existence of purgatory is a most certain truth of faith.[2]

Add to what has been said that the Church has always prayed for the dead, especially in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, asking God to grant them a place of refreshment, light and peace. This prayer cannot be for those already in heaven, because they do not need it; nor for the damned, because it is useless to them; it must therefore be for some who are neither in heaven nor in hell, and so in purgatory. And the funerals the Church holds, and has held in every century, as one finds in reading the most ancient of the holy Fathers, always with the aim of obtaining for the departed a place of refreshment, light and peace: are they not enough to confound all the enemies of this dogma of the Catholic faith, and to prove to them that only the spirit of heresy could have made them embrace such an error? The Jews believe in purgatory as we do, and they certainly did not take or imbibe this doctrine from the Catholic Church; therefore it comes to them from the ancient Synagogue, when it was still the people of God. And even the wise men of the gentiles, guided by natural reason, and perhaps better guided by the ancient traditions of the human race, have known this truth.

And indeed natural reason dictates that every just judge imposes on the offender a penalty according to the gravity of the offence: that is, if the offence is grave, a grave or capital penalty; and if it is not grave, a proportionate temporal penalty, for example imprisonment, flogging, exile and so on. Let us apply this doctrine to our case. God our Lord is so just a judge that he will judge even justices themselves, that is, just

works; and we are offenders, for there is no one who does not sin, faith assuring us that the just man falls seven times (Prov 24:16), that is, many times. It is true that these faults are slight; but they do not cease to be faults because they are slight, nor consequently to bar entry into heaven; for it is written that nothing stained shall enter heaven. Now if one cannot enter heaven with these stains or slight faults, and if on the other hand there were no third place called purgatory, God would have to cast those who have them into hell and lump them together with the most infamous criminals, which would be against all reason, equity and justice. Therefore God does not punish slight offences with eternal punishment, but with exile, prison, a temporal penalty; and when the term set by his justice is over, or when they are ransomed by the suffrages of the faithful, as faith teaches us, he takes them out of that place, which for this reason is called purgatory, because in it souls are purged and purified of their stains before entering heaven.

We have spoken of the funerals the Church holds; and on this point we must bear in mind that this practice, and praying for the dead, is so old in the world that sixteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, when Jacob died, his son Joseph already held his funeral with great pomp, as sacred History relates (Gen 50:1–13). And this piety has been so continuous that it has always been practised in all civilized nations; for besides being an inspiration of faith, it is also one of the noblest expressions of the human heart, so that all its feelings must be stifled whenever one wants to harden it towards the dead.

Perhaps someone will ask: why, given these evident proofs of purgatory, are there people who say they believe neither in purgatory nor in funerals? To which I answer that it is no wonder that the father of lies, the devil, whose children these unhappy people are without thinking they are, should contradict this truth; and I will make this plain with a comparison. Just as a general besieging a fortress prevents by every means its being relieved with provisions, and makes the fiercest war on those who try to bring a convoy in to the besieged, so the devil, who holds the souls in purgatory as it were besieged, cannot bear that the faithful should supply them with suffrages that hasten the moment when they go to satisfy their hunger and thirst to see God. That is why he turns against the faithful with the weapons of heresy, denying or mocking this truth of faith; with the result that the departed are not helped, and the faithful are left dead if they have the misfortune to let themselves be touched by this error.

Let us therefore be steadfast in believing these and the other truths that the Catholic Church our mother bids us believe. And if we hear anyone say that there is no purgatory, let us think that in part he is right, because indeed there is none for him. The reason is that purgatory is a road to heaven, where he will not go, being a heretic; instead of going to purgatory he will take the road to hell, where he will burn for all eternity, whether he believes it or not. And if he now mocks at it, the day will come when he will be mocked; and if he now laughs at it, the day will come when he will weep, as Jesus Christ says in the holy Gospel (Luke 6:25).

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[1] On 2 Macc 12:46 and prayer for the dead.

[2] *Dialogues* IV.39.

§ II. Is It True that Souls from the Other World Have Appeared, and Sometimes Appear?

Non est qui agnitus sit reversus ab inferis: "No one has been known to return from the other world," no one who after death has come back to tell us what goes on there (Wis 2:1). Here is what the impious say, in a tone of pride and unbelief, as the Holy Spirit assures us.

To which we answer, without fear of going too far, and to the confusion of such fools, that in fact not only souls from heaven appear, but also those from purgatory and those from hell; with this difference, that those from heaven and purgatory appear when God wills, and those from hell when God commands, because these will never come out of their own accord to appear: just as no prisoner would come out of prison of his own

accord to be led along a public street, because he knows that such publicity would cover him with dishonour, confusion and shame. God's purpose in such apparitions is usually, if they are of souls in heaven, to make us see the glory they enjoy, to encourage us, as Jesus Christ did with his three disciples on Tabor, and to instruct us about some heavenly secrets, as Saint Thomas says; if they are of souls in purgatory, to move us to relieve them; and finally those in hell appear, when God commands them, to instruct us, to frighten us in a holy way with the punishment of their sins, and so that, doing penance, we may not have to go to that place of torments, as the rich man of the holy Gospel asked for his brothers (Luke 16:27–28).

That many souls have in fact appeared is clear from the sacred Scriptures. Those of Onias and Jeremiah appeared to Judas Maccabeus (2 Macc 15:12 ff.); Samuel to Saul (1 Sam 28:12–19);[1] Moses appeared at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:3); and on the day Jesus Christ rose many appeared (Matt 27:52–53).

The doctors and theologians affirm the same; and so as not to be tiresome in citing them, I shall confine myself to Saint Thomas, who, besides teaching and proving this doctrine with his usual solidity in the Supplement to his Third Part, question 69, article 3, is also an eyewitness. This Saint was very devoted to the souls in purgatory and offered sacrifices, prayers and penances for them. While he was teaching theology in Paris, the soul of his sister, a nun who had died as abbess of the convent of Saint Mary at Capua, appeared to him very sad and afflicted, and begged him to have pity on her, since she was in the burning flames of purgatory and needed his suffrages to get out. He did so, and asked other religious friends of his to do the same; and having obtained by this means that God should free her from those pains, she appeared to him again, but in a very different way from the first time: not only did he see her joyful and full of jubilation, but also clothed in a mantle of glory, and she let him know that by his suffrages she was free of pains, adorned with glory and with the happiness of seeing God. On this occasion the Saint asked her to tell him in what state, or where, his departed brothers were. She answered him, saying that Arnold was in heaven and enjoyed a high degree of glory for the persecution he had virtuously suffered; that Landulf was in purgatory and needed his suffrages; and, she added, that he should strive to labour for the glory of God, for in that way they would soon be together in heaven, where a very lofty place was prepared for him for all he had laboured for the Church of Jesus Christ.

The same holy Doctor being in the church of Saint Dominic in Naples, Brother Romanus appeared to him, whom he had left as his successor in the chair at Paris. Thinking that he was still alive in mortal flesh and had come to visit him, he went to him to ask after his health and to exchange the usual signs of friendship between friends; when, behold, he was startled by the news Romanus gave him, telling him that he had already passed to a better life, and that God was sending him from heaven to encourage and comfort him in his labours. The Saint, coming to himself from the amazement these words caused him, asked him to tell him whether he was in the grace of God; to which Romanus answered with a smile on his lips that he was, and that he should continue in his holy tasks, because they were very pleasing to the Lord. The Saint went on to ask Romanus about his own state, to which he replied that he had gone to heaven after fifteen days of purgatory. Finally the Saint asked him some questions on certain theological points, especially on how the blessed see God, whether by the *lumen*, or light of glory, or by means of some other power. To this he answered with these words of Psalm 47 \[48\], verse 9: *Sicut audivimus, sic vidimus in civitate Domini virtutum*, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts" (Peter Maffei, in the life of Saint Thomas Aquinas). From this and many other passages I could cite, one may know whether apparitions are a reality or not.

The same holy Doctor says (*loc. cit.*, reply to the third objection) that when souls appear, those in heaven do not cease to enjoy glory, nor do those in purgatory or hell cease to suffer; and he makes this plain by the comparison of a pontiff, who even when he is not materially seated *in cathedra* does not for that reason cease to have the same glory, since that is the place destined for him. But Mendoza and the Abulensis say that souls, when they appear, have no power to take their own bodies, nor other people's either; but that by divine

power, when they are permitted or commanded to appear, they are given leave to take a body best suited to produce the effects at which the apparition aims. And they never appear with the childish purpose of joking, as some foolishly imagine.

So you must not be surprised, beloved in Christ, if in this little book I relate to you some apparition or vision of a soul from the other world. I will cite the author from whom I have taken it; and if anyone refuses to believe the account, he can make sure of it with his own eyes, for I do not ask to be believed on my word.

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[1] The source gives "1 Reg. 26:12" (that is, 1 Samuel in the Vulgate numbering); the apparition of Samuel is in 1 Sam 28:12–19.

§ III. How Great a Charity It Is to Pray for the Dead

The two poles on which the great machine of Religion and Christian perfection turns are the love of God and of neighbour: *On these two commandments depend the whole law and the Prophets*, says Jesus Christ (Matt 22:40). And if this virtue of love or charity is exercised in anything, it is certainly in praying for the dead. It is an undeniable truth that charity is the greater the greater the need of the person helped, so that if the need is extreme, the obligation to remedy it is very grave. There is no need more painful than to be plunged in a sea of torments, suffering most atrocious pains, intolerable anguish and deathly faintness; and this is the sad situation of the souls in purgatory.

On those words of the prophet Malachi (3:3), *He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold*, the expositors say that purgatory is like a great alembic of all the pains suffered in the world: as if God our Lord, after the manner of the chemists who distil from various substances their essences or most powerful spirits into a single extract, had distilled and united in the fire of purgatory all the kinds of evils suffered in this world, such as diseases, gallows, martyrdoms and so on, and had pressed out of them the quintessence of all pains and evils.

The prophet Isaiah seems to tell us the same when in chapter 4, verse 4, he speaks thus: *When the Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion... by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning.* For that fire has a supernatural activity, and surpasses by many degrees the fire of this world: it is enough to say that it is an instrument of the avenging justice of an almighty God \[*de todo un Dios*\]. Hence Tertullian called purgatory a transitory hell, because, he says, in both there are the same pains of loss and of sense, with the difference that in purgatory these pains are temporal and in hell eternal. Saint Augustine uses these words: *Eodem igne purgatur iustus, et torquetur damnatus*, "By the same fire the just man is purged by which the damned man is tormented"; and under the name of fire, says Saint Thomas, every kind of torment is included. Finally Saint Augustine says (on Psalm 37 \[38\]): *Let the whole world know that the pain this fire will cause will be greater than anything man can suffer in this world.*[1] From this, then, one may infer how great a charity it is to help those afflicted souls: for it is not a matter of a small act of charity, such as giving food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked and so on, but of delivering holy souls, friends of God, from the immensity of all evils gathered together.

And this charity gains still greater lustre if one considers that, besides freeing souls from so many pains, by the same act the gates of the ineffable delights and pleasures of glory are opened to them. So it may be said in a way that this charity towards the dead is as great as the happiness procured for them in heaven. And the excellence of this happiness, who could explain it? Ah! There they will see God face to face, and their spirit will be filled to the full in that immensity of light and truth. They will see God, their first beginning and last end, and seeing him they will love him, and their heart will be engulfed in that volcano of love and will swim in that ocean of all delights and sweetness. They will see God, and all their desires will be fully satisfied, and they will be fully and eternally happy and free of all pain and sorrow.

To help the souls in purgatory, then, is not only to exercise charity towards our neighbour, but also in a certain sense towards God, who accepts, as though it were done to his own person, all that is done for those poor souls. They are his images, in which, as he himself assures us, he takes his delight (Prov 8:31); they are his most beloved daughters and his dear spouses, whom he has redeemed and adorned with the most precious blood of his Son as with the richest pearls. What pleasure, then, will be given him by freeing them from such slavery and presenting them to him triumphant in glory? To understand this truth well, let us reflect how pleased a king would be, and how obliged and grateful to whoever brought to his palace his beloved son, whom he had mourned for many years as a captive among barbarians, subject to all the horrible consequences of a cruel slavery. What signs of gratitude would a husband show to the doctor who, by singular diligence and the skilful application of remedies, had restored to health his dearly loved wife, whom he was already mourning as dead? How pleased, then, and obliged will God feel towards that Christian who frees from the horrible prisons of purgatory, and from the hands of his justice, the souls he loves more than parents love their dear children and husbands their adored wives? Oh, how many favours and graces our good God and Lord will grant him!

But this is not all. Whoever helps the departed, besides exercising charity towards God and towards his neighbour, exercises it also towards himself. In the first place because, as we have just seen, God will grant him very special graces. In the second place because those same souls, who like another Joseph the chaste will have been drawn out of the prisons of Egypt to be placed at the side of the divine Pharaoh and made stewards of the treasures of his kingdom (Gen 41:39–44), how grateful will they not be, and how continually will they not pray for their beloved deliverers? It is very useful to us to have friends everywhere who take an interest in our favour; but to have them in heaven, and friends so grateful, who can do so much and owe us so much!... It is the greatest charity to oneself that each should procure them at any cost.

To kindle your charity more and more, dearest brethren, I shall relate for this purpose some

[1] Saint Thomas: *Summa theologiae*, Supplement, Appendix II (on purgatory).

Examples of Various Particular Pains Suffered in Purgatory, so that, Taking Warning from the Misfortunes of Others, You May Not Have to Go and Suffer There

The first two have been taken from the Revelations of Saint Bridget, approved by most learned doctors, a great part of these revelations having a kind of approval from holy Church.

The first, taken from book VI, chapter 38, is of a soldier, whose judgment and the pains he suffered in purgatory God caused the Saint to witness in a vision. The soul of that soldier was presented at the tribunal of God, having at its right the guardian Angel as advocate, and at its left the devil as prosecutor. The devil began to accuse him especially of three things: first, of having sinned with his eyes, looking at foul objects that stirred up obscene imaginings in him and desires for unchaste things; second, of having sinned with his tongue, uttering foul words and breaking out into curses and blasphemies; and third and lastly, that he had stolen and committed indecent actions.

The guardian Angel defended him, pleading, besides his having confessed all of it, the good works he had done, the prayers he had said with devotion, the alms he had distributed to the poor, the mortifications and other penances he had practised. He made special mention of his having turned to the most holy Virgin with all the affection of his heart, that she might obtain for him the pardon of all his sins, and of his having obtained through so powerful an advocate a true contrition. When the sovereign Judge had heard the accusations and the defence, he pronounced the sentence, in which he ordered that the soldier be free of the pains of hell, but that he be led to those of purgatory, where he should be tormented with prolonged and

sharp pains as his offences deserved. The pain of the eyes, he said, will consist in having to see horrendous and frightful objects; that of the tongue in being tormented with very sharp stabs and raging thirst; and that of touch in being plunged entirely in most burning flames. Then the advocate of sinners, Mary, came forward to ask that the pains of the sentence be lessened, pleading for this that the soldier had fasted on the vigils of her feasts, and had very often said her office and visited her altars. In view of this plea of Mary's, the divine Saviour lessened the pains, and said that to give full satisfaction to divine justice and free him entirely, the faithful should be got to offer prayers, alms and penances for him.

The second example is of a noble maiden. Saint Bridget was in very high contemplation when, behold, she was rapt in spirit and shown the pains of the other life. Among other persons suffering in purgatory she saw a noble maiden, who complained bitterly of her mother for the excessive love she had borne her: a love, she said, that had been more harmful to her than hatred. For her mother had allowed her fashions, flirtations, banquets, balls, theatres and shows, and from this immense harm had followed to her soul and the souls of many others; and instead of restraining or curbing her, her mother herself had encouraged her and decked her out. "It is true," she added, "that she taught me some devotions; but as these were mixed up with pleasures and vices, they were like poisoned food, and therefore very little pleasing in the eyes of God. I must, however, give infinite thanks to the Lord for the great mercy he has used with me in granting me time to confess, without which I would already be buried in the abysses of hell." (The Saint heard the soul recount the pains she was suffering, so that she might understand how they corresponded to the faults she had committed; and she went on saying:) "My head, once adorned with curls and vanities, is now set alight with the most burning flames; my shoulders and arms, which I used to go about with uncovered, I now have covered and clamped with red-hot irons; my legs and feet, which I adorned for the balls, are now tormented by vipers of fire, as though they were frying and devouring them; my whole body, once so polished, adorned and tight-laced, is now plunged in every kind of torment, devoured by the heat of the fire, or tormented by the rigours of an unbearable cold." With these and other likenesses and metaphors that soul strove to express her terrible pains, so as to move Saint Bridget to have pity on her and help her with her suffrages. And when the Saint had told them to a cousin of the dead girl, who was also given up to vanities, pleasures and worldly comforts, the cousin so changed her life that, abandoning her licentious ways, she entered a most observant monastery, leading the most austere life, and striving with every kind of mortification, fast and prayer not only to save herself from falling into such pains, but also to help the soul of her cousin who was suffering in purgatory (*Revelations of St Bridget*, book VI, chapter 52).

May the Lord grant, dear brethren, that from these examples you learn to lead a blameless life; and if at any time you have had the misfortune to sin, try to make a good confession and bring forth fruits worthy of penance, so as not to have to go after this life to those terrible pains; and try besides to help those who are already suffering there.

§ IV. Other Examples

Woe to him who gives scandal!... It is a very grievous thing to have to suffer for one's own offences, but much more so to have to suffer for those of others. How many men and women there are who suffer the most terrible pains in hell and in purgatory for sins they did not in fact commit themselves, but which they caused others to commit by the scandal they gave them! See it in the following example.

There was a certain painter, very famous for his skill, but even more admired for his exemplary conduct, who had painted many images of Saints. Because of this a prior of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers engaged him to work a great picture for his convent. Scarcely had the painter finished his work when he fell ill, and asked the Father Prior to have Masses said for him out of the price of the picture; and setting his will in order, he left for pious works all he had gained by his skill.

A few days after his death he appeared to a religious who had stayed praying in the choir after Matins, with the saddest look, surrounded by flames, and begging him to have pity on him, since he was in the midst of unbearable torments. The religious asked him: "How is it that, having led so exemplary a life, you are in such pains?" The dead man answered and said that as soon as he had breathed his last he found himself at the tribunal of the supreme Judge, where some souls appeared to accuse him, saying that because of a half-naked and obscene painting he had made they had had desires for unchaste things, and that, though they had confessed it, they had to purge the guilt with terrible pains in purgatory. And what was worse still, because of that picture many had fallen into sins of impurity and were burning in the eternal pains of hell; and for this reason, they said, he deserved to go there in their company and hear their curses. Then many souls of the Saints came forward to defend him, and said that he had made that picture when he was still young, especially in the art of painting; but that afterwards he had repented of it and done penance; that to correct that error he had painted many images of Saints, and so had cooperated in the veneration of those same Saints and in the salvation of many souls; that those Saints who had been more venerated because of such images had interceded for him and had obtained his pardon; and that lastly he had used the fruit of his labours for alms and pious works to obtain the pardon of that sin. And finally they interposed their merits so that that soul might not be cast into hell.

When the sovereign Judge had heard the charges and the pleas, moved to pity, he forgave him the pains of hell; but he condemned him to suffer the pains of purgatory for as long as that picture should exist, since it was an incentive to lust. "That is why," the soul said to the religious, "I come to beg you out of charity to warn the gentleman Don N..., at whose request I painted it, so that he may throw it into the fire, and it may cease to be an incentive to lust. Tell him that this is the will of God, and woe to him if he fails to carry it out!... And in proof that what I tell you is true, you may assure him that within a short time two of his children will die, and that if he does not do what he is enjoined to do, he will die suddenly." As soon as the gentleman received the warning, he himself threw the scandalous picture into the fire with his own hands. Within two months two of his children died; and even though he no longer had to fear sudden death, because he had done what he was commanded, he nevertheless did rigorous penance, and had many images of Saints painted, to repair the damage and so that they might be his advocates at the tribunal of God (Fr Joseph of Jesus and Mary, Discalced Carmelite, book 4, chapter 9).

If for one single picture so many souls were suffering in purgatory and so many others burning in hell, who can count the countless souls who will end up in those terrible flames, scandalized by the multitude of most immodest images and paintings met with at every step? In our fathers' time drawing-rooms, parlours and bedrooms were adorned with edifying images of Saints. But nowadays for some these are no longer in fashion, and even when the old pictures were masterpieces of inestimable value, they push them into a corner of the attic, and not infrequently frivolities and obscene figures take their place. What convincing proof that an antichristian spirit rules in our day, and that sensible Spaniards, by turning French \[*afrancesándose*, aping French manners and ideas\], are becoming frivolous and impure! And what sins do not follow from this!... The devil knows well what he is doing to tangle souls in his snare... That is why he sees to it that such figures are found not only in pictures, but also in prints, books, fans, boxes, clocks, and so on and so on: that is, everywhere. But woe to those who cooperate in it!... Woe to those in whose possession they are!... Woe to those who look at them!... Woe to those who sin with them or through them!... Woe to those women who make themselves into living immodest figures by the bareness of back, breast and arms with which they go about the streets, squares and promenades! Woe!... Woe!...[1]

[1] The end of this passage is damaged in the copy used; it reads "con que \[van\] por las calles, plazas y paseos".

§ V. Other Examples, for Those who Do Not Receive the Holy Sacraments

It is not my intention to explain here how the Sacraments are those perennial fountains of saving waters with which the filth of sin is washed away from all who come to them well disposed, and with which those who come already clean are made whiter than snow itself. Nor is it my intention to rebuke here the ingratitude of those who, while they are unhappy wretches laden with debts to divine justice, by their neglect despise these richest coffers that the divine Saviour keeps open for them in the holy Sacraments, so repaying in the most ungrateful way the generosity of an almighty God. I shall speak only of the punishments that those will have to suffer who are negligent and careless in receiving the sacraments of the Eucharist and of Extreme Unction.

In the year 1589, in the monastery of Saint Mary of the Angels in Florence, a nun of great standing \[*de muchas circunstancias*\] died, and Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi was asked to commend her to God, so that if she were in purgatory she might come out of it. The Saint did so; and behold, being one day in prayer before the altar of the most holy Sacrament, she saw that dead nun come, who, kneeling in the middle of the church, made reverence to the most holy Sacrament with a most horrifying look, wearing as it were a mantle of most lively flames that surrounded her on every side except the part covered by a large stole, which girded her breast like a sash and protected her somewhat. The Saint, astonished to see a nun in such pains, wished to know the cause; when, behold, she heard the dead nun tell her that she was suffering that purgatory in punishment for the little love she had borne the most holy Sacrament, having let many communions pass through negligence. For this reason divine justice had obliged her to come every day to the monastery church to reverence the most holy Sacrament, burning with those flames in punishment of her coldness and negligence. But she must nevertheless give many thanks to the Lord, because as a reward for the chastity she had kept exactly he had given her that kind of stole, which was a great relief to her in the excessive pains she was in. The Saint strove to do works of satisfaction to draw her out of such pains, and used this example to encourage and fire her nuns to visit the Most Holy Sacrament and to receive holy Communion frequently.

Jesus Christ tells us in that parable of the ten virgins that, though all were virgins, only five were admitted, and these were the ones found provided with the oil of charity or good works (Matt 25:1–13). Let us all strive, then, to do good works, because otherwise the door of the heavenly banquet will be shut on us as on the foolish virgins, or we shall be cast into the outer darkness as unprofitable servants (Matt 25:30), or thrown into the fire of hell as barren fig trees (Luke 13:6–9). Let us visit the most holy Sacrament often and receive holy Communion frequently; with this we shall be able to enrich ourselves with every kind of merit, and to procure for ourselves in this world the mantle of divine charity, so as to obtain in the next that of the glory of heaven. Jesus Christ wants to enter our hearts, as of old he wanted to enter the house of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:5); he takes his delight in being with us, and with all love he invites us. Woe to us if we excuse ourselves! He would say to us, full of anger, *You shall not eat my supper* (Luke 14:24), which would be to tell us that we shall not enter the glory of heaven, because holy Communion is a pledge of the glory that awaits us[1] (Vincenzo Puccini, in the life of St Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, part 1, chapter 29).

No less was the punishment given to a cleric who excused himself from receiving the sacrament of Extreme Unction. Being quite ill, he was told that he ought to receive holy Anointing; but out of the fear he had of dying he kept putting it off, and meanwhile he died without this Sacrament. It happened, then, that while his funeral was being prepared, God our Lord permitted, for our instruction, that the dead man should come back to life and, opening his eyes, speak in this way: "Because I resisted receiving holy Anointing, by which the guilt of my faults would have been lessened, divine justice has sentenced me to be a hundred years in purgatory to purify me of my faults, unless the faithful help me with prayers and pious works. If I had prepared myself," he added, "and had received as I ought that Sacrament, which relieves the sick and consoles the dying, I would have recovered from the illness by the power of that Sacrament, which prolongs life when it is expedient" (Michael Alix, vol. 6, book 2).[2] We know that holy Anointing is a shield of health, *clypeus salutis*; and as the holy Council of Trent says, by means of this Sacrament bodily health is often obtained, if it is expedient for the salvation of the soul: *Sanitatem corporis interdum, ubi saluti animae*

expedierit, consequitur (Session 14, chapter 2).

It is therefore very blameworthy, and very harmful to body and soul, to wait until the last moment, or not to receive the holy Sacraments in good time when one is ill. And the reason is this: *Domini est salus*, "salvation \[or health\] belongs to the Lord" (Ps 3:9 \[3:8\]); and who better than he who has it can give anything? And if he sees that he is the last one we trust in, that we run to him only when we have tried every remedy and no longer know where to turn, how can we expect him to help us? (See *The Straight Path*, p. 417 ff.)[3]

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[1] *futurae gloriae pignus.*

[2] The Council of Trent, Session 14 (*Doctrine on the Sacrament of Extreme Unction*), chapter 2, is quoted correctly.

[3] *The Straight and Sure Path to Heaven.*

§ VI. How to Help the Departed

Saint Augustine and Saint Gregory the Great teach us that the faithful can help the departed with four kinds of suffrages, which are: the holy sacrifice of the Mass, prayers, alms and fasts; and modern authors add another, which is the forgiveness of enemies.[1] Let us speak of each of them in particular.

First Kind of Suffrage: Mass and Communion

Among the works of greatest use to the departed, the first place is held by the holy sacrifice of the Mass. For, as Saint Thomas says (*Summa*, Supplement, q. 71, a. 9, in the body of the article), the suffrages of the living profit the departed more or less according as they are united to them by charity, and in proportion as the intention of the living is directed in favour of the departed. And since nothing touches charity so closely as the holy sacrifice of the Mass and holy Communion, because in it is contained, he says, the one in whom holy Church is united and from whom she receives all her solidity, namely Jesus Christ, eternal charity (*Deus caritas est*, 1 John 4:8), it follows that this will be the thing that most relieves them. And this is seen in the following example. Henry Gran relates that in the time of Saint Bernard a man died who, having gone to purgatory, was suffering terrible pains. He appeared; and the monks of Clairvaux, among other suffrages, offered some sacrifices of the Mass for him. Having thereby been set free, the soul, turning to the sacred Host, said in a clear voice these words: "Those are the weapons of divine grace that have given me freedom; this is the power of sovereign mercy; this saving Host is the one that takes away the sins of the world."[1] Let us then try to celebrate, or have celebrated, and hear Masses; let us try to receive holy Communion often for the faithful departed, and we shall have sent them the best of helps to free them from so many pains. So the Church our mother teaches us, who every day prays for them in every Mass.

Second Kind of Suffrage: Almsgiving

Almsgiving, said the archangel Saint Raphael to Tobit, is what purges away sins and makes one find mercy and eternal life (Tob 12:9). And as Saint Thomas adds in the place cited, among the effects of charity the chief work is almsgiving; and for this reason, after the Mass, it is what most profits the departed. And though you may not have the means of Judas Maccabeus, who sent to Jerusalem twelve thousand drachmas of silver (about twenty-four thousand *reales vellón*) to have sacrifices offered for the sins of the dead (2 Macc 12:43), act as your state and condition allow you; for God our Lord does not look so much at the sums as at the affection with which we give them, as is seen in that poor widow of the Gospel, of whom the Lord said that she had given more than all, though she had put only two mites into the plate or alms box of the temple, because with them she gave all she had (Mark 12:41–44). And the souls will receive a great suffrage from it, and we great profit, as can be seen in the following example.

Fr Gregorio Carfora relates (*In fortuna hominis*, book 1, chapter 9) that a poor woman of Naples, who could barely feed her family on the meagre wage her husband earned, suddenly found herself deprived of this

resource because he had been arrested and shut up in a prison for debts. Before she and her family should die of hunger, she presented a petition to a great lord who had the reputation of being very generous with alms; but however hard she tried to paint for him the wretched state in which she, her family and her husband found themselves, by dint of pleading she could obtain no more than four *reales*. The poor woman was then left inconsolable; and seeing that she found no relief among men, she sought it in God, in that Lord who feeds the little birds, and of whom the royal Prophet says: *Tibi derelictus est pauper; orphano tu eris adiutor*, "The poor man is left in your care; you are the helper of the orphan" (Ps 9:35 \[10:14\]). She went, then, into a church to implore God's help; and behold, while she was at prayer a thought came over her with great force, to trust entirely in God and to make an alms for the souls of the departed out of those four *reales* she had been given. Putting the thought into practice, she had a Mass celebrated, which she wished to hear. When the Mass was over she was returning home full of confidence when, passing along a street, she met a venerable old man who came up to her and said: "What is the matter, woman? What has happened to you?" The poor woman explained her troubles and miseries to him. He consoled her and gave her a letter, telling her to take it to the house named in the address, where they would help her. She went off full of joy and delivered the letter into the hands of the master of the house. The gentleman opens it, reads it, and is astonished to see that the handwriting and signature were in the very hand of his dead father. Coming to himself, he asks the woman: "Who gave you this letter?" "I do not know him," she answered; "I can only say that he was an old man, venerable, and very like that picture in his features" (it was the portrait of the father of the gentleman she was speaking to), "only that his face was more joyful and happy." He read the letter again; its content was the following: "Dear son: your father has come out of purgatory and gone up to heaven by means of a Mass that this poor woman who brings you the letter has had celebrated. I commend her with all my heart to your piety and gratitude; give her a good reward, for she is in great need." The gentleman read and read again many times the letter from his father, his eyes filling with tears from the tenderness and satisfaction it caused him; and finally he said to that woman: "You, with a small alms, have wrought the happiness of my dear father; and I, with another, greater alms, will see to it that you too are happy, and likewise your husband and family, so that you never find yourself in need again." And so it was: for her husband was set free at once, and from then on they always had what they needed, and even in abundance. Happy those who have charity towards the departed, for these, being grateful, will obtain for them a hundredfold and eternal life besides (Matt 19:29).

Third Kind of Suffrage: Prayer

Prayer is an admirable means for everything, and singularly for freeing the souls of the departed from purgatory. An admirable example of the efficacy of this means is found in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 12, where we read that when the apostle Saint Peter was in prison and loaded with chains, the Church prayed for him; and that great God who cannot resist the force of prayer sent him an Angel who said to him: *Surge velociter*, "Get up quickly"; and behold, the chains fell from him, the prison doors opened to him, and he went out in complete freedom (Acts 12:5–10). Each of the souls in purgatory is like Saint Peter; and if we pray for them, God will send them an Angel to break their chains of fire and open to them the doors of the prison of purgatory; and since prayer, according to Saint Augustine, is the key of heaven, they will certainly be admitted to the castle of glory.

And one of the things that should most move us to pray for the souls in purgatory is the example of our Redeemer Jesus, who in the garden of Gethsemane prayed three times: the first, says Saint Augustine, he offered for the conversion of sinners, the second for the perseverance of the just, and the third for the souls in purgatory: *Tertio oravit pro animabus purgatorii*. Let us then imitate our loving Redeemer; let us pray and make supplication for the blessed souls; and just as alms are collected for the prisoners of this world, let us also collect, pray and plead for the prisoners of purgatory with the infinite mercies of our God, the inestimable merits of Jesus Christ, the charitable heart of the most holy Virgin, and all the Angels and Saints

of heaven.

Fourth Kind of Suffrage: Fasting

Fasting is very acceptable in God's eyes; and just as gluttony is the cause of many sins, fasting is an effective means of giving satisfaction to divine justice, both for the one who fasts and for the souls in purgatory, as the holy Scriptures teach us in a thousand passages, as holy mother Church urges on us, and as an example related by D. M. Marchesio (in the life of Blessed Emilia) makes palpable to us. Cecilia Avogadra suffered much from thirst; but out of obedience, and in memory of and union with the thirst Jesus Christ suffered on the cross, she deprived herself of drink. This woman died and went to purgatory; and though she would have had to be there a long time, she was freed at once as a reward for this mortification. On the third day of her being there her guardian Angel appeared to her and poured over her that same water she had denied herself; and its virtue was such that it seemed all those flames tormenting her were put out by it; and at last he carried her up to heaven.

It will be very good, then, to fast sometimes in suffrage for the souls, in memory of the forty days that Jesus Christ fasted, and especially on Fridays, to honour the rigorous fast he kept on the day of his passion and death, and in union with it. And if we lack strength, or it is not easy for us to fast in the usual way, let us at least abstain from some part of our food or drink, and mortify ourselves somewhat in the other senses.

Fifth Kind of Suffrage: Forgiveness of Enemies

The forgiveness of enemies is one of the most express precepts of the Gospel, and one which our Lord Jesus Christ urged on us most effectively by his words, and chiefly by his example (Matt 5:44; Luke 23:34). And though in itself it is the easiest thing in the world to fulfil, because it needs neither money, nor health, nor robustness, nor strength, nor comforts, the will being enough for it, it is nevertheless perhaps what is most repugnant to the pride and perversity of our heart. Since, then, on the one hand overcoming this repugnance is a great sacrifice, and on the other it is one of the greatest victories that charity wins over our rebellious heart, according to the rule of Saint Thomas cited under the first kind of suffrage it will be very satisfactory if it is applied for the souls, as will be seen in the following example.

Nicius Erythraeus relates, and Segneri tells it, that in Bologna there was a noble widow who had an only and much-loved son. As he was playing \[*enredando*; the text layer misreads "epredando"\] one day in the street with other young men, a passer-by crossed there and spoiled their game. The widow's son rebuked him with some harshness; and the passer-by, resenting it, drew a dagger, plunged it into the young man's breast, and left him writhing on the ground. With the bloodstained dagger in his hand he ran off until he found an open house, which he went into, begging the lady of it to hide him for the love of God. The lady agreed, and she was none other than the mother of the murdered young man; and she did hide him in her house for the love of God. Meanwhile the officers of justice came looking for the murderer, but could not find him; but as those searching for him were leaving, one who had seen him said: "No doubt this lady does not know that the murdered man is her son; for if she knew it, far from hiding the murderer, she would hand him over herself." There is no need to describe the grief with which these words must have broken this lady's heart. And yet she made the effort, conformed herself to the will of God, and offered to the Lord the forgiveness of the man who had murdered the son she loved so much; and not only did she forgive him, but she also gave him a sum of money and a horse to flee, as in fact he did.

A short time later this good lady was in her room praying for the soul of her dead son when, behold, he appeared to her, shining and glorious, and said to her: "Do not weep any more, dear mother; dry your tears and rejoice, for I am now set free. The heroic acts with which you forgave my murderer and put him in safety have merited for me to be drawn out of purgatory, where I was to have been for many years. I owe you more, then, for having drawn me out of purgatory than for having brought me into the world. I give you a thousand

thanks for both benefits, and I am going to heaven, where I shall be happy for all eternity." A thousand times happy that mother, who knew how to forgive like that! If she had broken out into curses and imprecations, or had handed her son's murderer over to justice, she would have gained nothing and would have loaded herself with sins; but by forgiving she freed her son from purgatory and stored up much merit for herself by it. Let us then bear with and forgive our enemies and those who have offended us, for the love of God and in suffrage for the souls in purgatory; for at the same time as we gain much, we shall stop committing many sins and spare ourselves many pains.

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[1] St Augustine, *On the Care to Be Had for the Dead* and *Enchiridion* 110; St Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* IV.57–60.

[2] John 1:29.

§ VII. How Useful It Is to Those who Do It to Help the Souls in Purgatory

Although in § III I already said something about the good that whoever helps the souls in purgatory procures for himself, it seems to me that it will be very useful to explain myself a little more at length on the matter, and to show that this usefulness is extraordinary. Indeed, there is no kind of good work in which a Christian is employed with more profit and security than in helping the souls in purgatory. To make it plain, I shall use this comparison. To work for the people of this world, for example to teach, to preach, to attend the sick, to help the beggar and so on, is as if one loaded one's riches on a ship that has to make its crossing on a very stormy sea, and is therefore very exposed to shipwreck and to everything going to the bottom. For though it is true that the particular merit gained by whoever does these works of charity is not lost, however much the persons for whom he does them may be lost, but rather he will find it all whole in the harbour of glory, it is also true that if they are lost, this capital is lost, which would be the fruit of our good works, and our toil for them is left entirely useless. On the contrary, when we do good for the departed, it is like investing our capital in annuities secured on fixed property \[*censos sobre bienes estables*\], whose yield cannot be lost either for them or for us. They do not lose it, because with our suffrages they pay their debts to divine justice and, being set free, go off to heaven; we do not lose it, because besides the fruit of the great work of charity we do, as I said in § III, we gain as many advocates and intercessors as there are souls we send to heaven.

If we help the departed, they will intercede for us not only when they are in heaven, but also in a certain way from purgatory. It is true that Saint Thomas and very weighty Doctors teach that the souls in purgatory are not to be invoked to pray for us, since, not seeing God as the Saints in heaven do, they would not know our needs or what we asked of them. But whether it is that God applies to us, when we turn to them, the prayers that they certainly make for the whole Church militant, or whether God does it to reward our charity towards them and so draw us to help the departed, it cannot be denied that praying for the souls in purgatory is one of the most effective means of obtaining the favours of heaven. Everyone knows what an effective means it is, for waking at a fixed hour, to say an Our Father for the souls before going to bed for that purpose. Saint Catherine of Bologna says that when she wanted some grace from the Lord she made use of the souls in purgatory and obtained it; and she adds something that seems astonishing, namely that many favours she had been unable to obtain through the intercession of the Saints she had obtained by means of them.

But above all when they are in heaven, oh, how they will intercede for us! It would be an insult to their charity, and to the greatness of their gratitude for the great favour we shall have done them, to think that the first graces they ask for in heaven will not be in favour of those who freed them from such pains. Never, never will they tire of praying for them; and when they see them in some misfortune, in pains, troubles, illnesses, persecutions or other calamities, they will be their mediators with the divine clemency. Above all, great will be their zeal to obtain for them the graces they will need to overcome temptations, to acquire the virtues, and to make happily the all-important passage of death; for who could explain the ardour with which they long to see them safe in their company for all eternity? Cardinal Baronius relates that a gentleman very

devoted to the souls in purgatory was, at the hour of death, in great conflict on the part of the infernal enemies, when he saw coming to his aid a great number of combatants, who encouraged him and told him they had come to help him. The poor man was comforted by this, and with his eyes brimming with tears of tenderness asked them who they were; and they answered: "We are souls who were freed from purgatory by your suffrages, and now we come to help you and take you with us to glory." At these words he breathed his last full of joy and satisfaction, and went to heaven.

But let us suppose for a moment that the virtue of gratitude, instead of being perfected in heaven, were extinguished, and that those freed souls forgot their benefactors. Not for that would we have lost our good works; rather they would be fully rewarded to us, since God has promised that the merciful shall obtain mercy (Matt 5:7). And if this will be fulfilled in one who helps any unfortunate person, how much more in one who has helped the poor souls in purgatory, who are such beloved daughters and dear spouses of God himself? Saint Bonaventure says that one merits more by making suffrages for a soul in purgatory than by helping ten times as much an unfortunate person of this world, even a captive, sick, naked and starving one; because the merit of a favour grows in proportion to the greatness of the need and pain of the one helped; and who can doubt that the need and pain of a soul in purgatory is greater than all those of this world? And Saint Ambrose says that by helping the departed we merit a hundredfold: *Centum recipimus duplicatum*.

Let us then be persuaded that by helping the departed God our Lord will reward us not only with very great graces in this life and with the glory of heaven in the next, but also with many other spiritual and temporal favours, such as increase of faith, liveliness of hope and fervour of charity; relief in troubles, remedy in illnesses and protection in dangers. I could give many proofs of this truth, but let one stand for all, which the Holy Spirit gives us in the second book of Maccabees, chapter 15, verses 15–16. It is about that great general of the armies of God, Judas Maccabeus, who was so devoted to the souls in purgatory that he had sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem in suffrage for them; and God our Lord was so grateful to him for it that he sent him a sword, with which he promised him he would conquer his enemies. And so that it might be seen more clearly that he sent it to him as a sign of gratitude for what he had done for the dead, he had it brought by two of them, namely Onias and Jeremiah, who said to him these words: *Accipe sanctum gladium munus a Deo, in quo deicies adversarios populi mei Israel*, "Take this holy sword as a gift from God, with which you will strike down the enemies of my people Israel." He did not take long to experience the effect of this promise; for, armed with this rich gift, he attacked the enemy with a small army and killed thirty-five thousand men (2 Macc 15:27). We shall experience the same if we are devoted to the souls in purgatory, because the Lord will lavish graces on us in abundance, with which we shall always come out victorious over the enemies of our soul, the world, the devil and the flesh, and all their mighty armies.

Let us then be very devoted to all the souls in purgatory. Masses, communions, prayers, fasts, alms, forgiveness of enemies: in a word, whatever we do and suffer, let us offer it all to the Lord, so that the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God may rest in peace: *Ut fidelium animae per misericordiam Dei requiescant in pace.* Amen.

Catalogue of Some Works that We Can Apply for the Departed without Losing Anything Ourselves, and Procuring Immense Gains for the Souls and for Ourselves

1. Celebrating Masses, having them celebrated, and hearing them.

2. Receiving holy Communion.

3. Visiting the Most Holy Sacrament, and making a spiritual communion.

4. Mental prayer, especially on the passion and death of Jesus Christ.

5. Vocal prayer, the Rosary, the Scapular and the Septenary of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

6. The Crown \[chaplet\] of the Sorrows of most holy Mary.

7. Visits to altars, especially when there is an indulgence or a soul is released \[*se saca ánima*: privileged altars at which a Mass or visit gains a plenary indulgence for a departed soul\].

8. The penitential psalms, and the office of the dead.

9. Fasting, the hair shirt and the discipline.

10. Suffering with resignation pains and illnesses, troubles, contempt, and so on.

11. Almsgiving.

12. Forgiving injuries for the love of God.

See further on, in the Novena for the souls: *Suffrages*, etc.

Novena in Suffrage for the Holy Souls in Purgatory

Reasons why the Living Ought to Help and Succour the Departed

The souls of the departed who are detained in purgatory ought to be helped by the living for four reasons.

The first is of *justice*. This applies to heirs, executors and all those who take charge of carrying out the wishes of the departed expressed in their wills or other dispositions. They sin mortally whenever through their fault they delay the fulfilment of those dispositions and wishes, and they cannot be absolved until they have duly carried out that charge. When and how those who through their fault were remiss must make restitution to the souls will be decided by a confessor who is learned and fears God.

The second is of *charity*, that is, of that virtue which, after God, commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves. And since this love of charity consists not in words but in deeds (1 John 3:18), it follows that it obliges us to do all the good we reasonably can in suffrage and relief of the departed. This reason applies to sons and daughters with respect to their fathers and mothers, and to fathers and mothers with respect to their sons and daughters, to husbands with respect to their wives, and to wives with respect to their husbands; and, to say it in a word, to all who inherited goods from the departed. Even though they have satisfied what they owed in justice by making the suffrages that the departed left specified, they nevertheless remain their debtors by reason of charity. If charity is truly owed to every neighbour, it is much more owed to those who could not be nearer neighbours, such as parents and children, husbands and wives, and so on with the other relatives. This reason is so clear that the contrary is not only a lack of charity but downright inhumanity: it is to have more of the brute than of the Christian and the person of feeling. As for heirs, whether relatives or not, is it not an insufferable effrontery to forget the departed while they feed, clothe and regale themselves with their goods?... Where could greater ingratitude be found?

The third reason is of *compassion*. This one is general, and applies to all who have a heart, and who perhaps will afterwards find themselves in a like need, according to the proverb: *Hijo eres, padre serás; cual hicieres, tal habrás* \["A son you are, a father you will be; as you do, so you will have"\]. This reason is founded on those two sayings of the Gospel: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy* (Matt 5:7); *Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them* (Matt 7:12). If you were in purgatory, what would you want? To be helped with every kind of suffrage. Do, then, as much as you reasonably can for the souls in purgatory. The Apostle teaches us to weep with those who weep (Rom 12:15): a fellow-feeling found even in the pagan, provided he is a reasonable man. If, then, those souls weep night and day, is it possible that, being a Christian, they should not deserve from you even a little compassion? Oh, who could weep so many tears that they would suffice to put out the fire that afflicts those blessed souls! Oh, who would shed for them the

tears that Jeremiah longed to shed for his people! (Jer 9:1)

The fourth reason is of *one's own advantage*; for in no kind of needy persons is gratitude so sure as in the souls in purgatory. In this life the wicked are almost always ungrateful; and the good can become so, just as they can be corrupted. But those souls cannot fail to be most grateful, because they cannot fail to be holy. That is why they cry out unceasingly for their benefactors, and the Lord heeds them, because they are in his grace; and they will cry out still more, and be better heard, when they go up to heaven. And since the favour done them in hastening their possession of glory is beyond comprehension, so the efficacy with which they cry to God for their benefactors is beyond all measure.

This settled: these four reasons shine out wonderfully in the passion of Christ our Lord. For by it and by his most holy death he satisfied the eternal Father in justice for our sins; he showed towards us a charity that the Apostle calls excessive (Eph 2:4);[1] a compassion surpassing that which a loving mother has for her child; and finally, though he receives nothing from us but ingratitude, he will secure the eternal Father's reward for his pains in the most sweet name of Jesus, which is the name above every name (Phil 2:9). For this reason, O Christian man and woman, I send you to the fervent meditation of the Lord's passion, so that in considering those pains, those affronts, that abandonment, you may learn to have due compassion, first on your own soul and then on those in purgatory. But since the passion of Christ is inseparable from the compassion of Mary, in the loving and sorrowful heart of this divine Lady you will find a sea of tears with which to weep for your faults and for those pains; and be assured that Jesus and Mary will keep you in grace, and in the end will either free you altogether from purgatory, or at least see to it that the time you are there is short.

Conditions that Should Accompany this Novena

First: put yourself in the grace of God by making a good and holy confession, and then receive holy Communion with humility and fervour.

Second: hear Mass every day of the novena, and listen with docile attention to the sermons, if your occupations allow.

Third: go to church with great modesty, and be there as one who is in the presence of the most holy Sacrament and in the house of the Lord, which is not a house of business nor a house of conversation, but of silence, prayer and devotion.

Fourth: if on entering, leaving or being in the church some trial occurs that mortifies you, bear it with patience, and offer that mortification in suffrage for the souls; and I say the same of the mortifications that come during the day.

Fifth (for there must be five, in honour of the five wounds of Christ): flee, more than death, every occasion of sin.

Suffrages with which the Souls Can Be Helped

First, to celebrate or have celebrated and to hear the holy sacrifice of the Mass, which need not be a Requiem Mass in order to serve as a suffrage for the souls. Let reverend priests, then, try to celebrate it with all devotion, begging the Lord to put out the fire of purgatory by this means; and let lay people try to have Masses celebrated, or at least to hear them devoutly, by which they will gain thirty thousand years of indulgence granted by Pope Innocent IV.[1] It is related in the third volume of the *Annals* of Boverius that Our Lord revealed the pains of purgatory to a Capuchin religious; and as he looked in distress at those that the blessed souls were suffering, he saw two Angels enter that pool of fire. One carried a most precious vessel full of the blood of Christ our Lord, which had been offered at the altar for them; the other had a sprinkler in his hand, with which he took from that most precious blood and sprinkled the blessed souls suffering there;

and all who received any drop of that divine liquor were at once cleansed, pure and more resplendent than the sun. By this the Lord showed how effective the holy sacrifice of the Mass is for freeing the souls from those pains. Add to this holy Communion and the reception of the other Sacraments, since all are perennial fountains of grace and spiritual health.

Second, with prayer, whether purely mental or vocal helped by mental. The first: because besides being impetratory, which is proper to all prayer (and means that it is apt and suited to obtain favours and graces for the benefit of the one who makes it and of the persons for whom he means to ask God), it also shares in the character of a work of satisfaction, in the mortification of being prostrate, kneeling and other hardships, which only those understand who really want to practise this kind of prayer. The second, which will be the more fruitful the more it is accompanied by mental prayer (that is, by right intention and devout attention to what is said), consists in saying the Rosary to the most holy Virgin, the office of the dead, the penitential psalms and any other devotion, provided it is approved or permitted by the holy Roman Church. Whoever does not understand holy Scripture should leave the psalms aside and say the Rosary, because in that case he understands what he is praying, and consequently will have more devotion.

Third, penitential works, which are satisfactory, that is, suited to doing penance and giving satisfaction for our faults to the divine Majesty: such are fasting, almsgiving, taking the discipline, the hair shirt, kissing the ground, standing with arms outstretched in the form of a cross, and every kind of Christian mortification. I note that for those who cannot fast without being noticed it is very easy to deny themselves this or that choice morsel, or to give up visits made out of curiosity or some other lawful recreation of the senses: something that nobody or almost nobody notices, and that is of great value before God.

Fourth, to take the bulls for the dead \[*bulas de difuntos*: the papal indult, sold in Spain with the Crusade Bull, by which a plenary indulgence could be applied to a departed soul\], and to gain the indulgences granted to them, which are all those that can be applied to the souls in purgatory. Those gained with the bull of the Crusade are innumerable. The confraternity members of the Rosary, and those who profess the third rule of the seraphic Father Saint Francis, can gain a great many, especially the latter by making the stations of the Way of the Cross. Many are also gained by wearing the scapular of Carmel, by which the souls are so much assisted on Saturday; also by wearing the cord of Saint Francis of Paola or the belt of Saint Augustine; and finally by many other devotions, since the Supreme Pontiffs have been liberal in granting indulgences, because they know that it is the easiest means of helping the living and the dead.

We read in the first part of the Capuchin Chronicles that the most holy Virgin revealed to Saint John Baptist of Piedmont that by the indulgences granted by Paul III seventy-seven thousand souls were freed from the pains of purgatory. But it must be borne in mind that to gain the indulgences cited and others it is indispensable to have the bull of the holy Crusade.[2]

Fifth, all good works, and troubles, illnesses and affronts suffered with patience, can be offered to God, together with the merits of the passion of Christ and the sorrows of the most holy Virgin, in suffrage for those souls who, though able to help us much, cannot help themselves. And therefore, most grateful for our mercy, they will obtain for us, among other favours, that the Lord guide us along the road to heaven, where they and we may rest for ever. Amen.

Notes

This novena can be made at any time of the year; and it will be very fitting to make it when one desires some particular favour from the Lord, whether for oneself or for some third person; because making this spiritual alms to those imprisoned and afflicted spouses of his is a very fitting means of obliging God.

Those who are ill or unable to go to church may make this novena at home before an image of Jesus Christ and of the Virgin Mary.

Whoever cannot read will make the novena by saying on each of the nine days, with great devotion and slowly, five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys to the five wounds of Jesus, and seven Hail Marys to the seven sorrows of the most holy Virgin Mary, asking her for the relief of the pains the souls are suffering in purgatory.

How to Make this Novena

Having made the sign of the cross, and considering that God sees and penetrates the inside of your heart, try to make a fervent act of contrition; then ask the Lord for a right and pure intention in the novena and in all the other works of the day. If you feel in your conscience that you are in mortal sin, your first concern should be to go to confession. But if you are not in a position to do so, offer the novena chiefly for the souls, so that they may obtain for you the mercy to make a good confession in the middle or at the end of it. Then say the following prayer, not in a rush but slowly, and likewise on the other days; for this reason the novena is not called a recitation or reading but a fervent meditation, by virtue of which one must notice and weigh what each prayer expresses.

Act of Contrition

My Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, my Creator, Father and Redeemer: because you are who you are, infinite goodness, and because I love you above all things, I am sorry with all my heart for having offended you, and I am sorry that I am not sorrier. I most firmly resolve never to sin again, and to flee the occasions of offending you. I offer you my life, works and troubles in satisfaction for my faults and sins; and I trust in your infinite clemency that you will pardon me through the merits of your most precious blood, and through the sorrows and tears of the most holy Virgin, our Mother and Lady, and that you will give me grace to amend my life and persevere until death. Amen.

Prayer

O most sweet Jesus! If, nailed to that cross, you are the father of the wretched because you are the father of mercies, use your great mercy with me, for I am the vilest and most wretched sinner. By your most holy passion look with compassionate eyes on my soul and on all those in purgatory; and by the sorrows and bitterness of your divine Mother, most loving mother and refuge of sinners, grant me true sorrow for my faults, and free the souls from those pains, giving them in glory the rest you promised them. Amen.

First Day

Having done the things indicated above, which are to be done first each day, say the following prayer, adoring the sacred feet of Christ nailed to the cross.

Prayer

My Redeemer, love of pure souls: by the pain and patience you had when they nailed you to the cross, pierce my soul with the nail of your holy fear, and direct me along the way of your divine law. Prostrate at your feet I adore you, most sweet Jesus; and by the pain your sorrowful Mother felt, I beg you to free the souls from those pains, bringing them to the eternal rest of glory. Amen.

Five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys are said in reverence of the five wounds of Jesus Christ and in suffrage for the souls in purgatory, and then the following is said.

Prayer

O good Jesus, King of glory! Free the souls of the departed from the pains of purgatory. Free them, Lord, from the pains and sorrows they are suffering, by what you and your sorrowful Mother suffered on Calvary.

In suffrage for all of them we offer you, my God, our supplications, penances and sighs, together with true repentance for our sins. Accept, Lord, this entreaty, and grant that the archangel Saint Michael, whom you appointed to this office, may lead the blessed souls from the darkness and sadness of their pains into the light and joy of glory. Amen.[1]

Here, thinking of the bitter pains that the holy souls suffer in purgatory, let each one stir up his devotion, asking inwardly of Christ crucified what he means to obtain as the fruit of this novena, and the relief of the holy souls. (And afterwards the *Laments of the Souls*, which are at the end, are sung.)

Second Day

Having made the act of contrition and said the prayer *O most sweet Jesus*, etc., as on the first day, say the following:

Prayer

O right hand of the Saviour, hand of the predestined! How much the redemption of sinners costs you, which keeps you nailed to that cross! Be always, my God, at my right hand, so that I may be at yours on the day of the last judgment. By that pain you suffered, and by those suffered by your sorrowing Mother, the singular work of your right hand, stretch it out in compassion to the souls in purgatory. Since you deigned to predestine them in grace, give them the fruit of predestination in eternal glory. Amen.

Five Our Fathers, etc., and the prayer *O good Jesus*, etc., and conclude as on the first day.

Third Day

Having made the act of contrition and said the prayer *O most sweet Jesus*, etc., as on the first day, say the following:

Prayer

Most sweet Jesus: if your left hand, though as divine as the right, points out the reprobate, those who will be damned, I adore your sovereign justice; and trembling with fear of being one of the reprobate for the multitude and gravity of my sins, I beg you to move me from the left to the right, for I appeal from the rigour of your justice to the sweetness of your mercy. And by the sorrows of the Queen of Angels, whose true devotees will never be reprobate, I humbly pray you to move the souls in purgatory to heaven, from toil to the rest of glory, where they may praise your mercies for all eternity. Amen.

Five Our Fathers, etc., and the prayer *O good Jesus*, etc., and conclude as on the first day.

Fourth Day

Having made the act of contrition and said the prayer *O most sweet Jesus*, etc., as on the first day, say the following:

Prayer

Most loving Jesus: if scourging is the punishment of slaves, and chiefly of sinners, who made themselves slaves of the devil, how is it that I see you, the author of our freedom, disfigured by the scourges? Ah, infamous wretch that I am! How you paid in your most pure body for the abominable sensualities of my body! I resolve, Lord, to do true penance and to mortify my appetites; and this, together with the cruel scourges you suffered at the pillar, I offer you in suffrage for the souls in purgatory. By the sorrows your loving Mother suffered in this so shameful step, accept this will of mine, which is and always will be to love and serve you. Amen.

Five Our Fathers, etc., and the prayer *O good Jesus*, etc., and conclude as on the first day.

Fifth Day

Having made the act of contrition and said the prayer *O most sweet Jesus*, etc., as on the first day, say the following:

Prayer

Sinners crown themselves with roses, and you, most flowering Nazarene, are crowned with thorns. Oh, if that crown were fixed on my head to tear out of it once and for all pride and every kind of evil thought! Oh, if even one thorn were driven into my conscience and gave me no rest until I changed my life! I do not want, my God, a crown of flowers in this world, but one of thorns for love of you. By the crown that pierced your most holy head and the afflicted Heart of your sorrowing Mother, my most clement mother, grant the souls the incorruptible crown of glory (1 Cor 9:25). Amen.

Five Our Fathers, etc., and the prayer *O good Jesus*, etc., and conclude as on the first day.

Sixth Day

Having made the act of contrition and said the prayer *O most sweet Jesus*, etc., as on the first day, say the following:

Prayer

That you should shed bitter tears on the cross, and I not shed even one tear for my sins! Ah, my God! How blind I am, and how far from knowing what an evil and perverse thing it is to have turned away from you! Enlighten me, enlighten me, good Jesus, light of the world and guide of those who go astray! By your tears, and by those shed by the sorrowing Virgin, soften my heart and give me tears of contrition, for I long to weep for my faults with tears of blood. Wipe away the sad tears of the souls in purgatory; make them sharers in the joy of your divine face in the heavenly homeland. Amen.

Five Our Fathers, etc., and the prayer *O good Jesus*, etc., and conclude as on the first day.

Seventh Day

Having made the act of contrition and said the prayer *O most sweet Jesus*, etc., as on the first day, say the following:

Prayer

If only I had for my own salvation the thirst that you had for the salvation of souls! Ah, my Redeemer! How I would have virtues, as now I have only vices and sins! You tasted the bitterness and refused relief (Matt 27:34), to make satisfaction for what I had done wrong by the excesses of my mouth and unbridled tongue. Set order, good Jesus, set order in my tongue and mouth; and by the most modest silence of your sorrowing Mother, who never opened her lips though suffering endless pains, quench the most burning thirst of the souls in purgatory: their thirst to see you, to enjoy you, to reign with you, and to bless you for all eternity. Amen.

Five Our Fathers, etc., and the prayer *O good Jesus*, etc., and conclude as on the first day.

Eighth Day

Having made the act of contrition and said the prayer *O most sweet Jesus*, etc., as on the first day, say the following:

Prayer

What troubles can I complain of, most sweet Jesus, when I contemplate you, felt to be forsaken on the cross? The eternal Father let you suffer as if you were not his Son (Matt 27:46); and the pitiful sight of your most afflicted Mother increased your sorrows still more. Oh, example that confounds my impatience in troubles! Send me, Lord, whatever troubles please you, but at the same time patience, which is the royal road to heaven. By the great desolation the pure Virgin felt when you breathed your last before her eyes, shelter me against all temptations in life; shelter me at the hour of death. And by that same desolation, shelter the souls in purgatory, who in your shelter, and in that of the Virgin Mary, trust to see you face to face in glory. Amen.

Five Our Fathers, etc., and the prayer *O good Jesus*, etc., and conclude as on the first day.

Ninth and Last Day

Having made the act of contrition and said the prayer *O most sweet Jesus*, etc., as on the first day, say the following:

Prayer

O cruel lance that opened the side of the Saviour already dead! How sweet and loving you would be to me, opening for me a door and free entrance into the most sweet heart of Jesus! O heart of Jesus! O heart of Mary, both wounded by that terrible lance! Tear out my heart and join it to yours, so that it may be a pure heart, a patient heart and a humble heart; a heart that melts in love of God and of neighbour, and is so compassionate towards the souls in purgatory and others in need that it shows by deeds the compassion with which it regards them. With all my heart I am sorry, most sweet Jesus; with all my heart I love you, and with all my heart I pray you: console the souls in purgatory, who sigh so much to go to heaven. Console them, Father of mercies and God of all consolation (2 Cor 1:3). By the most pure Heart of Mary, be always the consolation of my heart. I am sorry, and shall be sorry as long as I live, for having offended you, because you are and always will be the Jesus of my heart. Amen.[1]

Five Our Fathers, etc., and the prayer *O good Jesus*, etc., and conclude as on the first day.

Cries and Laments of the Holy Souls in Purgatory

Refrain:

\| Pious people, look and see \| how severe the purging fire: \| hear the souls who cry to you: \| "Ah, what pain, what sorrow dire!"

\| Ah, our Catholic brothers dear! \| Oh, how hard the pains we bear \| in the midst of chains so sore, \| bound by hand and foot in here! \| Have on all of us your pity, \| praying God with fervent will. \| *Hear the souls*, etc. \|

\| Oh, what fire, how fierce it burns, \| that this dwelling-place shuts in! \| One spark only, flying forth, \| would set the whole earth aflame. \| Now, then, picture in your mind \| how these flames burn on and on. \| *Hear the souls*, etc. \|

\| There is no comparing them, \| the torments of this world below, \| with the suffering, so deep, \| that is suffered in this place. \| Think of us, how we lie here \| like the gold within the fire. \| *Hear the souls*, etc. \|

\| It seems an everlasting pain \| not to see the face of God: \| such a strange and dreadful pain \| that it seems like that of hell. \| O you mortals, now appease \| the supreme and sovereign Judge. \| *Hear the souls*, etc. \|

\| Sons and daughters, thankless all, \| parents, kinsfolk, cruel and cold, \| husbands, wives, hard and untrue, \| what! you do not hear our moans? \| Oh, unheard-of cruelty! \| Friends, oh, give us now your help. \| *Hear the*

souls, etc. \|

\| Heirs and you executors \| who go spending our estates, \| holding back the suffrages, \| deaf to all our cries and calls: \| woe to you! Oh, tremble now \| as you spend what we once earned.[1] \| *Hear the souls*, etc. \|

\| And you too, devoted ones, \| servants of the holy altar, \| can you also, then, forget \| our sad and pitiful laments? \| Apply for us, for us, we pray, \| the great value of the Mass. \| *Hear the souls*, etc. \|

\| Alms and prayers, and Masses said, \| visits to the altar made, \| confessions and communions too, \| penances and pardons given: \| these we beg you, out of pity, \| for Jesus' sake and for his love. \| *Hear the souls*, etc. \|

\| Happy, happy will the lot \| be of him who gives us aid: \| our friendship will avail him much \| both in life and when he dies. \| Of the Majesty most high \| we shall temper the severity. \| *Hear the souls*, etc. \|

\| The Archangel strong and mighty, \| who holds up the balance-scale, \| promises us rest and peace \| according to the folk who come \| to the novena here to pray \| to the Lord on our behalf. \| *Hear the souls*, etc. \|

\| God of goodness infinite, \| hear with favour now the cry: \| hear the souls who cry to you: \| "Ah, what pain, what sorrow dire!"

℣. *Audivi vocem de caelo dicentem mihi*: I heard a voice from heaven saying to me:

℟. *Beati mortui, qui in Domino moriuntur*: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord (Rev 14:13).

Let Us Pray

Deus, veniae largitor, et humanae salutis amator: quaesumus clementiam tuam, ut nostrae congregationis fratres, propinquos et benefactores, qui ex hoc saeculo transierunt, beata Maria semper Virgine intercedente cum omnibus Sanctis tuis, ad perpetuae beatitudinis consortium pervenire concedas. Fidelium Deus, omnium Conditor et Redemptor, animabus famulorum famularumque tuarum remissionem cunctorum tribue peccatorum: ut indulgentiam, quam semper optaverunt, piis supplicationibus consequantur. Qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum. ℟. Amen.

\[O God, giver of pardon and lover of human salvation, we beseech your clemency that you grant to the brethren of our community, our relatives and benefactors, who have passed from this world, by the intercession of blessed Mary ever Virgin with all your Saints, to come to the fellowship of everlasting blessedness. O God, Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, grant to the souls of your servants, men and women, the remission of all their sins, that through our devout supplications they may obtain the pardon they have always desired. Who live and reign for ever and ever. ℟. Amen.\]

To Devout Christians

The most heroic practice of charity in favour of the holy souls in purgatory is the vow we are going to speak of, approved with singular spiritual graces, which His Holiness Benedict XIII granted, and the supreme pontiff Pius VI confirmed, approved and granted anew on 12 December 1788, as appears from a solemn dispatch of the most illustrious Commissary of the Crusade, issued at Madrid on 22 June 1789.

The Christian faithful who have made or wish to make this vow, ceding all their satisfactory works in favour of the souls in purgatory, should know that there are three graces that the two Popes grant to those who make it with a true heart and sincerity: 1. that for all priests bound by this vow, provided they apply at least the most special fruit belonging to the celebrant, all altars and all Masses are privileged; 2. that for all the faithful of either sex, all the Masses they hear every Monday of the year, and on all the days they receive Communion, are as though celebrated at a privileged altar, releasing a soul from purgatory at each Mass; 3.

that all indulgences not otherwise declared are applicable in favour of the souls.

Formula of the Vow

For the greater glory of God, one in essence and three in persons; to imitate in some way my sweet Redeemer Jesus Christ; and as a token of my heartfelt bondage \[*esclavitud*\] to the mother of mercy, most holy Mary, loving mother of all the souls in purgatory: I intend to be a redeemer of those poor prisoners, held for debts of punishment owed to divine justice and for lack of satisfactory works. And in the way that I lawfully can, and without any sin, freely and spontaneously I vow to redeem that soul or those souls whom the most holy Virgin herself wills or may will, renouncing and making a gift of my satisfactory works, both my own and those shared with me, both in life and in death and after my death. Therefore I make and confirm this vow; and in case I do not have enough satisfactory works to pay the debts of those souls chosen by the Mother of mercy herself, and to satisfy for my own sins, which I abhor with all my heart, with a firm resolve never to sin again, I bind myself and am willing to pay in the prison of purgatory with pains all that I lack in satisfactory works. And I sign it, calling as witnesses to it all those living in the three Churches, militant, suffering and triumphant.

Note. This vow is not formal and strict, but material and devotional; and for this reason whoever breaks or abandons it does not sin; he loses only the graces granted to it. Likewise: this vow does not include the penance imposed by the Father confessor, nor anything else of obligation.

Know, O Christian, that Saint Peter Damian and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino say that as soon as they turned to the souls in purgatory in some need, they at once found themselves helped. Father Saint Augustine says: "Do you want God to have mercy on you? Use it towards your neighbour who is in purgatory." Saint Catherine of Bologna says that if the Saints did not hear her, she turned to the souls in purgatory and was at once helped. To Saint Gertrude, when she had given everything to a soul, Jesus Christ said: "Whoever strips himself out of charity, I will clothe with my own garment." Trust, then, that with this vow well kept you will either not go to purgatory, or will be there a short time, relying on the promises of Jesus Christ and the patronage of Mary.

End of Help for the Departed.

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[1] *Propter nimiam caritatem suam* (Vulgate, Eph 2:4): "because of his exceeding \[literally, excessive\] love".

[2] *Indulgentiarum doctrina*.

[3] *Bula de la Santa Cruzada*.

[4] *signifer sanctus Michael repraesentet eas in lucem sanctam*.

[5] The Heart of Jesus pierced by the lance (John 19:34):.

[6] Catalan *marmessor*.