



Holy Souls
Sodality

For Heaven's Sake

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Dear Members,

As we begin the New Year, I was reflecting on St. Gregory and the power of Gregorian Masses in releasing Holy Souls from purgatory — a favor our Lord granted to this saint who became Pope. In this light, my dear friend, Alice Hencinski of Our Lady of Peace, a parish operated by the Marian Fathers for over 60 years in Darien, Ill., wrote an article about St. Gregory that I would like to share with you.

While many Catholics are familiar with the practice of having 30 consecutive Gregorian Masses offered for the release of souls from purgatory, few of them can relate the actual circumstance that led Pope St. Gregory the Great to initiate this holy tradition in 590 AD.

The inspiration for these efficacious Masses may be attributed to a monk named Justus.

In 586, St. Gregory returned to Rome and became abbot of St. Andrew's Monastery, which he founded in his family home around 570 AD. Since his early years as a monk, St. Gregory suffered from much pain, stomach trouble, and other chronic illnesses.

However, St. Gregory was a real



A tradition holds that our Lord said to St. Gregory, "My friend, I want to grant in your favor a privilege that is unique. All souls in purgatory, for whom 30 Masses are offered in your honor and without interruption, will immediately be saved however great may be their debt toward Me."

trooper who frequently celebrated Masses and hours of services while feeling sick and miserable. Ministering to St. Gregory was a monk named Justus, who was a capable medical practitioner. However, in 590, Justus became gravely ill. Realizing that death was approaching, he confided to his

brother Copiosus that he had hidden three gold pieces. Accounts of the three gold coins reached the ears of St. Gregory, who had become Pope. Upon learning of Justus's serious sin against the vow of poverty, Gregory ordered the penance of solitary confinement for him. Although he was dying, all the monks at the monastery were forbidden to visit him. When Justus begged for their company, no one came to see him. When given an explanation for his isolation, Justus mourned and repented of his sin.

Despite the severity of his final days, Justus's purgation did not end with his death. Saint Gregory ordered a "tough love" funeral for the errant Justus even though he was known for his charity as Pontiff (each day he invited 12 needy people to dinner). Justus's body was crudely buried in a dung heap separated from the other deceased members of

the monastery. Before shovels filled with dirt covered his grave, the monks threw the three gold pieces on his body wailing the words of St. Peter to Simon the Magician, "Thy money go with thee to perdition!" Justus's committal resulted in an extreme examination of conscience for all

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the monks at the monastery.

Thirty days after Justus's funeral, Pope Gregory felt moved with compassion for his departed soul and spoke with the Abbot Pretiosus on his behalf, saying, "Our brother is a long time dead, and is suffering in fire: we ought to show some charity to him, and so far as we can to help him, that he may be released. Go therefore and see that the Holy Sacrifice is offered for him for 30 days, starting from today and let not a single day pass by without the saving Host being immolated for his absolution."

Saint Gregory wrote, "Engaged over other things, we did not count the days as they passed, but one night the soul of the deceased monk appeared to his brother Copiosus in a vision. Upon seeing Justus, Copiosus questioned him, saying, 'What is it, brother? How fare you?' Justus replied, 'Up to this I have fared badly, but now, indeed, I am happy, for this day I am received into the Communion of Saints.'"

When Copiosus returned to St. Andrew's Monastery and reported his vision, the monks counted and realized that it was exactly the 30th day since the consecutive Masses began for Justus's release from purgatory. Copiosus's vision proved a great consolation for the monks, Abbot Pretiosus, and Pope Gregory. His "Book of Dialogues," which described in detail Justus's death and release from purgatory, became immensely popular.

Although St. Gregory is best known for his contributions to liturgical music in the form of "Gregorian Chant," countless saints attending the heavenly banquet would argue that his love for the Poor Souls earned him the most emeralds in his eternal crown.

Saint Gregory was not so much a spiritual innovator with his 30 Masses as he was faithful to the roots of his faith. The custom of praying 30 days for the souls of the deceased actually originated in the Old Testament. Faithful

Jews prayed for 30 days after the death of Moses, for example, in keeping with their "days of weeping for the mourning rites" (Deuteronomy 34:8). Gregory's merciful efforts illuminated and spread a time-honored tradition for Catholics to offer the greatest prayer for their departed loved ones for 30 consecutive days. This tradition remains vibrant 14 centuries after the Pontiff's death.

As its name implies, the "Gregorian 30" Masses for the deceased are offered on 30 consecutive days without interruption for a particular soul in purgatory. If you would like to have Gregorian Masses offered for a loved one, call 1-800-462-7426. If you would like to pre-arrange Gregorian Masses for yourself, call Ellen Miller at 1-800-671-2020 or e-mail her at emiller@marian.org.

Sincerely in The Divine Mercy and Mary Immaculate,

Father Dan Conlon MIC

Father Dan, MIC

Tips for January

- Create a family tree and offer Gregorian Masses (30 consecutive Masses for a departed soul) for your parents, grandparents, etc., to the fourth generation. This is very powerful and brings many graces to such souls.
- Mark your calendar throughout the year for special dates, such as the anniversary of a loved one's death, as a reminder to pray for your dearly departed loved ones.
- Look for opportunities throughout the year to teach your children and grandchildren about praying for the Holy Souls. Teach them the St. Gertrude Prayer. Include it with bedtime prayers. Also, bring back the tradition of praying the Eternal Rest Prayer before and after meals.
- Offer Masses year-round for living and deceased family members and friends.
- Pray for 15 minutes before and after Mass in thanksgiving to Jesus and for all your ancestors who have gone before you. We would not be here if it were not for the sacrifices they made for us.

Source: Praying with the Saints for the Holy Souls in Purgatory by Susan Tassone

How I help the Holy Souls



Ed Heslin is devoted to the Holy Souls in Purgatory. He prays for the departed souls of his brothers as well as his mother and father every night. He prays for them at Mass, especially after receiving Holy Communion every day.

In case he finds himself in purgatory, he knows he will need prayers from the Church Militant, so he contacted the Marians and arranged to have Gregorian Masses said for himself following his death. "I don't usually pray for myself, but I'm the last one of my immediate family. I have no children," Ed said. "The only way I can be sure that I will have the Gregorian Masses offered is to set them up for myself.

"I remember them from when I was a kid," he added. "But I asked a priest, and he suggested I contact an order like the Marians because diocesan priests don't do them much anymore."

Ed also jokes that he's planning ahead. "I want to be right at the front of the line," he said. "I want to spend as little time as possible in purgatory. I want to get up to heaven."

