Dear Members,

As we begin the New Year, we do well to call to mind St. Francis de Sales, who never tired of encouraging everyone to have hope for each deceased person even though the person may have led a wicked life and seemingly died impenitent, for only uncertain conclusions can be drawn about any person. We can only judge from the exterior alone, and in this, even the most prudent may be deceived. The saint based his opinion on the doctrine that just as the first grace of justification is not merited by any previous work, so also the final grace of perseverance need not necessarily depend on one’s merits.

Saint Francis would suggest that a good thought, an act of perfect contrition, may have been the last sentiment that filled the soul before it passed on to its judge. God does not will the death of the sinner but desires his salvation. We would be imprudent to limit God’s mercy.

Who knows the effect that the sight of eternity has on one who already feels the presence of the Judge, into whose hands he is about to fall?

Recall that God is outside of time — a second is as a millennium and a millennium passes in a second for Him. One second in God’s presence can suffice to enlighten a soul lost in darkness. The move to contrition by a heart hardened by sin requires the gift of conversion that Jesus gave to the Good Thief on the Cross in that final moment of mercy. Even when a dying man can no longer hear a human voice, he may well hear the voice of God calling him home. The last sigh of a soul may be the sufficient cry of contrition to win God’s pardon.

The practice of offering prayers for the repose of departed souls is a necessity that the Church never wearies of impressing upon us. Charity toward the Poor Souls, by means of prayer, should become part of our every breath. In particular, we can offer for them the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass whenever we attend, or we can unite our prayers at any given moment with the Masses that are being offered throughout the world by Holy Mother Church. We can offer our Holy Communion, when we receive Jesus at Mass, or we can make a Spiritual Communion anywhere or at any time.

Possibly the greatest prayer that one can offer is a heroic act of charity. This consists of a voluntary offering made for the Holy Souls of one’s works of satisfaction during one’s life, as well as of all suffrages that may be offered for us after death. I offer for you the “Formula of the Heroic Act,” which I renew each year:
O my God, in union with the merits of Jesus and Mary, I offer up to Thee for the Poor Souls in Purgatory, all my works of satisfaction, as also which may be offered for me during my life, at my death, and after my death. Amen.

As I invite you to make such a heroic act for the New Year, you may be asking, “What are some other ways that I can make sure I’m remaining committed to the Holy Souls throughout the year?”

We can turn to Susan Tassone and her book Praying with the Saints for the Holy Souls in Purgatory for some guidelines in marking the seasons of the year:

Winter devotions and practices
- Mark your calendar throughout the year for special dates as a reminder to pray for your dearly departed loved ones.
- 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.
- Pray for those in Purgatory, all my works of satisfaction, as also which may be offered for me during my life, at my death, and after my death. Amen.
- Fast on Fridays in honor of our Lord’s Passion. Implement different kinds of fasting such as “fasting” from gossiping, complaining, watching TV, drinking alcohol, smoking, or other activities that give one pleasure.
- Pray The Divine Mercy Novena (especially the one beginning on Good Friday) and the Chaplet daily.
- At weddings, include your deceased loved ones at the petitions of the Mass.
- Plant a “prayer garden” in your yard in remembrance of the Holy Souls.
- When praying the Rosary in May, add an extra decade for the Holy Souls.

Summer devotions and practices
- Go on a “purgatory pilgrimage” by visiting parishes and shrines within your diocese. At each, pray for the Holy Souls.
- Visit the graves of loved ones and clean sites in a spirit of prayer and penance.
- Pray the “Eternal Rest” Prayer on your rosary beads.
- Pray the Seven Penitential Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143).

Fall devotions and practices
- An indulgence is granted the Christian faithful who devoutly visit a cemetery and pray for the dead. This indulgence is a plenary one from Nov. 2-9.
- Double up on prayers and sacrifices for departed loved ones and friends during this powerful season of the dead (the November remembrance).
- Light blessed candles. The burning of a candle is a sign of our prayer, a bright, silent intercessor for the Holy Souls.
- Consider some of these suggestions as your New Year’s resolutions to remember the Holy Souls in 2011.

Sincerely in The Divine Mercy and Mary Immaculate,

*Very Rev. Dan Cambra, MIC*

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**St. Gertrude Prayer**

We encourage everyone, members and non-members, to offer the Prayer of St. Gertrude the Great. She said our Lord revealed to her that 1,000 souls would be released from purgatory each time the prayer is said. Please offer this prayer daily to share in the Sodality’s purpose.

Eternal Father, I offer You the most Precious Blood of Your Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the Holy Souls in Purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the Universal Church, those in my own home, and within my family. Amen.

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**How I help the Holy Souls**

When Anna Pisani saw the Holy Souls Sodality’s website, she was very pleased.

“It’s wonderful! I am very excited about having perpetual Masses said for all the souls in purgatory,” Anna said.

She says she started to pray for her deceased, beloved father, who died of a stroke in 1971.

“Over the years, my mother would have a Mass said for him on his anniversary of death, and on his birthday, which we would attend.”

In 1990, she joined her aunt’s Rosary group.

“I remembered about my father and his sudden death and wondered about his soul, if he was in purgatory or heaven. I didn’t know and started to pray intently for his soul to get to heaven, if it wasn’t already. I also started to go to Adoration once a week. I started to have Masses said for my father and other deceased family members, too.

“Well, after some time, I had a dream in which I saw my father as a young man. He was in a crouched position on a beach where the water was so calm. In the dream, which was very vivid, I kept calling out, ‘Dad! Dad!’ He didn’t answer, but he had the biggest, most radiant smile ever! That is all I remember, and I believed that he had made it into heaven because he was so happy.

“At Christmas, I usually have a Mass said for deceased family members. I want to have my family and as many souls as possible released.”