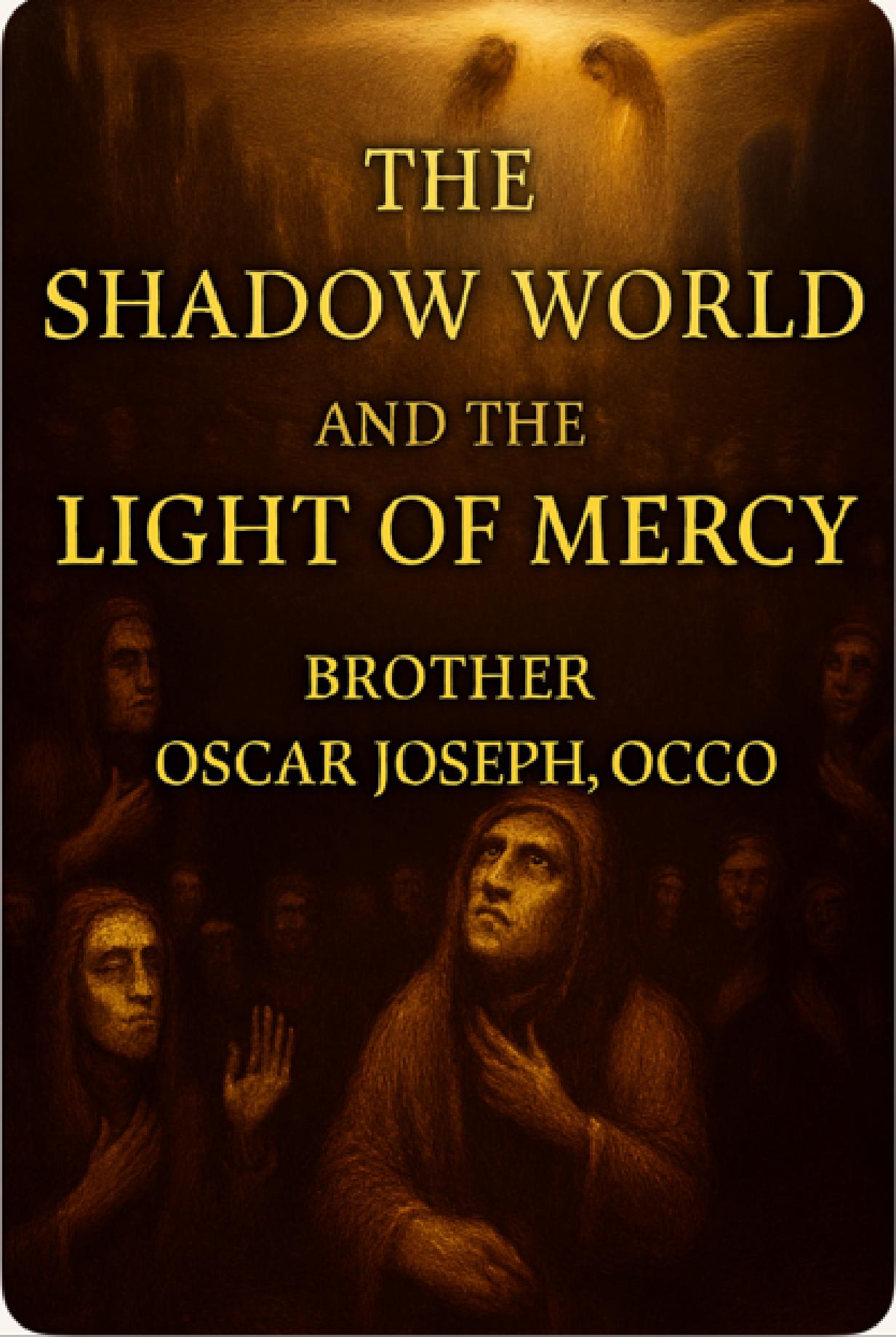


The book cover features a dark, monochromatic illustration in shades of brown and gold. It depicts a group of figures, possibly monks or saints, in a dimly lit setting. In the upper center, two figures are illuminated by a bright, ethereal light, suggesting a divine presence. Below them, several other figures are shown in various poses of prayer or contemplation, their faces partially lit by the same light. The overall mood is solemn and spiritual.

THE SHADOW WORLD AND THE LIGHT OF MERCY

BROTHER
OSCAR JOSEPH, OCCO



THE SHADOW WORLD AND THE LIGHT OF MERCY

Dedication

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

— Matthew 5:7

This booklet is offered as a gift of faith and hope, to inspire prayer for the souls in Purgatory, and to deepen our understanding of God's mercy.

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To our Hermit:

Though our hermit author preferred to remain anonymous, he was the one who first breathed life into The Purgatory Paper. He shared with me some of his reflective thoughts—quiet, thoughtful pieces that I found deeply moving. Then, in a gesture of trust and collaboration, he asked me to participate in the writing. So let us remember: the hermit’s voice runs through these pages, and his contribution was both generous and profound.

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Abbot Oscar Joseph

Abbot Oscar Joseph is a distinguished leader within the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, synonymous with dedication and service in the Christian community. He has been a priest since April 19, 1993, marking the beginning of a transformative journey that would see him become a vital spiritual guide for many. His elevation to the role of Bishop on November 9, 2002, further highlights his influence and commitment to the faith.

Over the past thirty-five years, Abbot Oscar Joseph has made significant contributions as a Christian Counselor and Spiritual Director, providing support and counsel to countless individuals navigating their spiritual journeys. His compassionate approach has led him to conduct numerous healing services throughout the East Coast of the United States, where he engages with communities, fostering hope and renewal.

Abbot Oscar Joseph is particularly revered for his philosophy of building courage and charity through humility. This principle resonates deeply in his work as he actively supports various causes associated with the Cistercian Order. His dedication not only strengthens individual faith but also uplifts the wider community, embodying the values of love, empathy, and service central to his monastic vocation.



**THE SHADOW WORLD
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Foreword

By Hermit

Over the years, I have received many insights about the mystery and message of Purgatory. These thoughts are not theological discourses; they are personal reflections from a heart molded by prayer, Scripture, and encounters with Divine Love. Purgatory is not a forgotten idea — it is a reality intimately tied to God’s mercy and justice. This book seeks to bring light into the mystery, hope into the shadow, and love into the silence. May the pages ahead help you reflect on eternity, and perhaps, inspire you to pray for those still waiting for their eternal home.

Introduction – Gifts of Friendship and Faith

There are moments when we sense God reaching out—through friends, through gifts like this prayer book, or words of encouragement. These are reminders that His love is personal, purposeful, and always near. Like the portrait of Jesus, this reflection is a gift not just from me, but from Him—to bless your heart and spirit.

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A Place of Mercy and Judgment

- Purgatory is not condemnation, but purification.
- Divine Judgment is exercised to heal, not punish.
- Each soul's journey is unique, shaped by earthly life.
- It is relational, purposeful, and deeply personal.

The Mystery of Purgatory – Mercy and Judgment

Purgatory is a place of Divine Mercy. No soul is condemned there. Yet it is a place of personalized judgment, where each soul's journey reflects God's loving justice. Just as in life some experience joy and others sorrow, the experience of Purgatory differs for every soul.

Pray for Heaven; Prepare for Purgatory

Br. Columcille, OCCO+

Purgatory is the ultimately merciful process by which divine justice is satisfied, removing all impurities and obstructions from the soul prior to its promised entry into Heaven and the ecstasy of the beatific vision and an eternity with God. Even if we pass from this life in a state of grace, shriven, and before the taste of viaticum is lost, only a very select few of God's faithful will go directly to heaven. This truth, and the entire dogma of Purgatory, has been glossed over in the humanist post Vatican II Church. Ignorance will certainly not lead to bliss and risks serious damage to the health of the soul. Additionally, the living faithful, the Body of the Church, have the responsibility of praying for the holy souls currently in Purgatory, especially remembering them in the Sacrifice of the Mass, if we are to hope for any such aid and succor during our final purification.

What follows is:

1. A brief overview of the Scriptural basis for Purgatory, along with the historical development of the Church's dogma.
2. A look at the nature of suffering in Purgatory.
3. What the Church Fathers (and Mothers) and mystics have said about Purgatory.

Purgatory became an official teaching of the Church in the 13th century, but the twin concepts of the purification of the soul after death and the offering of prayers for the dead by the faithful are much older, predating even the time of Christ.

The Old Testament sections relating to Purgatory come primarily from the Book of Wisdom and 2 Maccabees. In Wisdom 7:25 one reads that "nothing defiled can come into the presence of the Spirit of Wisdom [God]." From 2 Maccabees 12:39-46, we get the further perspective that "it is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins." In his book, **Inside Purgatory**, Dr. Thomas Petrisko draws the ready conclusion that "...although forgiveness of sins by

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God is obtained, divine justice, nevertheless, demands satisfaction for the remitted sins. Temporal punishment is rightly due and justly given.”

In the New Testament, we turn first to St. Matthew’s Gospel 12:32, where he says, “Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this world or in the world to come.” This statement reveals that some sins *will* be forgiven in the world to come. Since we know that those souls condemned to Hell cannot receive any merit or forgiveness, and that the souls raised up to Heaven are already perfected, St. Matthew can only be, albeit indirectly, referring to Purgatory. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 touches on post-death purification in saying that on the day of Judgement, “The work of each will be made clear. The day will disclose it. That day will make its appearance with fire, and fire will test the quality of each man’s work.” If, having been tested, the soul’s work is found wanting, Paul says of that man, “He himself will be saved, but only as one fleeing through fire.” The soul will be saved (destined, eventually, for Heaven), but will suffer the temporary fire of Purgatory.

Over time, the Church’s tradition regarding the liturgy of the dead was formed, and Synods from the year 533 (Orleans) to 868 (Worms) maintained that belief in Purgatory was consistent with the teaching of the faith. Then, at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274, the bishops declared that, “...when truly penitent souls die in charity before they have atoned for their faults of commission and omission by worthy fruits of penance, they are purified in the torments of Purgatory.” The doctrine was further refined in 1439, at the Council of Florence where it was established that, “the souls in Purgatory are benefitted by the suffrages [prayers] of the living faithful, namely the Sacrifice of the Mass, prayers, alms, and other works of piety.”

The nature of the suffering undergone in Purgatory is full of seemingly contradicting definitions and evolving doctrine. Since no-one living has experienced this purification, we are, in a sense, groping in the dark, here. Fortunately, we have the Tradition of the Church to guide us, and the topic of Purgatory has been considered by histories’ greatest and most holy minds and hearts.

In his landmark work, **The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life**, Fr. Charles Arminjon notes the twofold nature of Purgatory by calling it, “...The workshop of infinite justice” and “...the masterpiece of the heart of God.” This is important because the justice cited is *owed by us* due to a lack of true penance for sins, or some other impurity that sets apart from the perfection of God, but the core truth of Purgatory is evidence of a loving and merciful God, who is giving us one more opportunity to escape the eternal punishment of Hell, *even after death!*

Universally, the Doctors and saints of the Church accept that real, material fire is the reason for the “physical” part of the suffering experienced by the souls. How such a sensory experience is possible, having been separated from the body, is simply part of the mystery surrounding this final purification. The fire “tries” the soul and, finding earthly impurities, refines it by burning off this dross, as with gold.

Although the promise of fire is certainly fearful, perhaps the worse punishment is the separation from the Divine. The soul has the consolation of knowing that all of these sufferings are temporary and that it is eventually to be delivered clean and perfected, to Heaven. Yet, how maddening, how frustrating, how pitiable it must be to see our heart’s desire remain just out of reach? Fr. Arminjon describes this state by saying, “Under this great ruin of death, in the complete separation from all those objects on which our life

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turns, the soul has nothing left save this love that bares itself, leaving only the unimaginable regret that, through his own fault, he has delayed- by a day, a year, or a century- this consummated union which, for the soul, must be the real and perfect, the sole and everlasting, happiness.”

Still, like the last of emergency rations in a dire survival story, we have the ultimate human consolation, hope. How else could a soul maintain sanity amidst such purifying suffering? If it were not so, how could St. Catherine of Genoa say, “There is no joy save that in paradise to be compared to the joy of the souls in purgatory.” What’s more, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, St. Faustina, St. Pio and many others agree that once we are aware of our spiritual shortcomings, we accept this suffering, this refinement, *voluntarily*. Because union with God is our only goal, we are desperate to accept and enact His perfect will.

As I said earlier, we benefit from Scripture and Tradition in our attempts to grapple with such a deep supernatural mystery. What stands out is the great need for all of the living faithful to offer prayers, fasting, and the Sacrifice of the Mass to aid these souls in holding on to the hope that sustains them. This is even more true for those of us who are vowed religious, yet we hear little about Purgatory and the holy souls in today’s self-centered and materialistic world. It falls then to us, as leaders in our faith communities, to remind the faithful of the truth of Purgatory, and if one believes in Heaven and Hell, Purgatory is an equally important article of faith. It is the ultimate example of God’s loving mercy wedded to His demand for a creation based on justice, as well as on love.

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Degrees of Purification

- Souls suffer in different ways, from gentle sorrow to deep longing.
- Purification is layered, like light working through shadow.
- Healing is painful, but always loving.
- It is transformation for reunion, not punishment.

Upon our death how are we transformed from our earthly state?

Negativity and criticism: Can often prevail in our earthly state. Being transformed to the perfected state of being in heaven is a profound journey of grace, purification, and divine love.

Human Condition on Earth Original Sin:

Humanity inherited Original Sin from Adam and Eve, which inclines us to sin and negativity. This explains why people can be critical, judgmental, and negative.

Temptation and Weakness: Life on Earth is marked by the presence of temptations and human weaknesses. Our struggles with sin, selfishness, and the limitations of our human nature contribute to our negative behaviors.

The Role of God's Grace Sanctifying Grace:

The process of transformation begins with sanctifying grace, received through the sacraments, especially baptism and the Eucharist. This grace helps to heal our wounded nature and aligns us more closely with God's will. Divine Assistance: Through prayer, the sacraments, and the support of the Church community, individuals receive the divine assistance needed to grow in virtue and overcome negativity.

Purification in Purgatory:

Souls who die in a state of grace but are not yet perfectly purified undergo a process of purification in purgatory. This purification removes any remaining attachment to sin and prepares the soul for the fullness of heaven.

Cleansing of Imperfections:

In purgatory, the imperfections and negative tendencies of the soul are cleansed, allowing the soul to enter heaven in a state of perfect holiness.

Transformation in heaven. Beatific Vision:

In heaven, souls experience the Beatific Vision, the direct and perfect vision of God. This encounter with God's infinite goodness, love, and beauty transforms the soul completely, eliminating all negativity and imperfection..

Perfect Union with God:

The souls in heaven are in perfect union with God and are fully immersed in His love. This union fills them with perfect joy, peace, and love, leaving no room for negativity or criticism. Communion of Saints Perfected Relationships: In heaven, relationships are

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perfected. The communion of saints means that souls experience perfect harmony and love with one another, free from the conflicts and misunderstandings that can occur on Earth.

Eternal Joy: The joy and fulfillment of being in God's presence and in perfect communion with others eradicates any lingering negativity, as the soul is fully satisfied and content.

According to the Roman Catholic perspective how long would some soul stay in purgatory

From the Roman Catholic perspective, the duration of a soul's stay in purgatory is not defined in earthly terms. Here's how the Church understands it:

Nature of Purgatory

Purgatory is a temporary state of purification for souls who die in God's grace but are not yet fully purified

It is not a place of eternal punishment, like hell, but a merciful preparation for the beatific vision of heaven.

Duration: Beyond Earthly Time

The Catechism of the Catholic Church does not specify how long souls remain in purgatory.

Time in purgatory is not measured in earthly minutes or years. It's a spiritual reality, and the experience of time may be entirely different.

Each soul's purification is unique, depending on their attachment to sin and spiritual readiness. Some may be purified quickly, while others may require a longer process

Role of Living

The Church encourages prayers, Masses, indulgences, and acts of charity offered on behalf of the dead. These can help ease their purification and hasten their entry into heaven.

This practice is rooted in Scripture, such as 2 Maccabees 12:43, which speaks of offering sacrifices for the dead.

Summary

In essence, purgatory is a mystery of divine mercy. The Church teaches that every soul in purgatory is destined for heaven, and the duration of their purification is known only to God. The faithful are invited to participate in this mystery through prayer and acts of love.

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The “Shadow World” Imagery

When I imagine Purgatory, I see a shadow world—neither fully dark nor fully light, but a quiet grey. The sun and moon do not shine here; no flowers bloom. It is solemn, still, and heavy with longing. Yet in the stillness, hope quietly burns, as souls wait to be welcomed home.

The Silence of the Soul

- After death, the soul cannot pray for itself.
- Our prayers become their lifeline.
- To pray for the dead is to partner with God’s mercy.
- They may be silent, but we can speak for them.

The Power and Responsibility of Prayer

Souls in Purgatory cannot pray for themselves; they depend on our prayers. Our loving intercession becomes a bridge of mercy. Prayers prayed with pure love, expecting

What are the specific prayers for souls in purgatory?

Here are several beautiful and spiritually rich prayers offered for the souls in purgatory, drawn from Catholic tradition and devotional practice:

Classic and Powerful Prayers

1. Prayer of St. Gertrude the Great This is one of the most beloved prayers for the holy souls:

“Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy 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.” Tradition holds that this prayer releases many souls each time it is devoutly prayed.

2. Mercy and Light Prayer

“Gracious Savior, I lift my heart in prayer to You. For those who are in purgatory, I implore Your mercy. Remove the burdens they bear and let them behold Your glory. In Your compassion, may their sins be forgiven, and may they swiftly find their home in paradise. Amen.”

3. Rest for the Weary

Merciful Father, grant eternal rest to the souls in purgatory. May they find peace in Your loving embrace and be freed from their suffering. Amen.” Accompanied by Matthew 11:28: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

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4. For Forgotten Souls

“Loving God, in Your mercy, remember the souls in purgatory who have no one to remember them in prayer. In their solitude, may they find comfort in Your presence. Let no soul be forgotten, and grant that every prayer said for them speeds their journey to Your heavenly kingdom.”

Wanting nothing in return, carry great power in God’s eyes. As Scripture says, “Blessed are the merciful...” (Matthew 5:7).

Understanding the Language of Heaven

- Heaven speaks in selfless love.
- Praying for others transforms us.
- We become more like Christ.
- In lifting others, we are lifted.

Prayer for Souls in Purgatory

Heavenly Father, we entrust the souls in Purgatory to Your infinite mercy. May our prayers and acts of love hasten their journey to Your eternal embrace. Grant them peace, purification, and the joy of Your presence. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

The Shadow World

- Purgatory is grey, in-between realm.
- No sun, no moon — only spiritual twilight.
- A sorrowful place yet filled with hope.
- Souls learn, yearn, and awaken to grace.

Earthly Life – The Gift of Change

Here on Earth, we have the chance to invite Jesus into our lives—to pray, repent, and receive forgiveness. God transforms us, blessing us physically and spiritually. We have this opportunity to grow and to become vessels of His love.

Prayers for the Souls in Purgatory

Prayer of St. Gertrude the Great *Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with all the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the holy souls in Purgatory. Amen.*

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Prayer for Forgotten Souls *O my God, I offer Thee the Precious Blood of Jesus in satisfaction for the sins of the faithful departed. Especially for those whose souls are most forgotten. Amen.*

Scripture Meditations

- *Matthew 5:7* — “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”
- *2 Maccabees 12:46* — “It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead.”
- *Romans 14:8-9* — “Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.”
- *Isaiah 26:19* — “Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise.”
-

Scriptural Reflections

Many of these prayers are paired with verses like:

John 1:5: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

Philippians 4:7: “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

You can find full collections of these prayers on Prayer Guidelines and PrayersFor.com..

What other practices are recommended for souls in purgatory?

The Catholic Church offers a rich treasury of practices to aid the souls in purgatory, rooted in charity, sacrifice, and communion with the Body of Christ. Here are some of the most recommended:

Spiritual Practices

Holy Mass Intentions: Having Masses offered for the deceased is considered the most powerful way to assist souls in purgatory.

Offering Holy Communion: When receiving the Eucharist, you can spiritually offer it for the intention of a soul’s purification.

Rosary for the Holy Souls: A special form of the Rosary includes meditations focused on the mercy of God for the departed.

Way of the Cross: Praying the Stations of the Cross with the intention of relieving purgatorial suffering is deeply efficacious.

Novena to the Holy Souls: A nine-day prayer devotion specifically for the faithful departed

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Acts of Mercy and Sacrifice

Plenary and Partial Indulgences: Gained through specific prayers, acts of charity, or visiting cemeteries (especially Nov. 1–8), these can be applied to souls in purgatory.

Almsgiving: Offering charity in the name of the deceased is a spiritual work of mercy.

Fasting and Personal Sacrifice: Voluntary acts of penance offered for the dead help purify and console them.

Liturgical and Devotional Opportunities

All Souls Day (Nov. 2): A solemn day dedicated to praying for all the faithful departed.

Month of November: The entire month is set aside for remembrance and intercession for the holy souls.

Anniversary Remembrances: Praying on the anniversary of a loved one's death is a meaningful tradition.

The Power of Loving Prayer

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” — *Matthew 5:7*

- Love-born prayer is always answered.
- True charity is praying for those we've never met.
- Such intercession restores, relieves, and release

Speaking God's Language of Mercy

Love is God's language. When we pray selflessly for others—living or departed—we join in a divine conversation of mercy and hope. May this reflection inspire you to pray for the forgotten and to embody compassion, learning to love as God loves.

Living for Eternity

- Life is the time to act, grow, and choose Christ.
- Death begins the refining work of mercy.
- We must live with eternity in view.
- Pray now. Love now. Live now.

A Call to Love

To pray for the souls in Purgatory is to speak the hidden language of Heaven. Nothing is lost when we love with intention. Nothing is wasted when we spiritualize our compassion.

So, I invite you:

- **Pray with love**
- **Hope with intention**
- **Live with eternity in your vision**

Be God's voice of mercy for those who cannot speak. For truly, in lifting them, God will also lift you.



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RANDALL SORENSEN