

## **NOVEMBER - THE MONTH OF THE HOLY SOULS**

*An elderly bishop came to confirm some children one day at a local parish. The bishop decided to question the kids about their knowledge of the sacraments. So he asked Johnny, "What's matrimony?" "Oh," said Johnny, "Matrimony's where the poor souls go to suffer before they are admitted to heaven!" Well, Johnny had matrimony mixed up with purgatory!*

*Purgatory is a Doctrine of the Church and perhaps one that we do not hear too much about these days. Purgatory is a middle state where souls destined for heaven are detained, purified and made mature in love. The people in purgatory cannot help themselves for that time is past. They can, however, be helped by all the faithful on earth-by our prayers and all our good works.*

*The souls in purgatory are most especially aided by the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for them. The Church has from the earliest times faithfully guarded the words in the scripture that "It is a good and wholesome thing to pray for the dead" so that they might be loosed from their sins.*

*The month of November that we are currently in is dedicated to the holy souls in purgatory. Since we can help the souls of our loved ones in purgatory, it is especially important to remember to have Masses offered for them.*

*A couple of years ago at a priest council meeting, it was brought to the attention of the Cardinal by a pastor that in many parishes today there are not enough intentions to cover all the Masses that are celebrated. This is not a good situation as it was felt that many people today are neglecting to have Masses said for those who have died and for their own particular needs. The pastor who brought this concern to the floor is the head of a large parish in the Bronx and he is struggling to cover all the Masses with intentions. Other priests too voiced the same concern.*

*The lack of Mass intentions reveals in some way a lack of understanding of the power of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. To have a Mass offered for our deceased family and friends all we have to do is to come to the rectory and request one. There is an offering of \$15 for an Announced Mass and \$5 for an Unannounced Mass. The "Unannounced Mass" is one which the priest offers privately at his convenience.*

*The donation is given to the priest as a "stipend." The stipend is not given to "buy" a Mass, as a price for the Eucharist. Rather it is a voluntary donation. This is a custom that goes back to the early church. The priest is not out to get "rich" by amassing stipends. A priest would certainly not refuse to say a Mass for anyone who could not afford to pay the stipend!*

*During this month of November let us especially pray for those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. "Amen.*

