



The Parable of the Talents

The day of reckoning for three stewards
at the end of the parable in today's Gospel

The 33rd Sunday of the Year
at Lancaster St Bernadette and Bremen St Mary

November 19, 2017

St Bernadette Parish.

1343 Wheeling Road NE (740) 654 • 1893
LANCASTER, OH 43130-8701

[stbernadetteparish . net](http://stbernadetteparish.net)

cover picture: [The Parable of the Talents](#)

St Mary Parish.

602 Marietta Street (740) 569 • 7738
BREMEN, OH 43107

Painted (probably 1630) by Willem de Poorter (1608-1648?)
Narodni Galerie, Prague

our parishes.

Father Thomas Kessler (614) 634-0499 wonthomaskessler@icloud.com
pastor

at St Bernadette Parish

Jeff Carpenter (740) 681-9918 carpenter.277@osu.edu
deacon

Mark Scarpitti (740) 438-3970 dcn.mark@frontier.com
deacon

Ann Essman (740) 653-9347 aessman001@att.net
pastoral minister

Steve Huber (740) 654-3137 shuber57@yahoo.com
facilities coordinator

Angie & Kent Kerns (740) 654-2588 kwkerns@gmail.com
religious education

Liz Latorre (740) 243-1872 lizlatorre@gmail.com
liturgical music

The St Bernadette Parish office is in the Mary Good Center, across the back parking lot from the school.

Hours are: 9 AM-1 PM, MWThF; 11 AM-1 PM, Tu.

1343 Wheeling Rd NE, Lancaster, OH 43130-8701 (740) 654-1893

<http://stbernadetteparish.net>

at Bremen St Mary Parish

Ben Factor b_factor@lancaster.k12.oh.us
liturgical music

Sarah Borah sborah920@gmail.com

The St Mary Parish office is at the church vestibule.

Hours are 9-11 AM, Tuesdays.

602 Marietta St, Bremen, OH 43107 (740) 569-7929

at both parishes

Stephen Karnes (740) 654-1893 stbernbook@gmail.com
business manager

Kathy Kehnast (740) 654-1893 stbernaparish@yahoo.com
pastoral coordinator

Julie & Chase (740) 808-7294 maristellaspirt@gmail.com
Stalford
youth ministry

Saint Bernadette School

Pam Eltringham (740) 654-3137 peltring@cducation.org
principal

Barb Huber (740) 654-3137 bhuber@cducation.org
secretary

Saint Bernadette School is located at

1325 Wheeling Rd, Lancaster, OH 43130-8701

stbernlan@cducation.org

www.stbernadetteschool.com

Lancaster St Vincent de Paul Society svdplancasteroh.com

Diocese of Columbus columbuscatholic.org

Spirit of Peace Counseling Services spiritofpeaceclinicalcounseling.com

julie.sopcc@gmail.com (210) 781-0254

sacramental life.

Baptism

To have a child baptized, you must register and attend a class as a couple (unless attendance just isn't possible, in which case some discussion with Kathy Kehnast will be necessary). Sessions are held quarterly for both parishes. Try to attend before the child is born. Next session will be in January. If you are expecting or have a new born or somehow haven't gotten around to having an older child baptized, call Kathy to make plans now.

Please don't ask if you "have to go." This is an opportunity to meet with parents of children about the same age as your little one; those parents are in the same wonderful boat as you are.

At least one parent must be a practicing Catholic. Both godparents need to be practicing Catholics. If you don't attend Sunday Mass regularly (a major component of being a practicing Catholic!), there is something you can do about it: Start coming to Sunday Mass.

Penance

The priest is available for Penance

- at St Bernadette Saturdays at 3 PM and Thursdays at 5:30 PM, and
- at St Mary Bremen on Sunday at 8 AM.

Every Catholic priest is available whenever there is a need. There are Penance opportunities for parochial school children four times during the year so that they will learn the beauty of frequent confession. The Church's law requires us to receive the sacrament of Penance at least once a year.

Anointing and Care of the Sick

We receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick when dangerously ill, facing major surgery, or suffering from the ravages of old age. We celebrate the sacrament communally at a Sunday Mass before Advent and during the Easter season so that we can all pray with you for "health of mind and body."

We bring Penance, Anointing, and Holy Communion to the sick or shut in. It is very helpful to call the parish office to let us know before a hospitalization or when it has been too long since the sacraments were last available.

Holy Matrimony

Couples wishing to marry should contact the parish office six months before they wish to celebrate the sacrament. Why so long? Because **this sacrament, not just the ceremony, requires serious preparation.** And the Church needs to be involved in that preparation. Remember, Catholics who marry outside the Church have left the sacramental life and need to change that situation before receiving the other sacraments.

The Church wishes to support couples **through the years** of their married life. That's why our diocese offers programs to enhance married life. To learn about these programs, watch the weekly bulletin.

praying with the Church

at Mass this Sunday the Church Prays :

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

in November the Pope Prays

... that Christians in Asia, bearing witness to the Gospel in word and deed, may promote dialogue, peace, and mutual understanding, especially with those of other religions.

Listen to God's Word and Honor His Saints

Sunday, Nov 19,	Proverbs 31:10-31	Psalm 128		
33rd Sunday	1 Thessalonians 5:1-6	Matthew 25:14-30		
Mon, Nov 20	1 Maccabees 1:10-63	Psalm 119	Luke 18:35-43	
Tues, Nov 21	2 Maccabees 6:18-31	Psalm 3	Luke 19:1-10	
	Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary			
Weds, Nov 22	2 Maccabees 7:1-31	Psalm 17	Luke 19:11-28	
	Saint Cecilia, virgin & martyr			
Thurs, Nov 23	1 Maccabees 2:15-29	Psalm 50	Luke 19:41-44	
	Saint Clement I, pope & martyr; Saint Columban, abbot; Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro, priest & martyr			
Fri, Nov 24	1 Maccabees 13:1-9	1 Chron 29	Luke 19:45-48	
	Saint Andrew Dũng-Lạc companions, martyrs			
Sat, Nov 25	1 Maccabees 6:1-13	Psalm 9	Luke 20:27-40	
	Saint Catherine of Alexandria, virgin & martyr			
Sunday, Nov 26,	Ezekiel 34:11-17	Psalm 23		
Christ the King	1 Corinthians 15:20-28	Matthew 25:31-46		

Mass Intentions This Week

Monday, Nov 20	8:20 AM	deceased Seigny family	at St Bernadette
Tuesday, Nov 21	8:20 AM	Richard Kessler	at Bremen St Mary
Wednesday, Nov 22	8:20 AM	Chuck Beiter	at St Bernadette
Thursday, Nov 23	9 AM	Tommy Hartung	at St Bernadette
Friday, Nov 24	8:20 AM	Dorothy McClammer	at St Bernadette

There will be no confessions or evening Mass on Thanksgiving Day.

at both parishes

Catholic Campaign for Human Development

Please be generous in this week's collection for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. In the United States, one in six people lives in poverty. With this collection, you support programs that address the causes of poverty and provide a sustainable future for those who are struggling across the country. In addition, 25 percent of funds collected remains in our diocese to fund local anti-poverty projects. Prayerfully consider how you can support this collection and work on the margins. More information about the Catholic Campaign for Human Development can be found at www.usccb.org/cchd/collection.

Parish School of Religion

At both St Bernadette and Bremen St Mary Parishes, PSR meets each Sunday at 9:30 AM. Catholic parents are reminded of their solemn moral duty to see that their children are properly and

completely instructed in the Catholic Faith. They need to see that their children attend regularly (barring health or weather deterrents). Even if some weeks they are reluctant to attend, the children will find getting to know Jesus and his Church to be an irreplaceable and joy-filled part of their upbringing. And parental firmness a blessing that they may not acknowledge right away.

Anointing the Sick

We will celebrate the **Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick** at both parishes during Sunday Mass today. You should be anointed if you are

- a Catholic, age 7 or older and
- in the state of grace and
- suffering serious health problems, like
 - chronic or dangerous diseases,
 - old age, or
 - the prospect of major surgery.

Determine before Mass begins if you will receive the sacrament. If so, sit in the front row or at the end of the pew and come to the altar when you are called (or notify an usher to ask the priest to come to your place in the pew if coming forward is difficult). Everybody else: Pray for our sick. Keep them in your prayers.

A Surprising Advent Bible Study

Come and learn **how to read and how to pray** the four surprising liturgical prayers and three of the surprisingly moving joyful mysteries embedded in the two infancy chapters of the Gospel of Saint Luke. Father Kessler will lead these Advent reflections (with some gorgeous illustrations!) on Mondays, Dec 4, 11, and 18 from 7-8:30 PM.

Representatives

The pastor is requested to appoint

- two parishioners from each parish to represent their parish on the Fairfield / Hocking / Pickaway County **deanery pastoral council** (DPC)
 - The DPC meets **bi-monthly** on a Monday evening for about an hour at a different parish each meeting. Parishioners with some experience on parish pastoral council make especially good representatives because they can share and work together on concerns common to all of the parish communities.

He is on the lookout for St Bernadette parishioners to serve on the

- Lancaster **St Mary School Advisory Board** and
- Fisher **Catholic High School Advisory Board**.

The school boards each meet **monthly** in the evening during the school year. They serve to keep communications happening between their own parish and the Catholic schools.

Each rep is a volunteer appointed by the pastor for a fixed term. A school advisory board member need not be a parent or an alum of the school concerned. They help keep the pastor and the corresponding councils in our own parishes in the loop. Several of the positions are already staffed, but we always need a "strong bench" of people to help. Please call to notify Fr Kessler of your interest.

at bremen st mary parish

St Vincent de Paul

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Bremen takes up a **collection on the first Sunday** of each month. St Vincent always needs members. Call Angi Skinner at (740) 438-0027 if you can help.

Ministry at Mass at St Mary

8:30 AM Sunday Mass	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion	gifts	sacristan / usher
Nov 19	Joe Young	Caden & Cody Fyffe	Pam Redding, Joe & Cathy Young	Joe Young family	Joe Young
Nov 26	Susan Foltz	Carly Kunkler, Sydnee Rogers	Susan Foltz, Jim Schmelzer, Angi Skinner	Leo Kunkler Sr family	Jim Schmelzer

Christmas Baskets

The Bremen Community Food Pantry is in need of **turkeys and cookies for Christmas** baskets for families. Drop off ...

- **cookies** on Thursday, Dec 14, between noon and 6 PM and
- **turkeys** on Saturday, Dec 16, at 8 AM at the Calvary United Methodist Church.
- bring **monetary donations** or **nonperishable food** items to Bremen St Mary Church.
- to make **other arrangements**, or if you can donate a turkey for the baskets, call Mary Shumaker at (740) 569-4796.

Baskets will be distributed on Saturday, Dec 16.

at st bernadette parish

Advent Family Fun Day

Begin the Advent Season with an Advent Family Fun Day on Sunday, Dec 3, from 12-2 PM in the St Bernadette parish hall. There will be seasonal crafts and cookie making, as well as an opportunity to purchase Advent Wreaths and seasonal books. It will include a **Parish Family Lunch** pot luck. Contact Kara Tencza at Kara . tencza @ gmail . com for information or to volunteer.

Blood Drive

St Bernadette's next Red Cross Blood Drive happens Saturday, Dec 2, from 9 AM-2 PM in the parish hall. There will be lunch and cupcakes, along with Christmas crafts for kids. There is **no upper age limit** for blood donation, and 16 year olds can donate with a signed parental permission slip. Provide the gift of life the Christmas season. Appointments are made at [www . redcrossblood . org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) or by calling Joyce Guenther at (740) 974-5040).

Advent Drive for St Vincent de Paul

The Lancaster St Vincent de Paul Society tells us that **their biggest need these days** is for non-perishable foods, paper products (kleenex, paper towels, toilet paper), personal hygiene products (deodorant, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes), and laundry products including detergent. So that's what they ask us to provide. Don't worry about too much of any of these items. **There won't be too much**, for the Society will share surplus items with the St Francis Center in McArthur. This drive will last through the four Sundays of Advent. Our drop off point will be in the vestibule between the school entrance and the church. The Society has a new website; you can learn about the many activities of the Lancaster St Vincent de Paul Society at www . svdplancasteroh . com

Youth Choir

The **Saint Cecilia Society** (our parish youth choir) has begun its seventh season, and meets Sundays at 6 PM in the church. All parish students in grades 2-8 (public, parochial, or home school) are invited to join. SCS members in grades 4-8 are also invited to be members of the **Handbell Ensemble**, which meets Sunday evenings at 7 PM, immediately after the full SCS meeting. Mrs Latorre is happy to answer questions and provide registration materials. See her after Mass or call or text her at (740) 243-1872.

Adult Choir

St Augustine once said that, "**he who sings prays twice**". The Saint Bernadette Adult Choir has begun practicing for the new church year on **Wednesdays at 7 PM** in the church. Our adult choir is both a vocal ensemble devoted to making beautiful music for the Lord and a small faith group within our parish family. We would love to welcome some new members into the group. Might membership in the choir be an opportunity for you to get more involved in the parish and grow in your faith? Contact Liz Latorre after Mass or call or text her at (740) 243-1872 if you have any questions.

Book Fair

Let's promote literacy in our school and community. Hundreds of children's books, as well as religious books, adult best-sellers, and unique cookbooks, will be available for immediate purchase at the St Bernadette Scholastic Book Fair in the school library during the week of Nov 27-Dec 1, Monday through Friday, from 7:30 AM until 3:15 PM. The Book Fair will also be open before and after Vigil and Sunday Mass on Dec 2 and 3. Funds raised during this Book Fair will be used **to purchase new TVs and DVD players for our classrooms**, replacing our current televisions which are more than 20 years old. Any donation in lieu of book purchases will be gladly accepted in the school office.

Ministry at Mass at St Bernadette

November 18-26	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion	
Saturday, 4:00 PM	Marguerite Grimm	Lexi Utz Gus & Olivia Spiegel,	Tara Craaybeek Susan Garrett Sandy Landefeld	Joyce Guenther Craig Shaw Lee Guinan
Sunday, Nov 19 11:00 AM	Pat Gins	Samantha Kerns, Logan & Tori Loy	Nancy Griffith Teresa Scarpitti Jim & Rita Merk	David Shonk Jean Robertson
Monday, 8:20 AM	Mary Jane Vajen	Isabelle Lazar, Kyndra Nagle	Patricia Dreyer	Kathy Kehnast
Wednesday, 8:20 AM	Bob Christy	Silus Hopkins, Amelia Robertson	Mary Jane Vajen	Angie Christy
Thursday, 9 AM	Terry Carpenter	Daschel Neighbor, Hyde O'Rielley	Lee Guinan	Paul Lonergan
Friday, 8:20 AM	Jim Merk	Morgan Cox, Olivia Reynolds	Jim & Rita Merk	
Saturday, 4:00 PM	Becky Kuhn	Joey Mannella, Addy Myers, Jack Tencza	Bob & Angie Christy Kathy Kehnast Jim Kuhn	Denise McGuire Mickey Steyaert
Sunday, Nov 26, 11:00 AM	John Hartig	Anna Hartig, Avee & Drew Solt	Teresa Hartig Mary Jane Vajen Becky Wickham	Anna Sevigny Ben Peters Larry Sanford

Sandwich Saturday

School has started and the students are serving our community by participating in the "Sandwich Saturday" program. This is a service project for students to live their discipleship by making **sandwiches for Foundation Dinners**, usually on the **last Thursday of each month**. The kids begin this service from an early age. This month the fourth grade class provided the batch of sandwiches. Monetary donations, and donations of bread, lunch meat and wrapped cheese slices are always welcome and can be made through the school or parish office. Contact the school office for information at (740) 654-3137.

Becoming a Fisher Catholic Patron of the Arts

Fisher Catholic will present the musical **Gyps and Doll** on Mar 16 & 17. To raise funds for pre-production costs, Chipotle will donate 50% of your food costs on Wednesday, Nov 29, from 4-8 pm, if you mention Fisher Catholic when you order. For information or tickets, or to become a patron of the arts, contact Mary Walsh at mwalsh @ cdeducation . org.

here and there

An Irish Party

Bishop Fenwick Class of 1969 Fund is joining Fisher Catholic Alumni Association to kick off the holidays by throwing a party. Join them on Wednesday, Nov 22, from 7 PM–midnight at Fisher Catholic Alumni Hall. A local band will rock the hall. Food and legal beverages will be available for purchase at this adult gathering (18 years or older). To sponsor this fun event, contact Jim Faulkner at (614) 284-9369 or Jfaulk51 @ hotmail . com

Angels Nurture & Disciple

Angels Nurture & Disciple (AND) reaches out to single mothers to provide emotional support and spiritual guidance in the form of a **Guardian Angel** (a mentor) at the most critical time in a woman's life. Currently, AND has more single mothers in need than Guardian Angels to offer support and guidance. **They need your help.** Will you prayerfully consider these roles?

guardian angel baby shower host testimony speaker
meal provider angel assistance transporter

Visit angelsAND.org, or contact Gina @ angelsAND.org.

Holy Land Pilgrimage

Have you considered adding a **new dimension of understanding regarding your Christian history and the life of Jesus?** Father Nic Ventura, a recent Fisher Catholic alum, invites you to join him on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Feb 21-Mar 2. Cost is \$3179 per person, with meals, fees, and tips included. Contact Aimee Walton at frnicpilgrimage@gmail.com or (740) 225-6136.

in the diocese of columbus

Advent Morning of Reflection

Sts Peter & Paul Retreat Center in Newark presents *The Precious Present: Advent*, a time to pray and reflect on God's gifts to each of us, led by Sr Louis Mary Passeri, on Saturday, Dec 16, from 9-11:30 AM. Cost of \$20 includes continental breakfast. Register at (740) 928-4246 or info @ stpeterandpaulretreatcenter.org or register online at www.stpeterandpaulretreatcenter.com by Monday, Dec 11.

Donating a Vehicle to the Josephinum

The seminarians at the Pontifical College Josephinum are in need of used vans, SUVs and pick-up trucks for campus activities. If you could donate, call (614) 985-2230; arrangements can be made before Dec 31. The Josephinum will provide the necessary documentation.

Healing Mass

A Mass of Healing will be celebrated on Monday, Nov 20, at 6:30 PM at Saint Joseph Cathedral in Columbus. After Mass, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and veneration of a relic of the true Cross of Christ will be followed by an opportunity for each person to speak individually with a priest and receive the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. The service of healing concludes with Benediction. All who seek Christ's healing are invited—especially **those who suffer with physical illness and infirmities** (e.g. cancer and other debilitating diseases and conditions), and **those who seek emotional and spiritual healing.** Caregivers, family members, and members of the medical community are invited as well. For questions, call the Cathedral at (614) 224-1295.

Giving Tuesday

The Catholic Foundation is joining the #Giving Tuesday movement on Tuesday, Nov 28. Charities, families, parishes, community centers, and schools around the world will gather for a common purpose: to celebrate and encourage giving. **From fundraising to volunteering to pro bono service.** #GivingTuesday engages our community and to become part of a larger worldwide movement that promotes generosity. As you join #GivingTuesday, consider giving to your parish or school fund available at The Catholic Foundation. To see a list of existing funds you can give to on #GivingTuesday (and all year long) simply visit, www.catholic-foundation.org/funds and use the search box on the left side. If you don't see your parish or school listed contact Scott Hartman at shartman@catholic-foundation.org or (614) 443-8896.

Natural Family Planning

Whether God is calling you to try to **achieve or to postpone pregnancy**, Natural Family Planning (NFP) can help a married couple live God's plan for love and life, while strengthening the marriage relationship. Engaged and married couples can learn NFP at a diocesan NFP class series. To learn more, go to www.columbuscatholic.org/natural-family-planning or contact the Marriage and Family Life Office at (614) 241-2560.

November is the Month of the Faithful Departed!

nearly confessions & weekday Mass

But these times sometimes change, so be sure to call ahead!

parish	confessions	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>Bremen St Mary</i>	8 AM Sunday		8:20 AM				
<i>Lancaster St Bernadette</i>	5:30 PM Thursday, 3 PM Saturday, 8:30 AM on 1 st Saturday	8:20 AM		8:20 AM	6 PM	8:20 AM	on 1 st Saturdays @ 9 AM
<i>Lancaster St Mary</i>	4 PM Saturday	7 AM	9 AM	7 AM	9 AM		
<i>Lancaster St Mark</i>	5:30 PM Saturday	8 AM	8 AM	6 PM	8 AM	8 AM	
<i>Sugar Grove St Joseph</i>	½ hour before Mass	VARIABLE	NOON	7 PM	NOON	NOON	
<i>Circleville St Joseph</i>	4 PM Saturday	9 AM	7 PM	9 AM		9 AM	
<i>Logan St John</i>	4 PM Saturday	8 AM	8 AM	9 AM		8 AM	9 AM
<i>Fisher Catholic HS</i>	2 PM in chapel on first Fridays						each school day Friday @ 2:40 PM

How Catholic Funerals are Different

Sometimes Catholics like to say that we do things just like everybody else. We want to fit in. We don't want anyone to think that we're people from Mars. Because we aren't. As my Dad used to say (about ordinary people generally), we put our pants on one leg at a time just like everybody else. But Catholics often think that the main thing is to let everyone know that we can make just as good a citizen and just as good a neighbor as anyone else. And we have to admit that some of us, sometimes, make just as bad a citizen or neighbor. We feel that temptation to do things just the way our neighbors do them so that we will fit in better. It is a temptation to "assimilate," that you can also see in the lives of members of various minority groups, especially of new immigrants. While it is certainly necessary for such immigrants to focus on learning the language and folk-ways of the rest of the Americans, they must be permitted to keep alive what is basic in their own heritage.

We have to acknowledge to ourselves and to our neighbors that we have some remarkable and exceptional beliefs and ways of behaving, which are there for all neighbors to see and which are a blessing that we must keep alive and that we must share. There is something distinctive about being a Catholic. It isn't honest to act as though there weren't. Because there really is something special about being a Catholic, something to celebrate! To hide that something special would be to fool ourselves as well as to fail to provide our non-Catholic neighbors with the distinctive witness that comes from the ways of our Catholic Christian Faith.

One of the most basic ways people live out their heritage is in the way we respond when a loved one dies. A Catholic funeral has something in common with anyone else's funeral. Sort of. We contact the funeral home; we have a viewing, and we say the same inadequate words about sympathy and about how the dead person was embalmed and dressed to look just like she or he is asleep; we have a funeral, and the cremation or burial in a cemetery. People send flowers . . . or gifts to a charity in the dead person's memory. There is often a funeral lunch after our funerals. And the people closest to the dead person do a lot of quiet mourning.

But there is something decidedly different about our Catholic approach to funerals. In fact, there are several things.

For one thing, **we go to church for the funeral**. We go **for a funeral or requiem Mass**. That word "*requiem*" is the Latin word for "rest," and we go to that Mass to pray for the eternal rest of the dead person. To rest means to be refreshed, but not to loaf and not be ended. It is not for people who have ceased to exist. We are **praying for the rest and refreshment of the soul of the dead person**. This is because we believe that the soul of the person lives.

But that's not all. We go to a funeral Mass **to remind ourselves that we believe that, on the last day, at the end of the world, at the resurrection of the dead, the Lord will raise up the dead person**—in fact, all of the dead persons, ourselves included. It is this, and not the flowers or any happy memories of the good old days when the loved one was still alive, that is the source of our comfort. The Catholic funeral is, in a certain important sense, a memorial. But the memory we are there to stoke is the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. We pray, at the heart of every Mass, one of three very brief acclamations that make one basic point. My favorite one of them says:

When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, O Lord, until you come again.

That is our memorial.

We don't preach a eulogy. Not at the funeral Mass. It's not that we don't have happy memories of the dead person, but the reason to be at the Mass, in the church, is to remember not Uncle Herman or Aunt Marie, but what Saint Paul was remembering when he wrote to the Corinthians: *I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified*.

There is another very important reason for our not preaching a eulogy. The priest or deacon's job is **to invite our prayers to God for the dead person**. Sometimes in a news story we read that someone has said "Our prayers go out to the dead person or to the dead person's family." Ours don't! Our prayer goes out to God! For the dead person and for her or his family. This isn't splitting grammatical hairs. It is at the heart of what prayer means and it responds to the dead person and his family which we are commending to God's mercy.

In addition to recalling the difference that the dying of Jesus has made for all the dead; and in addition to rekindling our hope in the resurrection of the dead, we come together to pray for the dead person. The Catholic priest or deacon will not—must not—canonize the dead person. To say that the dead person was wonderful is never the point of this worship service. That would suggest that the person is not in need of our prayers. She is. And of course, we don't damn the person. It is not our call to determine whether the person is damned or saved. This is a surprising time when the words of Jesus apply: *Stop judging, that you may not be judged*.

We pray for the dead when it is reasonable to presume that the person has, at death, been judged by God to have been saved. But we also know that there may have been aspects that were still sinful about the person. The Catholic doctrine of purgatory enters the picture here. **Purgatory is the state of the soul of the dead person who has been saved, but who was flawed by sins** that have been forgiven but still mar the readiness of the person for the eternal bliss of heaven. Heaven and hell are the permanent realities. Ultimately, every human person will be assigned, irrevocably, to one or the other. Only heaven and hell will continue after the Last Judgment.

from Other People's Funerals

But purgatory is the interim situation of the person who is saved, who will never go to hell, but who, at death, is not yet ready for heaven. This doctrine of purgatory is not bad news at all. It is rather very good news to learn that, even those of us who are saved but still flawed by our sins and thus not really ready to enjoy the beatific vision of God, have the opportunity to be spruced up for heaven.

Among the first inklings we have of this doctrine of purgatory is found in the second book of Maccabees, an ancient Hebrew book which is one of the seven books of the Old Testament which had been in the Jewish canon of the bible from before the time of Jesus and which were preserved in the Catholic canon. These seven books were removed from that list by the Protestant reformation. In Second Book of Maccabees we read that some young Jewish soldiers who died bravely fighting for the cause of God and his chosen Jewish people were found to have had pagan religious images on their persons when the survivors went to bury them. The burial detail was horrified that their young heroes of Jewish faith had resorted to symbols of idolatry, had hedged their bets. That was an awful sin. And yet they died so heroically and for such a good cause! Rather than declare them damned or to say that their sin didn't matter, the leader **Judas Maccabeus called for prayer for these dead persons**. We read

*Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out.
The noble Judas warned the soldiers to keep themselves free from sin,
for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen.
He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas,
which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory sacrifice.
In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection of the dead in view;
for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death.
But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness,
it was a holy and pious thought. Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin.*

Praying for the “poor souls” in purgatory is a really comforting thing. I can do something for my less than perfect loved ones who have died: I can pray for them! It's not praying that the damned will be rescued; that won't happen. It is praying that the still-flawed among the saved may be purged of any evil that remains in them and moved into the bliss of heaven.

Heaven and hell are permanent realities. Purgatory will only last until the resurrection of the dead at the end of time; then the purgation of the flaws of anyone still in purgatory will be completed and they will proceed to heaven. It helps if we think of purgatory as a kind of a front porch where a person stops to scrape off the mud before he can go into the house which is heaven. The person is not quite ready for the living room, and wouldn't want to enter unready. But our loving, caring prayer for them can envelope them in a purifying participation in the effects of the saving work of Jesus. Our prayer and sacrifices offered for them do not take their sins away. Jesus does that. You might say we help scrape the mud.

We also express our Catholic Faith in **the way we dispose of the remains of the dead**. For most of the 20 centuries that there have been Catholic Christians, we were forbidden to cremate except in an emergency when there was no other choice. A couple generations ago, this rule was relaxed a bit. But the basic notions are not going to change. The pagans around the first Christians just incinerated the bodies of the dead. Bodies meant nothing to them once they were dead. The dead had no future as far as pagans were concerned. They were permanently cast off. It was the soul that lived on. Christians believed then and believe now in the resurrection of the body.

When a person dies we know the body decays, but we believe the soul lives on, whether in the joy of heaven or in the sorrow of hell—or in the anticipation of purgatory. The soul then has an incomplete existence, because we humans are only really complete when we are the unity of body and soul. At the resurrection of the body on the last day, our bodies will be raised up, in glorified completeness, in their prime, without disease or handicaps, and gloriously joined with our souls. What a wonderful day!

We have cemeteries because we need somewhere to store and to cherish these bodies as they await there the resurrection of the dead. Of course, being cremated, or buried at sea, or in some other way having our bodies destroyed, will not frustrate the glorious restoration the Lord has in store for us. After all, if he could put them together in the first place, he won't have any trouble putting bones or ashes back together. But the Church wants to make sure we don't lose track of that restoration which is the resurrection of the dead. So she now gives us permission to cremate if that is necessary, but only with the stipulation that there must be faith in the resurrection of the body. And she insists that we dispose of the ashes in a way that coincides with that faith. So, we may not scatter them over the ocean or from a mountain top. We don't keep them at home on a mantle or in a closet. And we don't share out portions of them. The intentions in all of those might be good, but they do not express our Catholic Christian belief in the resurrection of the dead.

We don't believe in ghosts. That is a leftover from pagan cultures. It has no part to play in our religion.

We do believe in the Incarnation, but not in any form of **reincarnation**. The Incarnation is the wonderful event when the Word of God assumed flesh in the person of Jesus and became permanently part of the human family of persons composed of body and soul. Reincarnation has no part to play in our religion. Believers in reincarnation see the individuality of the person, the person's very body, to be important. In fact, they see it as finished. They mistakenly hold that the soul would at death migrate to some other body. There are oriental religions that teach that to be the case. This would conflict with the high estimation of the body which our belief about Jesus and our belief about our humanity involves.

—Father Kessler

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