

Walking on the road to Emmaus, two disciples were discussing the events of the past few days, the crucifixion and death of Jesus, when someone came walking alongside them. They reiterated the strange news that the body of Jesus was not in the tomb anymore. Their thoughts clouded by the sheer meaning of death as an end, the two disciple's astonishment was double fold when later that night Jesus broke bread at supper, said a blessing, and gave it to them. They recognized him then as the Risen Lord, and eagerly set out to proclaim what had been revealed.

I open with this account from the Gospel of Luke because of this last week with All Saints Day and All Souls Day. On All Saints Day we celebrated all those who are living forever in heaven. On All Soul's Day we were reminded of all those who have died before us and the hope that awaits them in gaining eternal life. We were also reminded about the one human family, that as children of God, we are all linked as brothers and sisters. Together with the saints' intercession, we are called to pray for the souls of the faithful departed, especially for those souls in purgatory, that they too may enter heaven.

Purgatory is an aspect of our faith that we don't seem to hear much about. Whether it is overlooked or not stressed enough, the Catholic Church does hold it as doctrine. There is a recent Catholic documentary which expresses this general overlook called "Purgatory: The Forgotten Church." Purgatory is not a place, but it is a state. In the Catechism, it is called the final purification, the state where one is purified, "so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven." These souls in purgatory are saved, but they must undergo what it takes to be free from the sins that still cling and are with them from their earthly journey. Our intercession through prayer is essential because as the catechism makes clear, "our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them but also of making their intercession for us effective." Faithful Catholic Knights know well that life does not end here on Earth and so for those who have left Earth it is still our duty to remember and pray for them, especially those who have no one to pray for them. Our dead, the ones we love, we can someday meet again. In communion with the saints who have reached heaven, let us also implore their help, especially through the patron saints of purgatory, like St. Nicholas of Tolentino and St. Gertrude the Great. We won't know on Earth whether our prayer made a difference for someone, but it is in faith that we believe God listens to every one of our prayers, and we can trust solely in His true love that God will make things right in the end.

We have this responsibility to pray for all souls who have passed, that they may attain heaven. But as Knights here on Earth, we have to remember that the journey to heaven is not a solo trek. You seek to bring everyone with you. If one person falls, you travel to him or her, and help them get up, and you carry along together towards the destination. This is what God has entrusted us to do, to reveal such love as His love. Within our families, jobs, school, or wherever God calls us to be, we must give everything of ourselves in bringing others on the adventure, and helping them endure. Think of the image of exhaustively falling down on God's doorstep after the journey is over. You look back, and see no one, because the ones traveling with you have gone inside already.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus met Jesus, and soon realized with glorious joy that death was no more. It would be quite something if we could spread that joy like they did. To help others come to know Jesus, and therefore know that death, and all its baggage- fear, suffering, sadness- has no real power could free people from so much. To try to do all this- helping the dead and the living- we come to God first, and He will reveal to us what we need to know. As St. John Vianney said: “this is the glorious duty of man: to pray and to love.”