

This Week's Readings

First Reading: Wisdom 3: 1-9.

The Book of Wisdom here describes the souls of the deceased just people as being at peace with God.

Second Reading: Romans 6: 3-9.

St Paul compares the death and resurrection of Jesus to the death of our sinful nature and to our new life here and hereafter.

Gospel: Matthew 25: 31-46.

We read the description of the Last Judgment. The basis for judgment will be our treatment of Christ in the needy people of society.



Points for Reflection

Yesterday the pilgrim Church on earth celebrated the glory of the Church in Heaven by invoking the intercession of the saints. Today she joins again in prayer to intercede for those of her children who "have finished with this present life and are being purified" (Lumen Gentium 49).

As long as time lasts, the Church will consist of three states: 1) the blessed, who already enjoy the sight of God; 2) the dead in need of purification, who have not yet been admitted to that vision; 3) and travelers who are undergoing the trials of this present life.

There is a separation between each of these three. This, nevertheless, does not prevent a spiritual union, for "all who belong to Christ form one Church and cleave together in him, united in him. Therefore the union of the wayfarers with the brethren, who have gone to sleep in peace in Christ, is not the least interrupted. On the contrary it is strengthened through the exchanging of spiritual goods" (Ibid).

What are these goods? The saints intercede on our behalf. We are their brethren, struggling here on earth, and they encourage us with their example. They pray to hasten the time of eternal glory for their dead brothers and sisters, who are waiting to be ushered in. This is the communion of saints in action: saints in heaven, in purgatory, on earth. They are all saints, although at very different levels, through the grace of Christ. It is the grace of Christ that gives them life and through which they are all united.

The recent "Catechism of the Catholic Church" conveys the traditional doctrine of the Church regarding "Purgatory". It states:

- #1030 – "All who died in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven."
- #1031 – "The Church gives the name "Purgatory" to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned."

