

Living Eternally Through Death and Dying V:

Living Trusts, Bequeaths, and Memorial Masses

A bulletin insert series informing and inspiring the faithful in the truths surrounding death and dying

The following is the final in a series of bulletin inserts related to death and dying.

“Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”(Lk 6:38)

- I. **Gifts of Love:** Many who have been faithful and sacrificial in their lifetimes continue their giving after they depart from this world. A meaningful and simple way to support the work of Christ awaits everyone who includes his/her parish in a trust or in a will. Creating a living trust or bequeathing all or a portion of one’s estate to the mission of Christ through His Body, the Church, helps assure one’s loving ministry continues through Christ. Our bequest will allow us to make an impact in perpetuity.
 - a. A living trust is a legal document. It can provide us with the peace of mind that comes from knowing that our well-deserved material wealth will be protected in the unexpected event of our physical or mental capacity failing. A living trust can be written in a way that will pass our assets on to our beneficiaries immediately upon our death. Or, we can designate that they be portioned out over time, in amounts that we specify. A living trust not only provides for one’s family, but the trust is also a wonderful way to make a gift to the Church, for the progress of Jesus in the world.
 - b. A charitable bequest is simply a distribution from one’s estate to a charitable organization through one’s last will and testament. For as long as we live in this world, we keep for our own the assets we have earned; and, we can change our plans whenever we wish.

“You are being enriched in every way for all generosity, which through us produces thanksgiving to God.” (2 Cor 9:11)

- II. **Remembering Our Beloved Dead:** There is a strong spiritual relationship that exists between the members of the Church- the militant Church (those living on

the earth), the suffering Church (those in purgatory), and the triumphant Church (those saints in heaven). We, the living members of the Church, often assist one another in faith by our prayers, sacrifices and spiritual support for each other. Likewise, our prayers for the dead express hope that God will free the person who has died from any burden of sin and prepare a place for him or her in heaven.

- a. A precious soul in the state of purgatory is able to receive any spiritual benefit passively. God's mercy is poured out to them and our prayers rise to assist them. Until the soul is in the presence of God (and becomes a saint), the person is not capable of performing new meritorious acts. While such a soul is heaven-bound, it cannot increase in sanctity but only be purified of those imperfections which impede its definitive entrance into glory. We cannot enter heaven if we have not been completely cleansed of sin and all punishment due to sin (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1031 and 1472).
- b. The Memorial Mass: The greatest prayer that we can offer for the dead is the prayer of Christ on the Cross, the sacrifice of the Mass; it is the "source and summit" of our Catholic life. We, the faithful, unite the souls of our loved ones to the Death and Resurrection of Christ when we have Memorial Masses celebrated for their joyful repose. This help to their salvation may take place on the anniversary of their death, their birthday, their baptism Day or any time when Mass is celebrated.

The Catechism asserts, "From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic Sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God" (Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 1032).

This tradition of offering Masses for others, particularly the dead, originates in the early Church. The epitaph on the tomb of Abercius (c.a. 180), Bishop of Hieropolis in Phrygia, asks for prayers for the repose of his soul. St. Hippolytus of Rome (c.a. 235) mentions explicitly the offering of prayers for the dead during the Mass.

It is comforting to know that our individual prayers and our intentions offered in Holy Mass make a difference. The love, which our prayers express, cannot be in vain, "love is as strong as death" (Song of Songs 8:6).