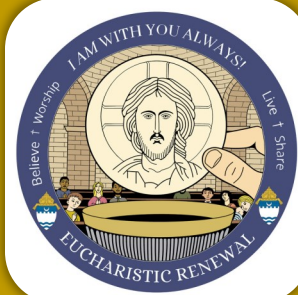


Encountering the Eucharist

Believe ✦ Worship ✦ Live ✦ Share



If you've ever been to a Catholic funeral, you probably noticed that the casket is usually covered with a white cloth. This is called a "pall." it serves to be a reminder of the white garment that each of us received at our baptism. During the rite of baptism, when the white garment is presented to the person or the parents, the priest or deacon says: "With your family and friends to help you by word and example bring it unstained into eternal life." It is most fitting, therefore, that the casket is covered with a symbol of that garment which the deceased brings into eternal life. The body is also incensed during the funeral because it received the holy sacramental elements during life: oil, water, Eucharist. We recognize the sanctity of the body by the incense.

What We Believe...

The Communion of Saints...The Resurrection of the Body

In the Apostle's Creed, we confess our belief in "the communion of Saints, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting." These brief statements contain within them the effects of the Pascal Mystery, that is, the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, how often do we ponder what these statements mean? During the month of November, the Church places before us the 'holy dead' for our contemplation. Liturgically, we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints and the next day the Commemoration of All Souls. We are all too familiar with the loss of loved ones through death; it's simply part of our human experience. Nevertheless, both the Church Triumphant (those holy souls who are in Heaven) and the Church Suffering (those holy souls who are in Purgatory) can teach us about the meaning of the Eucharist if we are willing to ponder the mystery. On the death of his brother, St. Ambrose gave a eulogy for him that's recorded in the *Two Books of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, on the Decease of His Brother Satyrus*. It's a great meditation on death and sorrow. At one point, after expressing how much he misses the earthly presence of his brother, Ambrose says that one night while he was in bed thinking about the loss he says: "So that, as I lay with my limbs bathed in sleep, while I was [in mind] awake for you, you were alive to me. I could say, 'What is death, my brother?' For certainly you were not separated from me for a single moment, for you were so present with me everywhere, that enjoyment of each other, which we were unable to have in the intercourse of this life, is now always and everywhere with us." In other words, St. Ambrose recognizes that, freed from the limitations of this earthly life, his brother is *more present now* than when he was alive! "Presence" is a psychological concept. We can be sitting right next to a stranger on a bus or airplane and never be "present" to that other person. Yet, we can sense the presence of someone close to us who is in fact far away in proximity. Being able to recognize the Real Presence of the Resurrected Jesus in the Eucharist, can also facilitate our ability to recognize the presence of the all the Saints in Heaven, including all of our deceased love ones, who are "always and everywhere with us." "We are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses" the writer to the Hebrews tells us. The familiar adage, *You are what you eat*, also applies to the Eucharist. We receive the Body of Christ and, simultaneously, we are united to the whole body of Christ here on earth, in Heaven, and in Purgatory. We are in "communion" together with all the holy people of God in Christ Jesus Our Lord.



Sharing Our Very Life: Praying for the Dead

"It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins" (2 Maccabees 12:46). It is the Catholic practice to remember the souls of the faithfully departed especially during the month of November. In a particular way, our prayers are directed toward assisting the souls in Purgatory. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that all "who die 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. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned" (#1030-1031). We recall that Our Lord, in the Sermon on the Mount, declared: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Mt. 5:8). Since apostolic times, the Church has taught that in order to experience the Beatific Vision (i.e. seeing God face-to-face or Heaven) our soul must be completely detached from all lesser or inferior "goods." In other words, our love for God must be central, wholehearted, focused, and absolute for us to stand in the Divine Presence. If we die in the state of grace but with desires or attachments to worldly things or our love for God isn't perfectly pure, through God's mercy, we undergo a time of purgation. Susan Tassone writes: "We need to be greedy for graces for the souls in purgatory. When the soul leaves the body, the time for merit is up. The soul is helpless. That's why they need our prayers — the Rosary, adoration, the Way of the Cross and, most of all, the Mass. The Masses we have offered for the souls in purgatory are the best thing we can do for our beloved dead. That's because the Mass is the highest form of worship, the highest form of prayer." Let us be mindful during this month of the Church Suffering and aid them by our prayers.



"So, then, I hold you, my brother, and neither death nor time shall tear you from me. Tears themselves are sweet, and weeping itself a pleasure, for by these the eagerness of the soul is assuaged, and affection being eased is quieted. For neither can I be without you, nor ever forget you, or think of you without tears."

-from book I of *On the Death of Satyrus* by St. Ambrose
378 A.D.

Life in the Eucharist: St. Satyrus of Milan

Confessor and brother of Sts. Ambrose and Marcellina. He died unexpectedly at Milan and was eulogized by his brother St. Ambrose in the funeral sermon, "On The Death of a Brother." On Satyrus' return from the last of his African trips, his ship was wrecked on shores just off the coast of Sicily. Before jumping off the boat, St. Satyrus requested that

a small piece of the Blessed Sacrament be wrapped up in a small napkin, and fastened around his neck. St. Ambrose attributes his safe deliverance from the sea to this, noting that Satyrus' faith in God was so strong that he did not even bother to grab onto one of the planks of the broken vessel. After safely reaching land, Satyrus, still a cate-



chumen, decided to be baptized. He died suddenly from an unknown disease.

Adoro te Devote: The Apostolic Pardon for the Dying

The Apostolic Pardon is given as part of viaticum. *The Manual of Indulgences* #12 says: "A priest who administers the sacraments to someone in danger of death should not fail to impart the apostolic blessing to which a plenary indulgence is attached. If a priest is unavailable, Holy Mother Church benevolently grants to the Christian faithful, who are duly disposed, a plenary indulgence to be acquired at the point of death, provided they have been in the habit of reciting some prayers during their lifetime; in such a case, the Church supplies for the three conditions ordinarily required for a plenary indulgence. In this latter case, the use of a crucifix or a cross in obtaining the plenary indulgence is commendable. The catechetical instruction of the faithful should ensure that they are duly made aware and frequently reminded of this salutary benefaction of the Church." One of the formulas the priest uses for imparting the Apostolic Pardon is:

"By the authority which the Apostolic See has given me, I grant you a full pardon and the remission of all your sins:

In the name of the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

