

## **one**

**The Church of Jesus is identified by four distinguishing marks: it is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.**

**Today we reflect on the way the Church is One, yet many of us forget that the Church isn't just composed of those on earth. The Church is made up of those on earth, those in purgatory, and the saints in Heaven. Those of us on earth are the Church Militant because we're fighting a war against three enemies - The World (temptations from others), The flesh (temptations from ourselves), and the devil (temptations from the demons). This is why we're here. To fight. And as Fulton Sheen would say, "God hates peace in those whom He has destined for war."**

**It was Christ Himself who said (Mt 10:34) "I came not to bring peace but the sword." And St. Paul told Christians to (Eph 6:11) "put you the armor of God."**

**This is the battlefield; it's happening right now.**

**The battle doesn't last long, but it's your only real chance to distinguish yourself, to contribute, to aid the cause**

**After the battle, there's only three kinds of people: The traitors, who fight on the other side, the cowards, who don't do much but don't actually change sides, and the heroes.**

**The hero goes straight to heaven and a traitor goes straight to hell, but a coward goes to purgatory**

## **two**

**The Church Suffering:**

**The Church in purgatory consists of those souls who are in rehab because they didn't fight as hard as they could and they allowed themselves and others to be wounded by sin.**

**Most of us don't risk our lives in battle, we get involved in a few skirmishes but we don't abandon ourselves to the cause. We hang back where there isn't as much danger, where it's not as rough. So we go to Purgatory where we have to go through two torments: First, we have to detox from our sin. We'll never be happy until we're freed from our addictions. And if it hurts to go through detox for something our body is addicted to, think how much worse it will be to detox from what our soul is addicted to (like resentment, vanity, self-will, self-importance, complaining, etc...) and that will be painful.**

**But worse than that is the pain of loss, of missed opportunity. You're going to see all the people you could have helped to heaven, all the poor sad people you could have so easily**

been generous towards. You're going to see all the ways you could have made the world a better place. And it's too late now. You had your chance, your chance to be loving to your families, your kids, your friends, or just needy people who could have benefitted so much from a little time with you. And if you had just taken the opportunities God had given you, everyone would have been so much better off. And you could have been with God now.

Trust me, you don't want to spend a minute in purgatory. Take the opportunities God offers you now to serve Him, to serve others, and to become holy yourself.

## **three**

### **The Church Triumphant**

Church Triumphant consists of the heroes in heaven, those who have passed through all their purification, whether on earth or in purgatory, those who have been made perfect, celebrating the victory of God and all good men and women. The battle is over and we won!

One day, the only Church will be the Church Triumphant. Purgatory and Earth will be over, and we will all, God willing, be among the victors, reigning with the angels

But until then, how do these three branches of the Church relate? How are heaven and purgatory and earth connected?

## **four**

### **The Christian connection across the gulf of death**

Protestants always want to know why Catholics do so much with the saints. Why do we honor the saints? Why do we pray to the saints? And Catholics say to Protestants, don't you guys ask your friends to pray for you? And the Protestants say, "Sure, but that's different!" We say, "No it's not! Christ has conquered death. What that means is that death is no longer an obstacle to love."

Death unites us to Christ and union with Christ enhances your ability to love and serve your neighbor.

That's why, when saints like Therese were dying or being taken away to Auschwitz, they said that one of the things they were looking forward to about Heaven was being able to do even more good on Earth.

We say, "Oh death, where is your victory? Oh death, where is your sting?" (I Corinthians 15:55) – because death unites us more with Christ, and therefore it unites us all the more with each other.

**The Church's bonds are not broken by death. We are still one body in Christ with those in Heaven and Purgatory.**

## **five**

### **Helping those in Purgatory and asking for help from those in Heaven**

**One night, a sister who had died two months previously came to me. She was a sister of the first choir. I saw her in a terrible condition, all in flames with her face painfully distorted. This lasted only a short time, and then she disappeared. A shudder went through my soul because I did not know whether she was suffering in purgatory or in hell. Nevertheless, I redoubled my prayers for her. The next night she came again, but I saw her in an even more horrible state, in the midst of flames which were even more intense, and despair was written all over her face...Despite this, I kept on praying. After some time she came back again to me during the night, but already her appearance had changed. There were no longer any flames, as there had been before, and her face was radiant, her eyes beaming with joy. She told me that I had a true love for my neighbor and that many other souls had profited from my prayers. She urged me not to cease praying for the souls in purgatory, and she added that she herself would not remain there much longer. Diary 58**

**Then one evening...the deceased sister, who had already visited me a few times, appeared to me. The first time I had seen her, she had been in great suffering, and then gradually these sufferings had diminished; this time she was radiant with happiness, and she told me she was already in heaven...Then she came closer to me, embraced me sincerely and said, "I must go now." I understood how closely the three stages of a soul's life are bound together; that is to say, life on earth, in purgatory and in heaven [the Communion of Saints] Diary 594**

**So, what could we take as our resolution?**

**Pray for the souls in purgatory: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.**

**Another is to choose a Saint as your travelling companion today? Mary keeps me close to her side because I tend to get in trouble. And I talk a lot with Kolbe and Faustyna and St. Louis De Montfort. Who will it be for you?**

**CCC 958 Our prayer for the souls in purgatory is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.**