

Praying for the Dead

Please read before the lesson to prepare

Most students will remember that we pray for the dead during the Mass. Praying for our deceased loved ones and hoping to encounter them in heaven is deeply ingrained in our humanity. As Christians, we commend the dead to the mercy of God, we remember and honor their memory, we pray for them that they may experience the love and mercy of God, and we ask for their intercession. Praying for the dead is a central aspect of our faith, and many students have likely prayed for a deceased love one during a funeral or on All Souls Day/Día de los Muertos.

This session is meant to reaffirm and encourage the practice of praying for the dead and to teach the special ways that we pray for the dead in the funeral liturgy and at each Mass during the prayers of the faithful.

Below are some Bible and Catechism quotes that will help you to prepare for this lesson.

Bible Quotations

St. Paul prays for his departed friend, “May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day.” – 2 Tim 1:18

“For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.” – 2 Maccabees 12: 39-45



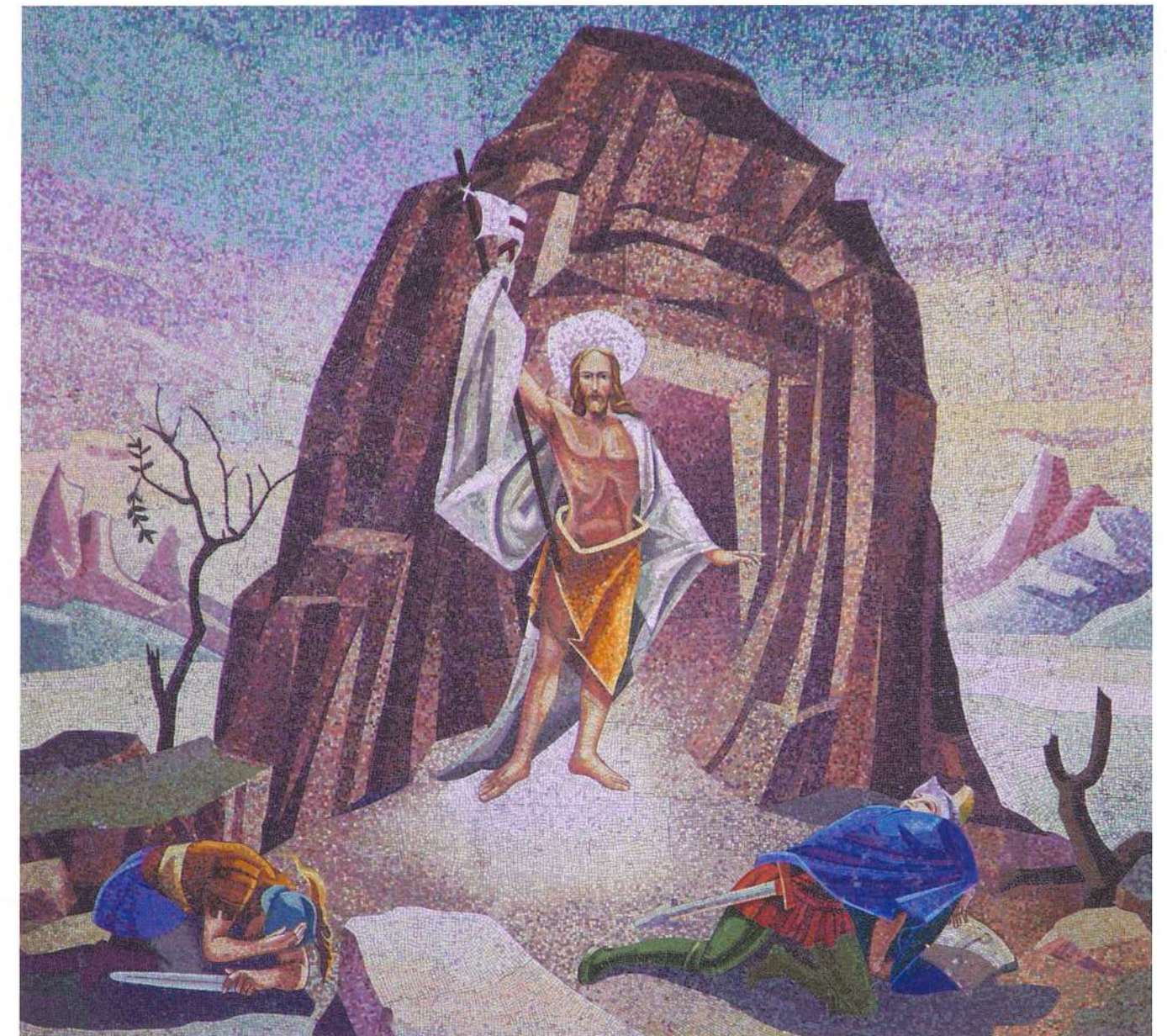
Catechism Quotations

CCC 958 – *Communion with the dead.* “In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; and ‘because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins she offers her suffrages for them.’ Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.”

CCC 1032 – “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. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead:

Let us help and commemorate them. If Job’s sons were purified by their father’s sacrifice, why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them.”

CCC 1055 – “By virtue of the ‘communion of saints,’ the Church commends the dead to God’s mercy and offers her prayers, especially the holy sacrifice of the Eucharist, on their behalf.”



Opening Prayer

Suggested prayer from catholic.org, modify to suit your use as needed

God our Father, Your power brings us to birth, Your providence guides our lives, and by Your command we return to dust.	relatives and friends, and for all the dead known to You alone.
Lord, those who die still live in Your presence, their lives change but do not end. I pray in hope for my family,	In company with Christ, Who died and now lives, may they rejoice in Your kingdom, where all our tears are wiped away. Unite us together again in one family, to sing Your praise forever and ever. Amen.

1) Proclamation

We firmly hope in the resurrection of the dead, and we pray for all who have died that they may experience the mercy of God. We also ask for their prayers for all our needs, especially that we may grow in holiness and draw closer to the Lord.

2) Explanation

For this age group, we recommend that the central teaching be done after a conversation with the students from which the most important points can be elaborated on.

Suggested question prompts:

- 1) **Q.** Has anyone ever been to a funeral? Why do we celebrate funerals?
A. To remember and honor the dead. To bury or inter our loved ones. To seek the Lord's mercy.
- 2) **Q.** What are some ways we honor our family members who have passed away?
A. Put up a picture. Remember them at the celebration of All Souls Day, and Día de los Muertos. Attend their funeral. Pray for them.



- 3) **Q.** When does the Church pray for all of our loved ones who have died?
A. At Mass, during funerals, at cemeteries, and at home or in church, we can pray for our family members who have died. On All Saints Day on November 1st, we ask for the prayers of all those saints who are alive with Jesus in Heaven. On All Souls Day we pray for all those members of our families and all those who have died . . .
- 4) **Q.** How do we pray for those who have died?
A. We pray for our family members, friends and all who have died at Mass, when we say our prayers at night; we can remember them when we pray or when we miss them . . .

Teaching

- Did you know that one of the most beautiful things that Jesus taught was that those who have faith in Him will have everlasting life and will be with Him in heaven? Our loved ones in heaven are united with us especially during the Mass where heaven worships together with us. We can pray for them and ask for their prayers.

Share a story about a family member or friend that you talk to and pray for/with.

Catechesis (main points to cover)

- Jesus loves us so much He wants us to live with Him and everyone else who is in heaven forever.
- On earth there are many good things but the earth is not our final home. God's love has something prepared for us that is even better. Here on earth there is sin and sickness, but in heaven everything good on earth is brought to perfection.
- When someone dies we have a special way of remembering and honoring them called a funeral, which prepares the person who has died to enter into new and everlasting life with Jesus and helps the family mourn their loss.
- We pray for our family and friends who have died, hoping that they will experience the love and mercy of God, and we ask for their intercession for us.
- We believe that we will be reunited with our family and friends and all those who are in heaven.

3) Application

Guided reflection and discussion

- Prompt: start with a large group discussion.
 - Is there someone who died that you

would want to meet in heaven? A famous person, a family member, a friend? What would you ask them?

Let several students respond, establish a proper sense of excitement and wonder

- Activity sheet "We Pray to the Lord"
Help students fill in the worksheet.
 - Which family members do you want to pray for?
 - Which friends do you want to pray for?
 - Who else do you want to pray for?
 - What deceased family and friends do you want to pray for?
- Key points to reinforce.
 - We are asked by God to remember the dead in prayer.
 - We are asked by God to honor the dead by praying for them, honoring their memory, visiting their gravesite, etc.
 - In heaven we are one big family, and our relationship doesn't end when someone dies. We are united through Christ and His Church.
 - We pray for the dead and ask for their prayers.
 - One day we hope to join them in heaven.
 - Those who have died who are preparing for heaven in purgatory are helped by our prayers.



4) Celebration

Finish the lesson by reinforcing any key points and offering a concluding prayer inviting children to pray for any family members and friends who have died.



“I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep.

My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand” — *John 10:14-15, 27-28*

We pray to the Lord.

Make a list of all the people you want to pray for.

Family: _____

Friends: _____

Other people: _____

Deceased family and friends: _____

