



**Note regarding the Gospel text:** The passage below may or may not be the Gospel text that appears on this date in some of the printed missals such as *Magnificat* or others. The Roman missal offers the option of 24 different Gospel passages of which this is one. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

John 11:17-27

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."

**Introductory Prayer:** Lord, I believe in you with a faith that never seeks to test you. I trust in you, hoping to learn to accept and follow your will, even when it does not make sense to the way that I see things. I love you, and I want to love you and those around me with a love similar to the love you have shown to me.

**Petition:** Lord, help me to take seriously the gravity of purgatory and the plight of those who end up there.

**1. Even God Weeps for those who Have Died:** Today we remember our loved ones who have passed away, just as Mary and Martha remember their brother Lazarus in this passage from the Gospel. It is a good and holy thing to be sad when a loved one dies. Some think that it is a lack of faith to be sad when someone dies, but in the passage,

Jesus does not rebuke Mary and Martha for being sad but tries to console them. Later, when he comes to the tomb himself, Jesus weeps for Lazarus (John 11:35). What a terrible thing death must be for Jesus to weep for Lazarus even though he knows that in a few moments he will raise Lazarus from the dead. Clearly, we don't appreciate the true tragedy of death, that God himself would weep for a friend who is dead while knowing he has power over death.

**2. You Don't Want to Go There:** We are quick to put people in heaven, probably a little too quick. We are not doing them a favor. Many of us, even the best of us, will not go straight to heaven, but will have to spend some time in purgatory, to be cleansed of our attachments and desires toward sinfulness as well as for any sins for which we have not done sufficient penance. We tend to underestimate purgatory as well, maybe because people there are assured of getting into heaven. While it is true that people in purgatory probably experience a joy beyond anything we will experience in this life, they also experience more intense suffering than anything we have experienced in this life. The suffering of purgatory is similar to the suffering of hell, and we know we don't want to experience that. Purgatory is nothing I want my loved ones to experience if I can help it, nor do I want to go there myself, if I can help it. The great thing is, I can help it.

**3. Only the Living Hold the Keys to Purgatory:** What am I willing to do to avoid purgatory? Up until now, have I even thought of it as something to be avoided? Do I realize that all the sacrifices I can make in this life to avoid purgatory do not add up to what it will be like to suffer in purgatory? Do I ever remember that my loved ones may be there now? Perhaps while they were in this life, they suffered greatly, and I was relieved by their deaths because now their "suffering was over." Am I an "out of sight, out of mind" kind of person? Do I think there is nothing more I can do for them? Or am I genuinely concerned about the likelihood that they may be in purgatory? Do I realize that my prayers and sacrifices represent the key to release them and that I can use it if I want to? Do I care about using it? On this day when we remember the souls in purgatory, it would be good to do something for those who are there, especially for the ones I love the most.

**Conversation with Christ:** Dear Jesus, help me to remember those I love and offer up sacrifices, prayers and masses for them frequently, so they may be with you as soon as possible. Help me to make the choices I need to make in this life so I can avoid purgatory as much as possible.

**Resolution:** Today I will make a sacrifice for my loved ones in purgatory, remembering that for God, the size of the sacrifice does not count as much as the love with which it is made.