

***Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time (English Mass)***  
***Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost (Latin Mass)***  
***September 17, 2023***  
***Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant***

*“To Thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.”*  
*(Hail, Holy Queen Prayer)*

As we reflect upon this selection of the “Hail Holy Queen” prayer, our minds are again drawn to a previous discussion concerning the intercession of the Blessed Mother. As a reminder, Christians, as early as the third century, asked for the intercession of the Blessed Mother. We examined this through our discussion of the prayer: We Fly to Thy Patronage (*Sub Tuum Praesidium*).

For generations, Christians have, in prayer, requested the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. This notion of the benefit in asking for assistance or offering assistance through prayer would not have been something early Christians developed. Please ask yourself this question. We have all either asked for someone to pray for us or have been asked to pray for another—Where did this come from? If Jesus is the one mediator between God and man, then why should any Christian ask another person to pray for a need? To answer this, we must begin with an important statement. It was not Christianity which developed the need for intercessory prayer. Intercessory prayer was already being practiced by our Jewish ancestors who became the first Christians. We are able to read the letters of Saint Paul who often spoke of praying for his communities or asking for the prayers of others. An example of this can be seen in his letters to the Colossians (Colossians 1:3) and Philippians (Philippians 1:4). The practice of asking another to pray for a need has always been Jewish. It was later adopted by Christians and is still requested daily by Christians, for Christians.

Allow me to take this Jewish concept of Intercessory Prayer one step further. If the living could offer assistance through prayer, then could those who have died also do as much? To answer this, one would again need to return to our Jewish roots concerning both God and death. When a person’s earthly journey has run its course and their soul has departed their body, then are they dead? Before we quickly respond with our answer, I ask that you consider how I worded the question: the soul separates from the physical body. Yes, our physical body can and does die, but does our soul die? Instead of listening to my answer, let us hear the words of Jesus, Himself, taken from the Gospel of Saint Mark (Mark 12:26-27). God can be the God of the living because He is eternal and all created souls are present in time which is present in God. Therefore, we can conclude that our souls, our intellects, essence and experiences, remain fully present once our body has run its course.

My family, through adding these two Jewish concepts together and later expounding upon them, we are able to ascertain that once a person is conceived of and begins to exist in the mind

of God, then that person is alive. Their being alive is not dependent upon a material birth, but solely dependent upon God. Furthermore, those who are born and begin to experience life as we currently experience it, will undoubtedly have many of the same experiences as we currently have or have had. One of these will be love. Once we know love, then we want to respond to that love by returning love. Does death stop this mutual exchange of love? Our Catholic Church responds by saying — NO! Therefore, one whose soul is currently present to God while their body is separated, remaining here on earth, continues to love and cherish those whom they loved and cherished while they were here on earth, body united to soul. Once love begins to be shared, it never ceases.

I say all of this as a precursor to our understanding of asking for the intercessory prayer of the Blessed Mother. Is Mary the Mother of Jesus? Yes, she is. Did she love her Son? Yes, she did. Did He give her to us and us to her as His last gift to humanity before dying upon the cross? Yes, He did. If the soul of Mary is currently present to her Son, with its love and experiences (one of which would be that moment when she became our Mother through His intention), then would death diminish her love either for Him or us? No, it would still be fully present. Then, would His Mother and our Mother love both He and us wanting all to be present as one family in Heaven together? Yes, that is what she would want. So, would she not listen, as a good mother should, to the voice of her child in its need? Yes, she would. All of these questions and answers lead me to conclude with our Catholic Church that anytime I lift up my voice in this valley of tears and ask for her help, the help of my Mother, then she will come in haste joining my love for God (imperfect as it is) to her love for God (perfectly joined with and to her Son) and offer my need or needs to her Son seeking what He deems is best for my salvation.