

# FAITH FUNDAMENTALS

Helping Catholics to Learn, Live, and Love their Faith.

NOVEMBER 2024 SUPPLEMENT

## Saint of the Month



**St. Gertrude the Great, Virgin** (Feast day, Nov 16) – This German Benedictine nun (d.1301 AD) is the only woman in the Church calendar to bear the title “The Great.” It was given to her by Pope Benedict XVI, another German. At age 25 she began having mystical visions of Jesus which lasted until her death at age 45.

St. Gertrude is the first saint to formalize the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, although the devotion is as old as the piercing of His Heart on Calvary. She also had mystical visions of the holy souls in Purgatory and encouraged the faithful to pray for them daily, especially at Mass. For centuries she was venerated as a saint though never officially canonized. In 1677, Pope Innocent XI simply declared her a saint due to the Church’s longstanding veneration of her writings and holiness.

## Catechism Connection



**FORGIVENESS VS ATONEMENT** – In a neighborhood baseball game, if a boy hits a fly ball and breaks his neighbor’s window, the neighbor may forgive the boy for the offense, but the damage still has to be repaired. The harmful act costs something of the person harmed and must be atoned for by the one who committed the act.

This is why the Church believes in Purgatory. We must pay the cost (debt) of our own sins. God forgives all who repent, but sin damages both the human community and the Church, not to mention our relationship with God. Only the holiest saints die completely purified of the debt of sin. Our Catechism says:

We must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned *neither in this age nor in the age to come*. From this sentence

we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come. (CCC, 1031)

Only Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross could have made atonement for the eternal debt of sin incurred by the human race, but each of us must undergo temporal punishment to pay for our personal sins. Purgatory is where we do that after death.

## Back to Basics



### WAYS TO MAKE ATONEMENT FOR SIN

In this life, it is possible to pay or reduce our debt of sin before we die. In fact, our Church gives us many ways to do so, by:

**Offering Suffering** – We may offer our personal sufferings to the Lord as a way of uniting ourselves with His atoning sacrifice on the Cross.

**Sacramental Confession** – After the absolution, the priest assigns us a penance in order to make atonement for the sins we have confessed.

**Works of Mercy** – Doing good to others in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy is a powerful force for the remission of the temporal punishment for our sins.

**Prayer and Fasting** – These spiritual works purify us of our debt of sin, particularly in the renunciation of self that they signal.

*“Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins.” (1 Pt. 4:8)*

## SITSTANDKNEEL

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