

# Father's Notes

*January 26, 2025*

How many of you have read the Book of Maccabees in the Bible? It tells how the Jewish people defied their Greek rulers and against all odds, reclaimed their home and temple, setting the basis for the celebration of Hanukkah. I'm surprised it hasn't been made into a film yet, with all its action and adventure! Within these pages of daring and heroism, lies a critical passage that affirms praying for the dead.

In 2 Maccabees 12:39-45, we find an encounter where the leader of the Jewish revolt, Judas (not the one who betrayed Jesus!) takes up a collection on behalf of fallen Jewish warriors. These men had worn pagan idols around their necks during the previous battle. The passage is interesting because Judas has the survivors both pray and offer a collection towards the temple in reparation for the deceased. Here's what the last verses says: "In doing this he (Judas) acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection. 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 12:43-45)

Praying for the dead and making sacrifice on their behalf is neither Catholic superstition nor unfounded in scripture. Here we have an accepted practice by the Jewish people in praying for the dead. Judas is not "buying" his fallen comrades' salvation, but interceding on their behalf through sacrificing something important. He and the other men are saying "These soldiers' salvation is more important than silver, and we are willing to give it up so that they can see God face-to-face."

Maccabees affirms what the church teaches in that we must pray for the dead and make sacrifices on their behalf. This is a special invitation from God to assist Him in interceding for others to enter heaven. When we pray and sacrifice something of importance, we are putting the salvation of another before our own comforts. We are being like Judas and his men, acting in a holy and pious way. Ultimately, it is God who grants salvation and yet, invites us to help make this happen.

May we offer daily prayers and some kind of sacrifice (refraining from screen time, food, dessert, time, moderate financial donation, extra prayer to name a few) to help many souls see God face-to-face!

God bless,  
Fr. Ben