

# TORTURED SOUL

by Theresa Linden

## BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

1. The story begins with a close look at man named Fred Rake. Fred works hard. He enjoys Louis Armstrong music, and he's just purchased a new sound system. His son does not appreciate him or share his work ethic, and he has a drug problem. Fred could be any one of us. We all have strengths and weaknesses and goals for each day. Some of us have broken families or loved ones with serious problems. Regardless of our hopes and plans for our lives, each one of us will die. As Our Lord taught in Matthew 25:13, we need to keep watch because none of us knows the day or the hour that we will be called from this world. **How often do you think about the Four Last Things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell? What does it mean to keep watch?**
2. The Church has always taught us to pray for the souls of those who have gone before us, and She remembers the souls in purgatory in a special way every November. Trella, Jeannie's sister-in-law, celebrates the Day of the Dead, a two-day celebration which coincides with All Saints Day and All Souls Day. Family and friends remember and pray for loved ones who have gone before them. It is not a time of sadness so much as a time of celebration and a reminder to help dearly departed on the spiritual journey. **In what ways do you remember deceased loved ones? How often do you pray for their souls? Consider how many people you know that have died and how often you have prayed for them. Might God be calling you to pray more?**
3. Jeannie treasures not only photographs and mementos of her departed parents but even the family home. **How can keepsakes serve as reminders to pray for loved ones? How can they sometimes stand in the way of our spiritual progress?**

4. In Chapter 3, Jeannie feels her mother's presence and thinks she sees her reflection. **Have you had experiences or dreams that have made you think of a loved one who has gone before you? How did you respond?**
  
5. When disturbances first began in the house, Jeannie wanted to attribute them to her cat or the old house settling. Once she realized that wasn't the case, she then turned to prayer and holy water, and later a house blessing. **What steps would you take if you heard strange sounds in your house? At what point would you decide to move out?**
  
6. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that "all forms of divination are to be rejected" (CCC 2116). This includes conjuring up the dead or the phenomena of clairvoyance and recourse to mediums. But stories abound of souls in purgatory appearing to the living, both to those later declared saints and to ordinary people. **Why would God use supernatural methods to draw attention to the suffering souls? Are these supernatural occurrences ever meant just for the person to whom the soul appears?**
  
7. The soul that appeared to Jeannie, Fred Rake, looked more like a tree than a person when he first appeared to her. Only gradually, after several visits, was she able to recognize the soul as that of a man. Several visits later, Fred was finally able to speak. **Discuss how Fred Rake's changing appearance and ability to communicate reflects both the level of purgatory and the effect of Jeannie's prayers.**
  
8. Jeannie used Holy Water to sprinkle on the soul, thinking that if it were evil it would go away. Saint John Massias, known as the Helper of the Poor Souls, used to sprinkle Holy Water on the ground several times a day for their relief. **What benefit might Holy Water have for the suffering souls? How often do you use Holy Water?**

Here is a prayer you can say while practicing this devotion: *“By this holy water and by Thy precious blood, wash away all my sin, O Lord, and relieve the souls in purgatory.”* Conclude the prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

9. In chapter 24, Jeannie struggles to forgive Fred for taking the life of her father. She complains that it isn't fair that he ended up saved. Fred Rake explains how suffering and purgatory are both due to the mercy of God. **How can both our sufferings and purgatory be considered the mercy of God? What might it feel like to stand before the profound holiness of God and to see the state of your soul, every poor choice, every sin, and every missed opportunity?**
  
10. Many of us have lost a loved one who did not seem close to God. And while it would be foolish to delay conversion, Fred's story (based on souls that appeared to the real visionary) shows that end of life conversions are possible. Every time we pray the Hail Mary, we are asking our Lady to pray for us “at the hour of our death.” **How can this prayer offer us hope and renew our effort to pray the Rosary for those we love?**
  
11. The German legend of the Christmas birds in Chapter 7 shows the importance of being prepared. This is true on both the physical and spiritual levels. **Discuss how this story can also illustrate the teaching of purgatory.**
  
12. St. Leonard of Port Maurice said that the charity you exercise toward poor souls under purification will all redound to your own good. Through her experience with the soul, Jeannie learns to forgive, to let go of the past so that she can live in the present, and to show mercy toward her enemy. **How can praying for the souls—especially those in the deepest depths, those of our enemies, and those who have been forgotten—help us to grow spiritually?**

13. Many seem to think that once a person dies, they automatically go to heaven. This faulty belief might comfort the living, but it doesn't help the soul. Few will leave this world with the level of perfection required to go directly to heaven. **Discuss ways of explaining purgatory to others, especially to those who have lost a loved one and who have a responsibility to pray for them.**
14. According to the World Christian Database (Brill 2013) it was estimated that Catholics made up 15.6% of the world's population. A Pew Research Survey of US Catholics in 2015 showed that roughly half of American Catholics agree with the Church's teachings, depending upon the teaching. **Discuss how many people in the world likely believe in purgatory. Given this low number, how much more important is it for those who do believe to pray for the suffering souls?**
15. While the word "purgatory" is not in Sacred Scripture, the teaching is there. **Look up the following Scripture verses and discuss how they shed light on purgatory: 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, Matthew 5:26, 2 Maccabees 12:45, and Revelations 21:27.**

## MORE WAYS TO PRAY

In addition to using Holy Water, Jeannie prayed Psalm 130 and offered Holy Mass for Fred's soul. For more ideas about how to help the Suffering Souls, check out the following article: [20 Ways to Pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory](https://www.catholiccompany.com/magazine/20-ways-to-pray-for-the-holy-souls-in-purgatory-6154). <https://www.catholiccompany.com/magazine/20-ways-to-pray-for-the-holy-souls-in-purgatory-6154>.

## PRAYER BOOKS

*Daily Pilgrimage to Purgatory: A Powerful Devotion for the Holy Souls* by Seven Swords Publications is a devotion for the Souls in Purgatory that dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

*Day by Day for the Holy Souls in Purgatory: 365 Reflections* by Susan Tassone includes prayers and teachings about purgatory, along with real-life stories, quotes from saints, and meditations.