

The Purgatory Project **Transcript**

Purgatory: Things You Should Know

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PURGATORY, PART II w/FOOTNOTES Purgatory, Things You Should Know

Commentator 1

The Catholic Church teaches that at the moment of death, each person is judged based on his or her life in Christ. This is called the Particular Judgment where a soul receives its eternal reward or punishment (cf. CCC, 1022). Those who die in a state of unrepented mortal sin are condemned eternally to Hell where there is no chance of ever going to Heaven (cf. CCC, 1033-37). Those who die in the fullness of God's grace without any imperfections of the soul, go directly to Heaven (cf. CCC, 1023-29). However, for those who die in God's grace but still have attractions to sin, unhealthy attachments to self, other creatures or things of this world (CCC, 1472) or have not made full reparation for past sins, a purification must first take place before going to Heaven. The Catholic Church calls this "place" or state of purification, Purgatory (cf. CCC, 1030-32; See also <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12575a.htm>).

Unfortunately, today, many people believe that when Jesus forgives a person's sins, they're home free; that they'll go straight to Heaven when they die. Or that someone who is already dead is in Heaven...We hear people say things like: Oh! She's with God in Heaven! Or, He's in a better place now. This is especially true of non-Catholic Christians, but also of misinformed Catholics.

Commentator 2

A Jesuit priest—who studied Purgatory based on accounts from the lives of the saints and authored the book "Purgatory Explained"—said that it is "very probable, almost certain" that you will go to Purgatory before going to Heaven (Schouppé S.J., Rev. Fr. F. X.. *Purgatory Explained (with Supplemental Reading: What Will Hell Be Like?) [Illustrated]* (Kindle Locations 4397-4408). TAN Books. Kindle Edition.). The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that reparation must be made for unforgiven venial sins or other sins that have already been forgiven, if not on earth, then in Purgatory (CCC, 1472). Historically, both Sacred Scripture (the Bible) and Sacred Tradition (or the perennial teachings) of the

WHAT THE CHURCH & SAINTS SAY ABOUT PURGATORY



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Catholic Church speak about the need to make reparation. For example, God forgave Adam and Eve for their sin of disobedience but then banned them from the Garden of Eden to work, labor and suffer until they returned unto dust (Gen 3:1-24). God forgave Moses and Aaron of their lack of confidence in Him but punished them by not letting them enter the promise land (Numbers 20:10-13). And after King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband killed, God punished David by taking the life of the son he had with Uriah's wife (2 Samuel 12:1-20). Also, since the time of the Apostles, we see references of a purification after death in the writings of St. Clement of Alexandria (Stromata 6:14 [A.D. 202]), Origen ((Homilies on Jeremiah 13:445, 448 [A.D. 244]), Tertullian (The Soul 35 [A.D. 210]; Tertullian, Against Marcion, 4:34, circa A.D. 220; Tertullian, Monagomy 10, A.D. 213), St. Cyprian (Letters 51[55]:20 [A.D. 253]), St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lectures 23:5:9 [A.D. 350]), St. John Chrysostom (Homilies on First Corinthians 41:5 [A.D. 392]; Homilies on Philippians 3:9-10 [A.D. 402]), and St. Augustine to name a few (Sermons 159:1 [A.D. 411]; (The City of God 21:13 [A.D. 419]; Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Charity 18:69 [A.D. 421]).

(SOURCES: <http://catholicbridge.com/catholic/purgatory-church-fathers.php>; http://www.staycatholic.com/ecf_purgatory.htm; http://www.helpersoftheholysouls.com/purgatory_corner/FirstChristiansOnPurgatory.htm; <https://www.catholicfidelity.com/apologetics-topics/purgatory/the-early-church-fathers-on-purgatory/>; <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12575a.htm>)

Commentator 1

Let's cut to the chase, "Why is believing in Purgatory so important?" First of all, it's a doctrine of the Catholic Church, and all Catholics are obligated to believe in Purgatory (See [Apostles Creed: The Communion of Saints; CCC, 946, 976, 1055, 1475, 1479](#)). In a practical sense though, suppose you intentionally break a window in your neighbor's house but later regret what you did. And let's say that in your sorrow, you confess to him that you broke his window and then ask for his forgiveness. Being a generous man, your neighbor takes pity on you, is merciful and forgives you for what you did. Does that make everything right? No, there's still a broken window that needs to be repaired; in other words, there's still a duty or obligation to make reparation.

The same holds true with God. God is merciful when we are sorry, repent (by turning away from our sins) and ask for forgiveness; and through His Son Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven. But there's still the matter of making reparation—or repairing—the damage caused by that sin. The Church teaches that sin has two consequences: Mortal sin deprives us of friendship with God and is deserving of the first consequence of "eternal punishment" in Hell. On the other hand, every sin entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures which must be purified either here on earth or after death in Purgatory. This purification frees us from the second consequence which is called the "temporal punishment" of sin ([CCC, 1472](#)).

For Catholics, the normal way of receiving God's forgiveness is by going to Confession—the Sacrament of Penance (or Reconciliation) ([CCC, 1455-58; 1468-70](#)) which we will discuss in more detail in another program. When the priest (in the person of Christ) absolves us from our sins (provided we've made a good confession by confessing all mortal sins in both kind and number [Code of Canon Law, 988, §1]; and have the proper disposition and contrition), we can be certain that we're forgiven (including any confessed or unconfessed venial sins). The priest then gives us a penance to perform which removes either all or part of the temporal punishment due to our sins ([CCC, 1450; 1459-60](#)).

However, we should not be content with only doing the minimum. We should also be open to penances that God sends (by accepting them with patience and endurance) or by other penances that we voluntarily undertake like fasting, prayers, almsgiving, or other works of piety (cf. [Hardon, John. Catholic Catechism \(Kindle Locations 9429-9430\). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition](#)). This is where Purgatory comes into play.

Commentator 2

Pope John Paul II, in a General Audience in August 1999, reminded us that even though God is merciful, His Mercy

does not excuse us from our duty to be pure, holy and rich in love. He said that every trace of attachment to sin must be eliminated and every imperfection of the soul corrected before we can enter into Heaven. (cf. [General Audience, August 4, 1999](#)). And so if we die before being completely purified and perfected, we go to Purgatory to finish that process.

The Church speaks about Purgatory as being a cleansing fire that is intended to purify, unlike the fires of Hell which are intended to punish ([CCC, 1031](#)). Saints Augustine, Pope Gregory the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure all speak of a fire that is more severe than any fire on earth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12575a.htm>: See [Purgatorial fire](#)). St. Catherine of Genoa said that the fires of divine love in Purgatory are so violent and powerful that God must sustain souls from being utterly destroyed (cf. [A Treatise on Purgatory, Chapter VIII](#)). St. Faustina tells us that the greatest suffering in Purgatory is not the fire (per se, as bad as that is) but the intense desire to be with God which is delayed because of the soul's purification (cf. [Kowalska, Saint Maria Faustina. Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul \(Kindle Locations 821-822\). Marian Press. Kindle Edition](#)).

Pope Benedict XVI speaks of the fire of Purgatory as a "blessed pain in which Jesus' love sears through us like a flame that enables us to become totally ourselves and therefore totally of God, and that the pain of love becomes our salvation and joy. He also said that the duration of Purgatory cannot be compared to time as we know it because it is a "passage" to communion with God (cf. [Spe Salvi, 47](#)). And finally, St. Catherine says that God, in His justice and mercy, does not leave a soul in Purgatory abandoned solely to its suffering, but also sustains it with a peace that exceeds all human understanding; although the peace does not reduce the suffering nor does the suffering reduce the peace (cf. [A Treatise on Purgatory, Chapter XII](#)).

Commentator 1

Let me cite just one story from an experience Saint Padre Pio had while praying for the Holy Souls in Purgatory: He saw a soul completely covered in flames. Marveling at the intensity of the flames, he asked if the fire of Purgatory was hotter than fire on earth. The poor soul said that all the fires of earth would seem like a breath of fresh air compared to the fires of Purgatory, and invited Padre Pio to see for himself. So Padre Pio touched a drop of sweat that fell from the poor soul's forehead; he gave a loud scream and, out of pain and fright, fell to the ground. When he recovered, he told his brothers, "If we only knew how severe divine justice is, we would never sin" (cf. [Giacometti, Giulio. Padre Pio mystery and miracle: Prophecies, bilocations, perfumes, stigmata, reading of consciences, encounters with the beyond \(Italian Edition\) \(Kindle Locations 297-305\). Mimep Docete. Kindle Edition](#)).

We learn from these examples (and others found in the lives of the saints) that if we do not avail ourselves of God's Mercy while on earth, we must be perfected in love by God's Divine Justice in Purgatory; justice that is so severe that time seems to stand still. In our first video on Purgatory, The Poor Souls Need Our Prayers, we heard about a poor soul that had been suffering in Purgatory for eight years but said that it seemed more like ten thousand (cf. [An Unpublished Manuscript on Purgatory](#)). In another example, the author of *The Imitation of Christ* says that an hour's pain in Purgatory is more grievous than a hundred years of the most bitter suffering on earth (cf. [Imitation, Book 1, Chapter 24](#)). Obviously, from these accounts, we should strive for perfection now rather than waiting until we die; we'll get into that discussion in our next program.

Commentator 2

Just as a reminder: From the time of antiquity, the Catholic Church has always taught that it is up to us, the Church Militant, to come to aid of the poor souls who are suffering in Purgatory (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12575a.htm#VI>; See: [Succouring The Dead](#)). St. Augustine said, "One of the holiest works, one of the best exercises of piety that we can practice in this world, is to offer sacrifices, alms, and prayers for the dead" ([Homily 16](#)). St. Francis de Sales said that "To assist the souls in Purgatory is to perform the most excellent of the works of mercy, or rather it is to practice in a most sublime manner all the works of mercy together" ([Schouppe S.J., Rev. Fr. F. X. Purgatory Explained \(with Supplemental Reading: What Will Hell Be Like?\) \[Illustrated\] \(Kindle Locations 3488-3490\). TAN Books. Kindle Edition](#)). The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us of the exchange of charity within the Communion of Saints (the Church Triumphant in Heaven, the Church Militant on Earth and the Church Suffering in Purgatory) where the holiness of one is of profit to the others. This exchange on our part (in the form of prayers, sacrifices, alms and indulgences) greatly assists the Poor Souls in shortening their time of purification (cf. [CCC 1475](#)).

Commentator 1

In closing, we can assist the suffering souls in Purgatory by offering up ([Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 51](#); <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04653a.htm>; See [Prayers For The Dead](#)):

Masses. Both the Church and the Saints tell us that having Masses said for the Holy Souls is the most effective means of assisting them and for obtaining their release into Heaven.

([CCC, 1032](#); [Mirae Caritatis, 11](#): http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_28051902_mirae-caritatis.html), Also Rosaries, Chaplets of Divine Mercy, other prayers including the St. Gertrude Prayer for the Poor Souls ([CCC, 958; 1032](#)); fasting, almsgiving, sacrifices, suffering ([CCC, 1032; 1434-1439](#)); partial and plenary indulgences ([CCC, 1032; 1478-79; 1498](#)); and any work of charity or piety ([CCC, 1032](#)).

We can also use sacramentals like sprinkling holy water or lighting candles for the Holy Souls ([CCC, 1667-69](#)); Visit cemeteries to pray for the dead; and most of all, to pray for the Poor Souls every day.

Finally, let us not forget to intercede and pray for the deceased of other faiths who do not believe in Purgatory and therefore have nobody to pray for them.

In our next program, we'll talk about how we can avoid the fires of Purgatory when we die and go straight to Heaven. Join us for our next episode of Faith Minutes: Purgatory or Heaven?

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