

The Purgatory Project **Transcript**

Purgatory or Heaven?

A Family Prayer Night Publication | FamilyPrayerNight.org

PURGATORY, PART III w/FOOTNOTES Purgatory or Heaven?

Commentator #1

In our last program on **Purgatory: Things You Need To Know**, we learned from the lives of the Saints that the overwhelming majority of souls that do not go to Hell go to Purgatory first, and that the smallest number go directly to Heaven.

The Catholic Church teaches, however, that there is a possibility of going straight to Heaven for those who practice “such fervent charity on earth” that all the temporal punishment due to sin is remitted before death (CCC, 1472; *Therese of Lisieux. St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations, Pg. 273. ICS Publications. Kindle Edition*) and there are no further imperfections of the soul that need to be corrected (cf. *Pope John Paul II, General Audience, August 4, 1999*).

That would include: • anyone who dies immediately after being baptised, including children who have been baptised but have not yet reached the age of reason since baptism removes all sin and punishment due to sin (CCC, 1263; see also CCC 1213-1284); • people who are martyred for the faith—a baptism of blood (CCC, 1258); • those who have the explicit desire to be baptised and have repented of their sins but die first—a baptism of desire (CCC, 1259); • or someone who has obtained an Apostolic Pardon upon receiving the Last Rites immediately prior to death (*United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Manual of Indulgences . United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Grants #12, §1; Kindle Edition; Code of Canon Law, #530 §3*).

Catholics who die suddenly or unexpectedly without receiving Last Rites may obtain a plenary indulgence (CCC, 1471-1479) at the moment of death provided they have been in the habit of reciting some prayers during their lifetime (*United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Manual of Indulgences . United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Grants #12, §2 & §3; Kindle Edition*).



Also, Catholics who die after obtaining a plenary indulgence at other times (provided they haven’t committed any other sins) go directly to Heaven since the plenary indulgence remits (or cancels) all the temporal punishment due to one’s sins. The same for the Divine Mercy Sunday Promise or Plenary Indulgence (*The Indulgence versus The Promise: https://www.ewtn.com/devotionals/mercy/indulgence_vs_promise.htm; <https://www.thedivinemercy.org/news/Mercy-Sundays-Special-Graces-Plenary-Indulgence-Are-They-the-Same-2485>*).

That leaves the rest of us, the majority! So what can we do to go straight to Heaven? Three things (which must be done for love of God): • we must practice “fervent charity on earth,” • make full reparation for all forgiven sins and any unconfessed venial sins, • and be free from imperfections of the soul (like attachments to sin or things of this world).

In other words, we must become “saints” before we die, not after. That seems like a daunting task for most of us, but not impossible. Admonishing the other sisters of her community, St. Therese the Little Flower exclaimed, “Oh! How you grieve me! You do a great injury to God in believing you’re going to go to purgatory. When we love, we can’t go there” (*Therese of Lisieux. St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations (p. 273). ICS Publications. Kindle Edition*). To be sure, there’s no single formula that will work for everyone simply because we are all unique and unrepeatable (*Urbi Et Orbi Message, Pope John Paul II, Christmas 1978*) and in different places on our spiritual journey of loving God and neighbor; ranging from virtually non-existent to near sainthood.

Commentator #2: PRINCIPLE #1: LOVE

The first principle is practicing fervent charity. Charity is one of the theological virtues we receive at baptism (CCC 1265-66) by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God (CCC, 1822; 1844); the first two great commandments (cf. Mark 12:30-31). After the age of reason, we are bound by a third commandment of love which Jesus instituted at the Last Supper when He said “love one another as I have loved you” (cf. Jn 13:34).

The love which Sacred Scripture and Jesus speak about is not a sentiment (a feeling or emotion); rather, it is a decision, an act of the will (cf. Benedict XVI. (2005). *Deus Caritas Est.*, #17; Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.): “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn 14:15). If we obey, Jesus will send us an Advocate, the Spirit of truth—His Holy Spirit—who will remain with us and teach us (cf. Jn 14:16-17), and that both Jesus and His Father will come and make their dwelling within us (cf. Jn 14:23).

St. Paul gives us concrete ways to identify and live authentic love. In a letter to the early Christians living in Corinth, he said that love is patient and kind. It is not jealous, or pompous (meaning self-important), inflated (such as being egotistical, conceited or self-centered), rude; nor does it seek its own interests (for example, if is not selfish), it is not quick-tempered nor does it brood over injury (in other words, it forgives unconditionally and does not hold grudges) (cf. 1 Cor 13:4-5), it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails” (1 Cor 13:6-8).

In other words, the “fervent charity” that remits temporal punishment due to sin is “grounded in the love of God” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 20); a love that is sacrificial and not selfish (*Deus Caritas Est*, #12), and is best expressed in our concern for the welfare and good of others (*Deus Caritas Est*, 15; Mt 25:34-40). This type of love is also *the* foundation for making reparation and detachment profitable and much easier to attain, as we shall see in just minute.

And finally, as we advance in love under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will soon see that love has no limits since God, Who is Love, is Infinite ((cf. Benedict XVI. (2005). *Deus Caritas Est.*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.; Gn 1:1; Rev 1:8, 4:8; Ps 33:13, 147:5)!

Now for two very important side benefits: First, St. Peter tells us that an intense love for one another (as we described earlier) will cover “a multitude of sins” (cf. 1 Peter 4:8). In other words, the more we love, the more reparation we make. And second, St. John says that when love is perfected in us, we will also have confidence on the day of judgment (cf. 1 Jn 4:17) because “perfect love drives out all fear” (fear being associated with punishment) (cf. 1 Jn 4:18).

I think it was Mother Angelica who said, “Shoot for Heaven; if you miss, at least you’ll end up in Purgatory.” The good news

is that those who do end up in Purgatory will have much less to be purified and will therefore be with God in Heaven more quickly (CCC, 1023-1030; 2794-96; 2802). The point I’m trying to make is that if we are living in God’s will by loving, even if our love has not been totally perfected and we need to go to Purgatory, we will gladly accept this purification out of love for Him. St. Catherine of Genoa said that “the divine essence is so pure - purer than the imagination can conceive” a soul would rather cast itself into a thousand hells than appear with the slightest imperfection before such Divine Majesty, and would willingly suffer the pains of Purgatory to obtain this level of purity (cf. *Saint Catherine of Genoa. A Treatise on Purgatory: Chapter VIII, Of the Necessity of Purgatory.* Kindle Edition.). But let us not forget that St. Therese also assures us that we *can* go straight to Heaven by loving and trusting God completely (*Therese of Lisieux. St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations* (p. 273). ICS Publications. Kindle Edition.).

Commentator #1: PRINCIPLE #2: REPARATION

The second principle is to make reparation. By doing everything out of a deep, heart-felt love of God and neighbor, all forms of reparation become powerful and fruitful, like offering up sacrifices, sufferings, penances, prayers, indulgences, almsgiving and fasting (*Reference Series: Baltimore Catechism of 1891, Q. 221: http://www.boston-catholic-journal.com/baltimore_catechism.pdf*). The more we do these things out love, the more meritorious and effective they become. How effective? God will determine the amount of reparation based on the love from which it is offered. Much love, much benefit; No love, no benefit (1 Jn 4:20; 1 Peter 4:8).

SACRIFICES

First, we learn that making sacrifice to God is prevalent throughout Biblical history beginning with the sacrifices of Cain and Abel; Abel’s sacrifice being accepted because it was offered in faith and trust in God (cf. Heb 11:4; *See also Catholic Bible Dictionary: Abel, by Scott Hahn*). The greatest sacrifice of all time, though, is Jesus’ Passion and Death on the Cross which is made present to us every day in the Sacrifice of the Mass; in the Holy Eucharist. As such, the Church teaches that venial sin is remitted (*Reference Series: Baltimore Catechism OF 1891, Q. 896: http://www.boston-catholic-journal.com/baltimore_catechism.pdf; CCC, 1394*) and some or all of the temporal punishment due to sin (CCC, 1414) when we receive Holy Communion worthily. Apart from Mass, we *can* offer up everything we do throughout the day as a sacrifice, a continual offering to God: Everything. For example: St. Therese wrote that we should not refuse Jesus “the least sacrifice. Everything is so big in religion... to pick up a pin out of love can convert a soul. What a mystery!... Ah! It is Jesus alone who can give such a value to our actions; let us love Him with all our strength” (*St. Therese of Lisieux. Letters of St. Therese of Lisieux, Volume II: General Correspondence 1890-1897 (Critical Edition of the Complete Works of Saint Therese of Lisieux Book 2, May 22, 1894, Kindle location 2920-2927)* . ICS publications. Kindle Edition.).

SUFFERINGS

We can also make reparation by accepting and offering up suffering that comes to us (sometimes daily) throughout our lives. In his letter on the **Christian Meaning of Human Suffering**, Pope John Paul II said that we can be sharers in the sufferings of Jesus Christ who suffered in our place, because through His suffering, He raised all “human suffering to the level of Redemption” (cf. [Pope John Paul II, Christian Meaning of Human Suffering, Salvifici Doloris, 11 February 1984, 19.](#)). This is confirmed by St. Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians; that when we suffer we share in the sufferings of Our Lord ([2 Cor. 1:5; 4:8-11, 14; See also CCC, 1505](#)). And in his letter to the Romans; that we can present our bodies “as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” ([Rom. 12:1](#)). In other words, a lot of reparation can be made by patiently accepting suffering for the love of God (cf. [Gal 5:22; Fruits of the Holy Spirit](#)). So, rather than complain, let us accept our sufferings with patient gratitude to Jesus for our salvation, and in reparation for the damage done by our many sins (cf. [Prov 24:16; 1 Jn 1:8-9](#)). And by the way, we don’t have to go looking for suffering, it will come to us; but it is up to us to make it profitable!

Commentator #2

PENANCES, FASTING, PRAYER & ALMSGIVING

Another way of making reparation is by offering up penances; the first being the conversion of our hearts toward God and His Divine Mercy and away from sin (cf. [CCC, 1430-32](#)) ...something we should be working on every day, including penances we receive from the priest when we go to confession: the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation (cf. [CCC 1459-60](#)). Also, Sacred Scripture and the early Church Fathers insist on fasting, prayer and almsgiving as essential forms of penance (cf. [CCC 1434](#)).

In fasting, we give something up like not eating an hour before receiving Holy Communion, or observing days of fasts and abstinence during Lent (cf. [CCC 2043](#)), or other voluntary acts of self-denial. In prayer (see [CCC 2558-2565](#)) when we express our sorrow for the sins that we’ve committed (cf. [Hardon, John. Catholic Dictionary \(p. 390\). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.](#)), and in “reading Sacred Scripture, praying the Liturgy of the Hours and the Our Father” ([CCC 1437](#)); in almsgiving, by offering material or financial assistance those who are in need (cf. [Hardon, John. Catholic Dictionary \(p. 16\). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.](#)).

INDULGENCES

There are also indulgences that can be obtained which remove all or part of the temporal punishment due to sins that have already been forgiven. Plenary indulgences ([Reference Series: Baltimore Catechism of 1891, Q. 845; http://www.boston-catholic-journal.com/baltimore_catechism.pdf](#)) remove all temporal punishment while partial indulgences only remove part of the temporal punishment (cf. [CCC, 1471](#)). So how do we know if we’ve obtained a

plenary indulgence? Only God knows for certain “because only He knows whether a person’s dispositions are adequate” such as being free from “all attachment to sin, even venial sin” ([Hardon, John. Catholic Catechism \(Kindle Locations 10960-10961\). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.](#)). However, if the conditions for obtaining a plenary indulgence are lacking, then a partial indulgence is still gained (again, God determines the merit of all indulgences based on the love from which they are performed).

Commentator #1: PRINCIPLE #3: DETACHMENT

The third and final principle is to eliminate all attachments to sin or imperfections of the soul (cf. [Pope John Paul II, General Audience, August 4, 1999](#)) like bad moral choices or disordered desires for riches, fame, power, achievement, recognition, notoriety, people, places or things (cf. [CCC, 1723; 2544](#)); including those things which hinder our interior life and union with God. The simple measure of this principle is whether we love God above all other things, or not.

And finally, in this program, we covered the basics on how to avoid the fires of Purgatory and go straight to Heaven; in other words, how to become saints before we die. There’s obviously much more to consider, but when we begin in earnest, the Holy Spirit will come to our aid and lead us on our personal journey.

Let’s close here with a quote from St. Therese the Little Flower: “God would never inspire me with desires which cannot be realized; so, in spite of my littleness, I can hope to be a Saint. I could never grow up. I must put up with myself as I am, full of imperfections, but I will find a little way to Heaven, very short and direct, an entirely new way” ([St. Therese of Lisieux. The Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of the Little Flower \(with Supplemental Reading: Classics Made Simple\) \[Illustrated\] \(pp. 116-117\). TAN Books. Kindle Edition.](#)). Her “Little Way” was to do everything (every thought, word, action and deed...both interior and exterior) out of love for God and love of neighbor for the love of God. She did it and so can we!

In our next and last episode, we’ll suggest time-tested ways of practicing fervent charity, making reparation, obtaining indulgences and eliminating sin or imperfections from our lives; both for our benefit and the benefit of the Poor Souls in Purgatory. Join us for our next program: Purgatory, Making The Most Of Every Day.

Copyright Notice

Image of St. Therese of Lisieux
© Jorge Royan / <http://www.royan.com.ar> / CC BY-SA 3.0 (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Church_of_the_Infant_Jesus_of_Prague_-_8151.jpg), „Church of the Infant Jesus of Prague - 8151“, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode>

© 2019 Family Prayer Night Devotions
All rights reserved worldwide.