

# St. John's Newsletter



## Understanding Purgatory

Few Catholic teachings are misunderstood more than Purgatory. Catholics fear it and Protestants dismiss it as false teaching, but it is a message of hope of life after death. This is how the Catechism describes Purgatory:

*"All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned."*

*"This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, mentioned in Sacred Scripture... From the beginning, the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead..."* (CCC 1030-1032)

Purgatory is not a second chance at salvation. At death, a person's eternal destiny is sealed: he will either spend eternity in heaven or hell. Purgatory is a temporary place that people who are already assured of heaven may go to in order to prepare for heaven. So, once in Purgatory, a person can't alter their eternal destiny – there are no second chances after death. Purgatory is only for people who have died in friendship with Christ and are assured of heaven. Further, the purifying process of Purgatory is only through the grace of Jesus Christ. So rather than being something in competition with Christ, Purgatory is an occasion for the grace of Christ.

Purgatory, while not mentioned by that specific name, is based on Scripture in the Old Testament and the New Testament. . In chapter 3 of his first letter to Corinthians, Saint Paul describes a period after death, but before heaven, in which a Christian is purified with fire. In Matthew chapter 12, Jesus mentions the possibility of sins being forgiven after death. In the Old Testament in the second book of Maccabees chapter 12, the practice of praying for the dead (a practice Purgatory makes sense of) is commended.

The souls in Purgatory can pray for us, but they cannot pray for themselves. We can and should pray for the souls in Purgatory. St. Augustine said: "It is not at all to be doubted that such prayers are of profit to the dead; but for such of them as lived before their death in a way that makes it possible for these things to be useful to them after death."

### Eternal Rest Prayer

**V.** Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

**R.** And let the perpetual light shine upon them. And may the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Sources:

[https://www.churchpop.com/5-myths-about-purgatory-too-many-people-possibly-even-you-still-believe/?utm\\_campaign=ChurchPop&utm\\_medium=email&\\_hsmi=281693091&\\_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8LFvP0Gt0bx7bn9H7PS8-QN IE4nYwQivKGFc0v1\\_oL3yid1v33fJ58td436JhSCxlm18qJIWPBC4aMCRTMekSu31Iq&utm\\_content=281693091&utm\\_source=hs\\_email](https://www.churchpop.com/5-myths-about-purgatory-too-many-people-possibly-even-you-still-believe/?utm_campaign=ChurchPop&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=281693091&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8LFvP0Gt0bx7bn9H7PS8-QN IE4nYwQivKGFc0v1_oL3yid1v33fJ58td436JhSCxlm18qJIWPBC4aMCRTMekSu31Iq&utm_content=281693091&utm_source=hs_email)

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/is-purgatory-in-the-bible>

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## PRAYERS FOR SOULS IN PURGATORY



Have you lost a loved one who passed away, or know someone who has? Prayers for souls in purgatory can help them! While we can derive great comfort from the hope that our loved ones are enjoying Eternal Life with God, it never hurts to pray for their souls in any case.

In purgatory, the souls of many of those who have died in God's grace undergo purification so that they may enter heaven.

The Prayer of St. Gertrude, below, is one of the most famous of the prayers for souls in purgatory. St. Gertrude the Great (pictured at left) was a Benedictine nun and mystic who lived in the 13th century. According to tradition, our Lord promised her that 1000 souls would be released from purgatory each time it is said devoutly.

**Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the masses said throughout the world today, for all the holy souls in purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the universal church, those in my own home and within my family. Amen.**