

**PURGATORY**

## **PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful,  
grant that by the same Holy Spirit,  
we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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# Primary Resource for this Talk:

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR PURGATORY

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# OUTLINE

- DEFINITION OF TERMS
- SACRED SCRIPTURE AND PURGATORY
- JEWISH TRADITION AND THE EARLY CHURCH
- COMMUNION OF SAINTS
- PENANCES
- INDULGENCES

# DEFINITION OF TERMS

- GRACE AND THE SOUL
- SIN AND FREE WILL
- GUILT AND PUNISHMENT
- PURGATORY

# Grace and the Soul

# Grace

- Grace—A share in God's Divine Life.
- A supernatural gift that is unmerited.
- Bestowed on rational creatures.
- Human nature is not endowed with Grace; it is a gift from God. We must be given the proper equipment to live the Divine life that God desires for us.

# Sanctifying Grace and Actual Grace

- **Sanctifying grace** stays in the soul. *It's what makes the soul holy*; it gives the soul supernatural life. More properly, it is supernatural life. It is the grace necessary to be with God in heaven. Also known as Habitual Grace—it lives or resides or is constantly present in the soul absent of mortal sin.
- **Actual Grace** is transient; it exists for a moment of time. It is a supernatural push or encouragement. It is extrinsic and does not live in the soul, but acts on the soul from outside. It is given by God to move us toward seeking out and retaining sanctifying grace.

# **Sin and Free Will**

# Sin

- **Original Sin** -- Original sin consists in the deprivation of grace caused by the free act of sin committed by the head of the race. We all are born naturally and descend from Adam. We are born in a natural state without sanctifying grace. Baptism restores sanctifying grace in the soul.
- **Actual Sin** -- Actual sin is any willful thought, desire, word, action, or omission forbidden by the law of God.
- “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8)

# Mortal vs. Venial Sin

- Mortal Sin -- Mortal sin is a grievous offense against the law of God. This sin is called mortal, or deadly, because it deprives the sinner of sanctifying grace, the supernatural life of the soul.
- Venial Sin -- Venial sin is a less serious offense against the law of God, which does not deprive the soul of sanctifying grace, and which can be pardoned even without sacramental confession.
- “If anyone sees his brother committing a sin that is not a deadly sin, he will ask, and God will give him life for those whose sin is not deadly. There is sin which is deadly; I do not say one is to pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not deadly. (1 John 5:16-17)

# Free Will

- The Human Soul is endowed with two spiritual faculties – Intellect (we can reason) and Free Will (we can choose).
- Free Will means that we are moral beings. We are obligated to do good and avoid evil.
- Because we have the gift of free will we are accountable (culpable) for what we do or fail to do.

# **Guilt and Punishment**

# Guilt and Punishment

- Guilt is the fact or state of having committed an offense, crime, violation, or wrong. In the spiritual order it is an offense against God's law.
- Punishment or "Satisfaction" can be understood as compensation for injury inflicted.
- Punishment has a two fold dimension, it makes right the inequality caused by our wrongdoing and it also has a penal dimension which preserves us from future wrongdoing. It rehabilitates us.
- In the natural order, a judge or jury will determine guilt. If guilt is determined, punishment is levied.

# Punishment – Eternal and Temporal

- Eternal punishment occurs when a person completely turns away (through mortal sin) from the infinite good that is God. There is a corresponding infinite punishment, (endured in hell).
- If a person turns to a mutable good beyond right reason (venial sin), there is a finite punishment, (endured here or in purgatory). The punishment is finite (temporal) because the good itself is finite and because the person hasn't turned away from God completely.
- Temporal punishments refer to the personal, social, ecclesial, and cosmic effects that our sins cause, which must be remedied by virtue of God's divine justice.
- Therefore venial sins incur temporal punishment, while mortal sins incur eternal punishment.
- It is true that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (the God-Man) through His passion, death and resurrection was more than sufficient to atone for all punishment (both temporal and eternal) due to sin for every person throughout all time.
- Even though Jesus alone has made satisfaction for the eternal punishment for sin, He specifically requires us to participate in making satisfaction for the temporal punishment for our sin.

## Colossians 1:24

“I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.”

- What does St. Paul mean when he states that he completes what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions?
- If Christ made complete atonement (both temporal and eternal) for our sins then how can there be something lacking?
- Nothing can be lacking for the eternal atonement, so what is lacking is by God’s choice the debt of temporal punishment that we must suffer in justice for our sins. Our participation then “completes” what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.

**Purgatory**

# The Divine Command

- “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)
- “nothing unclean” shall enter heaven (Rev 21:27)
- Without “holiness” no one shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14)
- Most people will admit that even though they have a living faith and strive to do God’s will here on earth, they lack this perfection and holiness required to enter heaven. Their imperfections include attachment to created goods, inordinate desires for earthly pleasures and small but habitual sins.
- How does God admit these souls to the Beatific Vision?

# Purgatory

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1030-1031)

- **III. The Final Purification, or Purgatory**
- **1030** 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.
- **1031** The Church gives the name *Purgatory* to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire: (954, 1472)

- A Doctrine of the Church.
- Explicitly taught in Sacred Scripture.
- A revealed truth by Jesus Christ to His Apostles.
- Part of the Deposit of Faith.
- Believed and taught by the Early Church.

# **SACRED SCRIPTURE AND PURGATORY**

## Matthew 5:25-26

“Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.”

- After Jesus tells the crowd in His Sermon on the Mount to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect, He gives His followers this warning. The debt of sin needs to be atoned for either in this life or in the afterlife (Purgatory).
- “on the way to court” – during our earthly life before the particular judgement.
- “accuser” – Satan “judge” – God “prison” – purgatory “you have paid the last penny” We are personally responsible to atone for our actual sins.

## Colossians 1:24

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## **Matthew 12:31-32**

“Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”

- If sins can be forgiven in the age to come, then there is forgiveness of sins in the afterlife.
- If heaven is only accessible to those without “spot or blemish”, then no forgiveness of sins can take place in heaven.
- In Hell there is no forgiveness of sins, then there must be a place in the afterlife where sins are forgiven.....Purgatory

## Luke 12:45-48

“But if that slave says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and if he begins to beat the other slaves, men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and put him with the unfaithful. That slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating.”

- The first wicked servant mentioned commits mortal sins by beating other slaves and getting drunk. He is cut to pieces and put with the unfaithful -- Hell.
- The two other servants committed venial sins and will be beaten (receive temporal punishment for their sins). Punishment for venial sins will be proportional based on the offence committed....beaten severely vs. beaten lightly.

## **1 Corinthians 3:10-17**

“According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.”

- The building materials of gold, silver and precious stones are good works and the wood, hay and straw are bad works.
- The fire will test what sort of work each one has done. Scripture uses “fire” both metaphorically (to represent God’s justice) and literally (to represent what God uses to purge and destroy)
- St. Paul reveals three outcomes of God’s judgement after His testing fire:
  1. The man who built with only good materials will receive a reward.
  2. The man who built with both good and bad materials will have his bad materials burned up by fire; he too will have to pass through the same fire but then he will be saved.
  3. The man who built with only bad materials has destroyed God’s temple, and God will destroy him.

## Wisdom 3:1-7

### **The Destiny of the Righteous**

“But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them. In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble.”

- The Book of Wisdom provides a beautiful scriptural account of the truth of Purgatory. The sacred author incorporates the various facets of purgatory... departed souls are tested, punished and disciplined for a time, like gold in the furnace is tried by fire, but these souls are at peace because they will receive immortality.

## **2 Maccabees 12:41-45**

### Prayers for Those Killed in Battle

So they all blessed the ways of the Lord, the righteous judge, who reveals the things that are hidden; and they turned to supplication, praying that the sin that had been committed might be wholly blotted out. The noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened as the result of the sin of those who had fallen. He also took up a collection, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he 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, so that they might be delivered from their sin.

# **JEWISH TRADITION AND THE EARLY CHURCH**

# JEWISH TRADITION / CATHOLIC TRADITION -- PRAYING FOR THE DEAD

- The Catholic Church has established the Feast Day commemorating the faithful departed on November 2<sup>nd</sup> as All Souls day.
- As a matter of fact , the Church has dedicated the whole month of November to honor and pray for the Holy Souls in purgatory.
- This tradition has its roots in ancient Mosaic Law. Among the Israelites, the “month of the dead” was one of the most general and customary forms of devotion for the deceased.
- This pious practice of praying for the departed during an entire uninterrupted month became so deeply rooted among the chosen people that Scripture tells us mourning is only complete when the deceased has been remembered and mourned during 30 days.

## **Deuteronomy 34:8**

“The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.”

# The Early Church and Purgatory

- The early Church Fathers – those in the first centuries of Christianity who were closest to Christ and the Apostles were all unanimous in their belief in Purgatory.
- The earliest liturgies of the Church also reflect a belief in purgatory. From the very beginning, the Church in the Holy Mass would remember the faithful departed, with prayers for their peace and the forgiveness of their sins.

# Early Church Fathers Who Wrote on Purgatory

- Clement of Alexandria (d.215)
- Tertullian (d.225)
- Origen (d.254)
- Cyprian of Carthage (d.258)
- Cyril of Jerusalem (d.386)
- Basil (d.379)
- Ephraem (d.373)
- Gregory of Nyssa (d.325)
- Ambrose (d.397)
- Jerome (d.420)
- John Chrysostom (d.407)
- Monica – Mother of Augustine (d.387)
- Augustine (d.430)
- Pope Gregory the Great (d.604)

# **COMMUNION OF SAINTS**

- The “Communion of Saints” consists of the entire “Body of Christ” ... The Church Triumphant (Heaven), the Church Militant (Here on earth) and the Church Suffering (Purgatory).

### **Ephesians 2:19**

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God.

### **Philippians 2: 10-11**

“so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- All the baptized - whether living or dead – are in a mystical spiritual intercommunion with each other through the Church, of which Christ is the Head and we are members.

- Paul also teaches “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” (1 Corinthians 12:26).
- If one member of the body sins, the sin causes a wound that affects the entire body. Because the sin of one member affects the entire body; the members of the affected body can repair the damage.
- That is one member can make satisfaction for the sins of another, just as he can make satisfaction for his own sins.
- There is a perennial bond of charity among the members of the Church, whether on earth, in heaven, or in purgatory.
- This is why St. Paul says “charity never ends.” (1 Cor. 13:8) and “None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself” (Rom 14:7).

- All of our acts of charity redound to the profit of all, and these acts include the penances we perform for the benefit of another.
- We call these acts of charity the spiritual goods of the Communion of Saints. These spiritual goods are part of what the Church calls its “treasury”.
- The Church’s treasury is the infinite value that Christ merits have before God the Father, along with the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints.
- The spiritual goods of the Church are held in common by all its members, so that the good works and penances of one member can benefit another.

**PENANCES**

# THE THREE FORMS OF PENANCE

1. PRAYER

2. FASTING

3. ALMSGIVING

St. John the Apostle identifies the three causes of sin as “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16)

**Prayer** -- the pride of life.

**Fasting** – the lust of the flesh.

**Almsgiving** – the lust of the eyes.

# PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD

- Prayers for the dead can be works of satisfaction such as prayers of repentance and prayers of forgiveness.
- In the Our Father we pray to God to “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” we are asking Him to forgive our sins and to free us from the debt of punishment.
- When in prayer we pour out our sorrow for sin, the prayer becomes a penal work that makes satisfaction for sin.

# THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

- The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the highest act of worship and the highest form of prayer.
- **St. Cyril**: “We pray for all who have departed in this life, with the most confident conviction that the prayers at the altar are the most profitable to them.”
- **St. Augustine**: called the Mass “the sacrament of love, the revelation of unity, and the bond of friendship”.
- **Pope Benedict XVI**: “I wish together with the Synod Fathers, to remind all the faithful of the importance of prayers for the dead, especially the offering of the Mass for them, so that once purified, they can come to the beatific vision of God.”
- The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the most effective and powerful means we have to relieve the suffering souls in purgatory and deliver them for it.

# FASTING

- Fasting is the penitential act of abstaining from food or drink, either partially or completely.
- It is a penal work because it takes away from the sinner something that he desires.
- Fasting tames the body's desire for food and also subdues the lust of the flesh.
- It also raises the mind to the spiritual realm and makes us more docile to the will of God.
- Fasting makes satisfaction for sins because God responds by relenting of His punishments.
- In the book of Jonah, the prophet told the people of Nineveh of God's impending chastisement; the people responded with a great fast and God relented from punishment.

# ALMSGIVING

- Almsgiving, which literally means “mercy”, is any material favor performed to assist the needy.
- Almsgiving must always be prompted by the virtue of charity, and not for selfish motives.
- Yet, while almsgiving is a work of mercy, it is also an act of justice that makes satisfaction for sin. This is because giving alms takes away from one who has and gives to one who has not.

## **Tobit 4:10-11**

- For almsgiving delivers from death and keeps you from going into the Darkness. Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practice it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.

**INDULGENCES**

# INDULGENCES

- The Church defines an indulgence as a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven.
- The faithful Catholic who is duly disposed gains an indulgence under certain defined conditions through the Church's help when, as a minister of redemption, it dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of satisfactions won by Christ and the saints.

- As with the Church's authority to forgive sin, a person obtains an indulgence through the Church by virtue of the power of the keys.
- This means the authority of granting the indulgence rests with the Pope who alone holds the keys.

### **Matthew 16:19**

“I will give you (Peter) the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

- The Church is able (through the power of the keys) to remit temporal punishment due to sin because of its treasury of merits.

# TREASURY OF MERITS

- This treasury of merits includes not only the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ but also the abundant merits of the saints.
- By God's grace many members of the Mystical Body have performed works of satisfaction that exceed the requirement of their debt.
- These merits along with the infinite merits of Christ are the common property of the whole Church and are distributed to the members of the body according to the judgement of the Vicar of Christ who holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

# APPLICATION OF INDULGENCES

- While indulgences can be applied to both the living\* and the dead there is an important distinction in their application: those who are living on earth are subject to the Church's immediate jurisdiction whereas those who have died are subject directly to God's jurisdiction.
- Thus, the Church grants indulgences to the living as an exercise of its judicial authority, but applies indulgences to the dead by way of petition. That is the Church implores God to apply the indulgence to the intended soul in purgatory by accepting the works of satisfaction that have been performed to that end.

\*The living means the one doing the indulgenced work. A person cannot apply an indulgence to another living person.

# HOW TO GAIN AN INDULGENCE

- To gain an indulgence, a person must first be Catholic. The Church's power to remit punishment through the keys is a jurisdictional power, and one must be subject to the Church's jurisdiction (that is, be a Catholic who is not excommunicated) in order to be subject to that power.
- The person must be in a state of grace. Without grace our penances have no merit in God's eyes and thus indulgences would avail us nothing. Moreover, a dead member of the body receives no inflow from the living members of the body, and one who is in mortal sin is spiritually dead.
- The person must perform an act to which the Pope has specifically ascribed an indulgence.
- Finally the person must perform the act with at least the habitual intention of gaining the indulgence.

# PLENARY VS. PARTIAL

- To gain a plenary indulgence (complete remission of temporal punishment), the person must make a sacramental confession and receive the Eucharist.
- The person must also pray for the intention of the Pope.
- Finally the person cannot have any attachment to sin, even venial sin.
- If any of these conditions are not met, the indulgence will be a partial only.

# PARTIAL INDULGENCE

- Three principal ways of gaining a partial indulgence. First, the Church grants a partial indulgence to those who raise their mind to God on humble confidence while performing their daily tasks. One raises his mind to God by piously invoking even mentally, the names of Jesus, Mary and the saints. “Jesus have mercy on me.”
- Second the Church grants a partial indulgence to those who motivated by charity, perform the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.
- Thirdly the Church lists many prayers for which one can gain a partial indulgence....the Angelus, the Magnificat, Memorare, etc.
- Certain indulgences are obtainable anytime and in almost any place, for example, reading Scripture continuously for a half hour or reciting five decades of the rosary in a church, family setting or religious community.

# FINAL SUMMARY

- Nothing unclean enters Heaven.
- Actual personal sin stains the soul and creates a debt of punishment.
- Jesus Christ pays the eternal debt of punishment; we pay the temporal debt.
- The debt of punishment can be alleviated when we are still alive by prayer, fasting, almsgiving, good works, indulgences etc.
- Upon physical death, when the soul separates from the body, the soul in purgatory will suffer the pain of sense and the pain of separation.

- The disembodied soul can do nothing for itself to accelerate the process whereby it pays the debt of punishment.
- The Church Militant can assist the expiation process of the Holy Souls in Purgatory by prayer, fasting, almsgiving, good works, indulgences etc.
- Those that assist the Holy Souls in Purgatory not only lessen the punishment and pain for the particular soul while in Purgatory, but also gain eternal merit for themselves when they enter Heaven.