



## Purgatory

**Q: Why is there purgatory if Jesus died for us?**

**A:** *It is more precise to say that Christ suffered and died for our redemption. He opened the gates of heaven for us — gates that we couldn't have opened ourselves. In his wisdom, though, he wants us to do our part in terms of making amends for our sins. Even sins that are absolved in the confessional might still have a temporal punishment connected to them, even after the penance is done. It's like Joe who breaks his neighbor's window out of negligence. Joe can apologize, the neighbor can forgive him, but the window still needs to be replaced. Joe needs to do something to help replace the damaged pane. That is the way it is with sin. There are various ways we can help "replace the window" — by prayers, almsgiving, fasting, act of charity, etc. If we fail to work off all the temporal punishment,*

*and we die without mortal sin, then we need to go to purgatory for a while. I say "for a while," but that is a figure of speech. We step out of time when we die. So, we won't experience time in purgatory as we experience time in this world. It is part of the mystery surrounding the afterlife.*

*How is the suffering of purgatory measured? That, too, is hard to say. One idea is that, whatever our faults were in this world, there will be a corresponding punishment in purgatory. A soul who was lazy in this world might have to do the equivalent of hard labor or lots of exercise in the next — but, again, that is a figure of speech. I should add, though, that "punishment" isn't the best word; what we will go through is a purgation, a cleansing, that will prepare us for entrance into heaven. In that sense it is something that we will understand that we want to go through. It's like an operation to remove a tumor. We don't naturally like to undergo surgery, but we can see the operation as something good, something desirable, knowing that it will restore us to health.*

*How do we know when we are cleansed? Again, that is hard to say. We are dealing with things beyond our total grasp right now. To dig deeper into these spiritual realities, you might consider watching our short videos on the so-called Four Last Things (death, judgment, heaven and hell). The last video in the series, the conference, explains purgatory and indulgences. This video series is called "Fire of Mercy: A Retreat Guide for All Saints' and All Souls' Days." It also comes in PDF in case you prefer that format. For more reading see the Catechism, beginning at No. 1030.*

*Suffice it to say that we and God will know when our moment to enter heaven has come. And we will be glad for having gone through purgatory.*

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