



**Purgatory by Fr Frederick William Faber:**

The soul goes into purgatory with its eyes fascinated and its spirit sweetly tranquillised, by the face of Jesus, its sight of the Sacred Humanity at the particular Judgment which it has undergone. That vision abides with it still, and beautifies the uneven terrors of its prison as if with perpetual silvery showers of moonlight which seem to fall from Our Saviour's loving eyes. In the sea of fire it holds fast by that image. The moment that in His sight it perceives its own unfitness for heaven, it wings its voluntary flight to purgatory, like a dove to her proper nest in the shadows of the forest. There need be no Angels to convey it thither. It is its own free worship of the purity of God.

In that moment the soul loves God most tenderly, and in return is most tenderly loved by Him. The soul is in punishment, true; but it is in unbroken union with God. It has no remembrance, says St. Catherine of Genoa most positively, no remembrance at all of its past sins or of earth. Its sweet prison, its holy sepulchre, is in the adorable will of its heavenly Father, and there it abides the term of its purification with the most perfect contentment and the most unutterable love. As it is not teased by any vision of self or sin, so neither is it harassed by an atom of fear, or by a single doubt of its own imperturbable security. It is impeccable; and there was a time on earth when that gift alone seemed as if it would contain all heaven in itself. It cannot commit the slightest imperfection. It cannot have the least movement of impatience. It can do nothing whatever which will in the least displease God. It loves God above everything, and it loves Him with a pure and disinterested love. It is constantly consoled by Angels, and cannot but rejoice in the confirmed assurance of its own salvation. Nay; its very bitterest agonies are accompanied by a profound unshaken peace, such as the language of this world has no words to tell.

No sooner has a soul, with the guilt of no mortal sin upon it, but owing to God a debt of temporal punishment, issued from the world, and been judged, than it perceives itself to be confirmed in grace and charity (according to St.

Catherine). It is incapable either of sinning or of meriting any more; and it is destined by an eternal and immutable decree to enter one day as a queen into the kingdom of the blessed, to see, to love, and to enjoy God, the perpetual fountain of all felicity.

In that instant all the sins of its past are represented to the soul, whether mortal or venial, even though they have been remitted in lifetime by Contrition and the Sacrament of Penance. But after this transitory and instantaneous view of them, the soul remembers nothing more about them. The Saints' words are: *"The cause of purgatory, which these souls have in themselves, they see once for all, in passing out of this life, and never afterwards. The reason of this exhibition of sins is, she teaches us, to enable the soul in that moment, by an act, no longer indeed meritorious, but nevertheless a real act of the will, to detest all its sins afresh, and especially those venial sins for which it had not contrition in lifetime, either through the weakness of an imperfect heart, or through the accident of a sudden death, that so it may be strictly true, that no sin whatever is pardoned unless the sinner makes an act of detestation of it."*

After this momentary view of sins and formal detestation of them, the soul perceives in itself their evil consequences and malignant legacies, and these form what the Saint calls the impediment of seeing God. The rust of sin, she says, is the impediment, and the fire keeps consuming the rust; and as a thing which is covered cannot correspond to the reverberation of the sun's rays, so, if the covering be consumed, the thing is at length laid open to the sun.

As soon as the soul perceives itself to be acceptable to God, and constituted heir of paradise, but unable, because of this impediment, to take immediate possession of its inheritance, it conceives an intense desire to be rid of this hindrance, this double obligation of guilt and punishment. But knowing that purgatory alone can consume these two obligations, and that it is for that very end God condemns the soul to fire, it desires itself to endure the punishment. The soul separated from the body (these are the Saint's words), not finding in itself this impediment which

cannot be taken away except by purgatory, at once throws itself into it with right good will.

Nay, if it did not find this ordinance of purgatory aptly contrived for the removal of this hindrance, there would instantaneously be generated in it a hell far worse than purgatory, inasmuch as it would see that because of this impediment it could not unite itself to God Who is its end. Wherefore, if the soul could find another purgatory fiercer than this, in which it could the sooner get rid of this impediment, it would speedily plunge itself therein, through the impetuosity of the love it bears to God.

But this is not all. The Saint goes on to teach that if the soul, labouring under this impediment, were free to choose between ascending at once, as it is, to paradise, and descending to suffer in purgatory, it would choose to suffer, although the sufferings be almost as dreadful as those of hell. These are her words: *"Of how much importance purgatory is no tongue can tell, no mind conceive. So much I see, that its pain is almost as if it were that of hell; and yet I see also that the soul which perceives in itself the slightest flaw or mote of imperfection, would rather throw itself into a thousand hells, than find itself in the presence of the divine Majesty with that defect upon it; and, therefore, seeing purgatory to be ordained for the very taking away of these flaws, forthwith it plunges into it, and it seems by its bearing, as I see, to conceive that it finds there an invention of no little mercy, simply in the being able to get rid of this impediment."*

When the righteous soul has thus arrived in purgatory, losing sight of everything else, it sees before it only two objects - the extremity of suffering, and the extremity of joys. A most tremendous pain is caused by knowing that God loves it with an infinite love, that He is the Chief Good, that He regards the soul as His daughter, and that He has predestined it to enjoy Him for ever in company with the Blessed: and hence the soul loves Him with a pure and most perfect charity. At the same time it perceives that it cannot see Him or enjoy Him yet, though it so intensely yearns to do so; and this afflicts it so much the more, as it is quite



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uncertain when the term of its penal exile, away from its Lord and paradise, will be fulfilled. This is the pain of loss in purgatory, of which the Saint says *"that it is a pain so extreme, that no tongue can tell it, no understanding grasp the least portion of it. Though God in His favour showed me a little spark thereof, yet can I not in any way express it with my tongue."*

Now let us examine the other object, the extremity of joy. As it loves God with the purest affection, and knows its sufferings to be the will of God in order to procure its purification, it conforms itself perfectly to the divine decree. While in purgatory, it sees nothing but that this pleases God; it takes in no idea but that of His will; it apprehends nothing so clearly as the suitability of this purification, in order to present it all fair and lovely to so great a majesty. Thus, the Saint says: *"If a soul, having still something left to be cleansed away, were presented to the Vision of God, it would be worse than that of ten purgatories; for it would be quite unable to endure that excessive goodness and that exquisite justice. Hence it is that the suffering soul is entirely resigned to the will of its Creator. It loves its very pains, and rejoices in them because they are a holy ordinance of God. Thus in the midst of the ardent heats it enjoys a contentment so complete that it exceeds the grasp of human intelligence to comprehend it. I do not believe,"* says the Saint, *"that it is possible to find a contentment to compare with that of the souls in purgatory, unless it be the contentment of the Saints in paradise."* This contentment increases daily through the influx of God into those souls, and this influx increases in proportion as the impediment is consumed and worn away. Indeed, so far as the will is concerned, we can hardly say that the pains are pains at all, so contentedly do the souls rest in the ordinance of God, to whose will pure love unites them.



In another place, St. Catherine says that this inexplicable jubilee of the soul, while it is undergoing purgatory springs from the strength and purity of its love of God. This love gives to the soul such a contentment as cannot be expressed. But this contentment does not take away one iota from the pain; nay, it is the retarding of love from the possession of its object which causes the pain; and the pain is greater according to the greater perfection of love of which God has made the soul capable. Thus the souls in purgatory have at once the greatest contentment and the greatest suffering; and the one in no way hinders the other. As to prayers, alms, and Masses, she asserts that the souls experience great consolation from them; but that in these, as in other matters, their principal solicitude is that everything should be weighed in the most equitable scales of the Divine Will, leaving God to take His own course in everything, and to pay Himself and His justice in the way His own infinite goodness chooses to select.

When she looked at herself with the light of supernatural illumination, she saw that God had set her up in the Church as an express and living image of purgatory. She says: *"This form of purification, which I behold in the souls in purgatory, I perceive in my own soul now. I see that my soul dwells in its body as in a purgatory altogether conformable to the true purgatory, only in such measure as my body can bear without dying. Nevertheless, it is always increasing by little and little, until it reaches the point when it will really die"*. Her death was indeed most wonderful, and has always been considered as a martyrdom of Divine Love. So truly from the first has her position been appreciated, as the great doctor of purgatory, that in the old life of her, the *vita antica*, examined by theologians in 1670, and approved in the Roman process of her canonisation, and which was composed by Marabotto, her confessor, and Vernaza, her spiritual son, it is said: *"Verily it seems that God set up this His creature as a mirror and an example of the pains of the other life, which souls suffer in purgatory. It is just as if He had placed her upon a high wall, dividing this life from the life to come; so that, seeing what is suffered in that life beyond, she might manifest to us, even in this life, what we are to expect when we have passed the boundary."* This is a mere epitome of her wonderful and exquisitely beautiful treatise, which has given St. Catherine a rank among the theologians of the Church.



# THE CLOISTER

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November 2020 Calendar		
<b>1</b>	<b>Feast of All Saints</b> Bristol: 9am Mass & 11am Mass Taunton: 11am; Holnest: 4pm	
<b>2</b>	<b>All Souls Day</b> Bristol: 11am & 6pm Taunton: 11.30am	
3	Feria	8:00 am
4	St Charles Borromeo	8:00 am
5	Feria	8:00 am
6	Feria	8:00 am
7	BVM on Saturday	11:00am
<b>8</b>	<b>23rd Sunday after Pentecost</b> Bristol: 9am Mass & 11am Mass Taunton: 11am; Holnest: 4pm	
9	Dedication of the Archbasilica of the Most Holy Saviour	8:00 am
10	St Andrew Avellino	8:00 am
11	St Martin of Tours	8:00 am
12	St Martin I	8:00 am
13	St Didacus	8:00 am
14	St Josaphat	8:00 am
<b>15</b>	<b>Resumed 6th Sunday after Epiphany</b> Bristol: 9am Mass & 11am Mass Taunton: 11am; Holnest: 4pm	
16	St Gertrude	8:00 am
17	St Gregory the Wonderworker	8:00 am
18	Dedication of the Basilicas of SS. Peter & Paul (Colleton Manor Mass 11:30am)	8:00 am
19	St Elizabeth of Hungary	8:00 am
20	St Felix of Valois	8:00 am
21	Presentation of the BVM	8:00 am
<b>22</b>	<b>24th Sunday after Pentecost</b> Bristol: 9am Mass & 11am Mass Taunton: 11am; Holnest: 4pm	
23	St Clement I	8:00 am
24	St John of the Cross	8:00 am
25	St Catherine of Alexandria	8:00 am
26	St Sylvester	8:00 am
27	Feria	8:00 am
28	BVM on Saturday	8:00 am
<b>29</b>	<b>1st Sunday of Advent</b> Bristol: 9am Mass & 11am Mass Taunton: 11am; Holnest: 4pm	
30	St Andrew	8:00 am
31	BVM on Saturday	8:00 am

Dear Faithful,

The month of November is dedicated to the Holy Souls. The Catholic Church has been praying for the departed souls since the time of the Apostles. This fact of praying for them implies the belief that these souls are not in Heaven and yet, neither are they hopelessly lost in hell; that they will reach heaven in the end and that our prayers may help them to attain this end. This belief in Purgatory as a place of expiation is an excellent example of what is meant by the tradition of the Church. Even in the Old Testament there are references to suffrages for the departed. In the book of Maccabees a clear reference is made when Judas Maccabaeus found concealed on the bodies of his soldiers who had fallen in battle the offerings which they had looted from a pagan temple: *"and making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead"*. Which leads the inspired writer to say that it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins. In the lives of the Saints we are constantly reading of apparitions of souls from purgatory or of revelations about them and especially about the pains which they suffer. Saints like St Catherine of Genoa received in prayer a supernatural light enabling them to understand more clearly this teaching on purgatory. In her 'Treatise on Purgatory' she expounds upon her revelations and describes both the great sufferings and joys of the souls in purgatory. She talks about the alms of the

living being offered up to God in accordance with His Divine Will in order to be able to succour the Holy Souls. Her treatise is well worth a read. Let us offer up many prayers and masses for the Holy Souls during this month. It is a perfect act of Charity to help them with our suffrages, since they are unable to merit for themselves, but we can gain indulgences for them. You will find below the conditions needed in order to gain indulgences for the Holy Souls: plenary indulgences if we can strive to obtain them, otherwise partial indulgences: all of our good works go into the treasury of the Church, so that Divine Providence will distribute these goods appropriately to those souls in need.

Requiescant in pace.

With every good wish and blessing,

Fr John McLaughlin

**A Plenary Indulgence for the Holy Souls can be gained during the month of November:**

- Between 1st - 8th November, visit a cemetery and pray for the holy Souls;**
- Receive Holy Communion on the day of the visit;**
- Go to Confession 8 days before or after;**
- Pray for the Sovereign Pontiff's Intentions;**
- Have no attachment to sin, even venial, otherwise only a partial Indulgence is gained.**