

I Believe in Purgatory

I have to believe in purgatory because I am a sinner, defiled and guilty. I must to be cleansed, washed and purged if I hope to be welcomed into that heavenly city in which nothing impure will ever enter.

As a child I was taught about 'purgatory', where the soul is purified through fire and torments before admittance to heaven. The picture of people in agony and engulfed in flames is equally terrifying to a child as it is to an old man or woman on their death bed, and indeed to anyone who takes this doctrine seriously.

I thank the Lord Jesus Christ who delivered me from this fear of death and the horrible prospect of agony thereafter. God gave me the grace to trust in His Son, and through the Bible He reassures me that Christ has already purged me of my sins:

"[The Son] being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when **he had by himself purged our sins**, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

All Christians can say: "He had by himself purged our sins." In a very real sense, the Lord Jesus is our purgatory. The purging has been done already; it is not something to be achieved in the future after death. Christ "purged our sins."

Moreover, and more importantly, our sins were not purged by personal sufferings, personal torments or personal punishment. Not "by my suffering" but Christ had "by himself" purged our sins. I did not clean myself, but He cleansed me by his blood. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). We have "boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19).

I hope and pray that many Catholics reading this letter would come to realize this simple and glorious truth. You cannot pay for your sins by your suffering in this world or in the next. You cannot be your own saviour. The Saviour is the Lord Jesus. That is why He gave himself as a sacrifice on the cross. Therefore our confidence for complete and perfect purification must be in Him alone and in the blood He shed.

Do you believe in purgatory? I sincerely hope you can respond, "Yes I believe in purgatory. His name is Jesus. And I am not afraid of death any longer because on that same day he assures me, 'Today, you shall be with me in paradise.'"