

AN APOLOGETIC EXPLANATION OF **PURGATORY**

What is Purgatory?

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, that they might be delivered from their sin. (2 Mc 12:44–45)

If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor 3:15)



Purgatory is a state of purification for those souls who have died in the grace of God but require cleansing from imperfections before they can enter Heaven.

Before entering Heaven, every trace of attachment to created goods must be eliminated, every imperfection of the soul corrected. The Church uses the word Purgatory to describe the final purification of the souls of those who, having died in grace, have not fully received the remission of the temporal punishment for their pardoned mortal sins or their venial sins. “As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come” (St. Gregory the Great, *Dial.*, 4, 39; *PL* 77, 396; cf. Mt 12:32). (Cf. CCC 1031, 1472)

The punishment of the souls in Purgatory is the delay in seeing God and the knowledge that this delay is their own fault for not having fully repented on earth. These souls also have great joy because that they are assured of Heaven. Purgatory is not a lesser form of Hell but rather a state of preparation for Heaven.

Scriptural evidence of Purgatory is found in both the Old and New Testaments. Most strikingly is that Judas Maccabeus offered prayers and atonement for the sins of his fallen soldiers; such prayers for the dead would have been meaningless if the deceased had already reached their final destination (cf. 2 Mc 12:44–45). The New Testament also speaks of a purification “as through fire” (cf. 1 Cor 3:15). (Cf. CCC 1032–1033)

Prayers for the dead have always been considered a pious duty, an act of charity and justice. The Church frequently remembers the dead—who are also members of the Communion of Saints—in her liturgies, prayers, and indulgences. (Cf. CCC 1475, 1498)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* addresses this question in paragraph 1031.

Rev. James Socias, The Didache Bible, Midwest Theological Forum Press, Downers Grove IL, 2014, 2015

AN APOLOGETIC EXPLANATION OF **INDULGENCES**

What is an indulgence?

Judas and his men went to take up the bodies of the fallen and to bring them back to lie with their kinsmen in the sepulchers of their fathers. Then under the tunic of every one of the dead they found sacred tokens of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. . . . And they turned to prayer, begging that the sin which had been committed might be wholly blotted out. . . . 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. . . . Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin. (2 Mc 12:39–45)



Within the one Church, we “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal 6:2). The saints in Heaven intercede for us who are on earth. We pray for each other as well as those who are undergoing purification in Purgatory so their burden might be lighter, as Judas Maccabeus did for his fallen soldiers who had secretly trifled with idolatry (cf. 2 Mc 12: 39–45).

An indulgence is an act of faith that requires an offering of some prayer, sacrifice, or work of service, in imitation of Christ and the saints. By doing these things, we can develop virtues—good habits—and become more like Christ. An indulgence is an act by which we dispose ourselves to receive God’s grace of conversion. On behalf of Christ, the Church rewards us from the “treasury of merits”—the abundance of grace won for us by Christ and his faithful people down through the ages. Indulgences may also be applied to other people. (Cf. CCC 1498)

An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints. (Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, norm 1)

An indulgence is partial or plenary depending on whether it removes part or all of the debt due to sin, and the Church requires that those seeking indulgences should also receive the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist near the time they complete the indulgenced act. (Cf. CCC 1471, 1478, 1498)

The Church frequently makes indulgences available to mark certain feast days or events in her life, most notably on All Souls’ Day, on which the Holy Souls in Purgatory are especially remembered; other indulgences are available to the faithful every day of the year. The Church’s official list of indulgenced actions is called the *Enchiridion* (“Handbook”) of *Indulgences*.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* addresses this question in paragraph 1471.

Rev. James Socias, The Didache Bible, Midwest Theological Forum Press, Downers Grove IL, 2014, 2015