

Take-Home

Purgatory and the Last Things

Abide

Module Three

What We Found

Everyone in purgatory is saved. It is not a second chance, not a middle destination, and not a way of finishing what the cross left undone. If you remember one sentence, remember that one.

The problem it answers comes from two verses almost every Christian accepts. Revelation 21:27 says nothing unclean shall enter. Hebrews 12:14 says holiness is necessary to see the Lord. And most people die genuinely loving God and genuinely unfinished. Every tradition has to say something about that gap.

And we noticed how little the Church defines: not the duration, not the mechanism, not whether fire is literal. The council that defined the doctrine told bishops in the same breath to keep speculation out of preaching.

Voices of the Church

Voice of the Church

St. Augustine

Confessions, Book IX (summary)

He records his mother's dying request that her sons remember her at the altar, and then prays for her in the book itself. Not an argument; a fourth-century Christian doing something ordinary for his mother.

Voice of the Church

St. John Chrysostom

Given as a summary of his teaching; no locus printed

The dead are genuinely helped by the prayers and offerings of the living. He urges his people not to weep uselessly but to pray and give alms, which gives grief something faithful to do.

Voice of the Church

The Council of Trent

Session 25, 1563

Affirmed purgatory and the help of the faithful's prayers, and instructed bishops to exclude from popular preaching the difficult and subtle questions that do not build up piety.

Ready Response

“The word is not in the Bible.” Say yes before you say anything else, because it is not there and pretending otherwise costs you the conversation. Then move to what the evening was really about. Nothing unclean shall enter, and almost nobody dies finished. Ask your friend what they do with that gap, and listen; every Christian has to do something with it.

“Hebrews says judgment comes after death.” Agree, and then find out what your friend thinks you believe. Most people who raise this assume Catholics hold that the verdict is still open, and until that is cleared up they are objecting to something you do not hold. Everyone in purgatory has already been judged and is already saved. If you remember one sentence, remember that one.

“That insults the sufficiency of the cross.” This is the one to slow down for, because the person saying it is defending something you love as much as they do. Say that first. Then ask what they think God is doing when he changes a Christian over a lifetime, and whether that has ever looked to them like an insult to the cross. Let them answer before you add anything.

“Indulgences.” Do not defend the sixteenth century and do not change the subject either. Say plainly that the selling was a scandal, that people were genuinely wronged by it, and that the anger it caused was earned. You lose nothing by conceding it, and you will not be heard on anything else until you do.

Live It This Week

- Have a Mass offered for someone who has died.
- Read Malachi 3:2-3 and notice what a refiner is doing and why.
- Pray for the dead by name every day this week.

Memory Verse

“If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” **1 Corinthians 3:15**

In the Catechism

CCC 1030-1032, 1054. If you read only one, read 1031.