

Session 13 Take-Home: Nothing Unclean Shall Enter

What We Found

We built the problem before we named the solution. Heaven's door policy: "nothing unclean shall enter it" (Rev 21:27). The requirement: "the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14). The promise: "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion" (Phil 1:6). And the honest, humbling likelihood: many of the faithful die as real friends of God, forgiven but not finished. So between death and glory, something happens: a completion. The Church's name for it is Purgatory, and its whole core is one sentence: "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed **assured of their eternal salvation**; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven" (CCC 1030). A doctrine about the saved, from its first word.

We found the man the usual categories forget: foundation on Christ, shoddy work burned on the Day, suffering loss, "but he himself will be saved, **but only as through fire**" (1 Cor 3:15): a text Catholic tradition has long read, and the Catechism cites (CCC 1031), as a saved man purified on his way into glory: not hell, for he is saved; not yet glory, for he suffers loss, through fire. Jesus's strange clause has been heard the same way since the Fathers: a sin not forgiven "either in this age **or in the age to come**" (Mt 12:32), read by St. Gregory the Great, whom the Catechism quotes there (CCC 1031), as leaving some forgiveness open in the age to come. And forgiveness does not always erase every consequence: David, forgiven, with a consequence standing (2 Sam 12:13-14); Moses, barred from the land for Meribah (Num 20:12; Deut 32:51-52) and dying on Nebo within sight of it (Deut 34): the Church calls this the temporal punishment of sin, purified here or hereafter, not vengeance from without but sin's own residue (CCC 1472, in substance). Even our Exodus map taught it: the wilderness ends with an account settled at the border.

And the family habit: Judas Maccabeus prayed and offered sacrifice for his fallen dead, "that they might be delivered from their sin" (2 Macc 12, in substance); the Gospels record no correction of the practice from Jesus (an observation, not a proof); the catacombs and the ancient liturgical traditions of East and West witness it; and a dying St. Monica asked only to be remembered at the altar. Praying for the dead has always, in the Church's reasoning, aimed at someone who can be helped: not the blessed, who need nothing; not the lost, who can use nothing; but the beloved in between, being helped home. Purgatory is not an insult to the Cross; it is the Cross refusing to leave anyone half-washed. All who die in his grace will arrive clean.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Monica, through St. Augustine

Confessions, Book IX, ch. 11 (c. 397)

Dying at Ostia: "Lay this body anywhere... only this I ask of you: that you remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you may be." The most famous mother in Christian literature ends her story with a request for prayers after death, honored by a Doctor of the Church in writing.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Catherine of Genoa

Treatise on Purgatory (15th century)

In substance: apart from the happiness of the saints in heaven, there is no joy comparable to that of the souls in purgatory: confirmed in God's love, certain of salvation, their suffering is love itself burning away, with their full consent, everything that resists it. The doctrine's true face: Love finishing the job on someone who finally, completely, wants him to.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. John Henry Newman

The Dream of Gerontius (1865)

In Newman's poem, the soul glimpses Christ and begs, not for admission, but for purification: "Take me away", gladly, because one glance at Holiness makes the soul unable to bear its own stains or want anything but their removal. Purgatory, from the inside, is answered prayer.

Live It This Week

Pray for your dead, by name. Each night this week: "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them." Say the names.

Offer a Mass. Contact the parish office and have a Mass offered for someone you love who has died: simple, ancient, and CCC 1032 in action.

Start the purification early. Name one attachment you would rather surrender now than carry to the door, and bring it to confession or prayer this week.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

Philippians 1:6 (RSV2CE)

Before next session: read Revelation 21:1-7 and 22:1-5, slowly, twice.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1030-1032, 1472