

to cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit because the encounter with God requires absolute purity. He continued: *“Every trace of attachment to evil must be eliminated, every imperfection of the soul corrected. Purification must be complete, and indeed this is precisely what is meant by the Church's teaching on purgatory. The term does not indicate a place, but a condition of existence. Those who, after death, exist in a state of purification, are already in the love of Christ who removes from them the remnants of imperfection”*. The nature of the state of purgatory is that while the souls are temporarily deprived of being in the sight of God in heaven, death has put an end to their ability to sin and this makes them secure of eternal happiness after cleansing. Finally the CCC tells us that the Church commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead and cites the words of St John Chrysostom: *“Let us help and commemorate them..... Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them.”*

- Stephen S.

Entrance Antiphon: Give me justice, O God, and plead my cause against a nation that is faithless. From the deceitful and cunning rescue me, for you, O God, are my strength.

First Reading: Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Responsorial Psalm: 50 Response: A pure heart create for me, O God.

Second Reading: Hebrews 5: 7-9

Gospel Acclamation: Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God! If a man serves me, says the Lord, he must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too. Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God!

Gospel: John 12:20-30

Memorial Acclamation: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: Amen, Amen I say to you: Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single grain. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.



Fifth Sunday of Lent, Cycle B, 2024 Weekly Reflection:

From Suffering to Redemption: (2) Purgatory: The Catholic Church's official doctrine on purgatory, based on the Council of Florence (1439) and the Council of Trent (1563) is summarised

in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (“CCC”) in this way: *“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. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect...”* Further the Council of Trent made clear that the penitential system of the Church is such that penitential works are part of true repentance; and that the doctrine involves as its necessary consequence a belief that the sinner failing to do penance in this life may be punished in another world so as to be eternally united with God.

To add more context and explanation we can look at some scriptural passages and early Church writings and tradition. That there is a third state between Heaven and Hell, which we call Purgatory, is the reason why we pray for the deceased. Otherwise, such prayers would be pointless. In the Old Testament Book of 2 Maccabees it states: *“For had he not expected the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead, whereas if he had in view the splendid recompense reserved for those who make a pious end, the thought was holy and devout. Hence, he had this expiatory sacrifice offered for the dead, so that they might be released from their sin.”* Praying for the dead is part of the earliest church tradition and is mentioned in 2nd/3rd century writers such as St Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen and St Cyprian. In the “City of God” St Augustine said: *“But temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but all of them before that last and strictest judgment.”*

Although there are many representations of purgatory as a place, it is better understood as a state. Pope St John Paul II said in 1999 that we are invited