



## From Deacon Mark Miller's Desk

Our Catholic belief in purgatory is often misunderstood. It's frequently one of our beliefs that are often questioned by those of other faiths. Emily Stimpson Chapman, writing for Our Sunday Visitor, helped demystify purgatory by outlining its eight truths.

1. **Purgatory exists** – Sin has consequences. While God is love, he still honors the decisions made by men and women who employ their free will. Purgatory is a place of purification for those who “die in friendship with God but who haven't fully broken their attachment to sin or atoned for wrongs done in this life.”
2. **Purgatory isn't just punishment** – it is a gift rooted in God's mercy and love. It's a testament to the depth of his love for each of us. “God forgives us immediately when we ask. The role of suffering is to undo the damage we've done. It's God the Healer applying the remedy to make us perfect images of Christ.
3. **The suffering in purgatory isn't physical pain** – Purgatory is a place for the soul alone. Without the body, there can be no physical suffering. Susan Tassone, author of seven books on purgatory, describes the suffering in Purgatory as “a spiritual fever” that separates the soul from the sin.
4. **The souls in purgatory experience joy as well as pain** – Chapman explains “Every soul in purgatory is bound for glory. Their fate has been sealed, and ultimately, it's a blessed fate. Therefore, the time they spend in purgatory, whether short or long, is a time marked not only by suffering, but also by joy
5. **Our prayers for the dead matter** -- Dr. Regis Martin, professor of theology at Franciscan University, explains, “It really is one of the most consoling doctrines of the Church. None of us stands alone. our relationship to those in purgatory is simply an extension of “the logic of love,” where “You extend yourself so that another might have an easier time of it. And that principle isn't bound by death
6. **The holy souls intercede for us** – The souls in purgatory can pray for us, helping obtain for us the graces we need to follow Christ more perfectly.

They're interested in our salvation. They want us to understand the seriousness of our sins and the importance of following the example set by Christ.

**7. Purgatory is scripturally rooted** – In the second book of Maccabees, Judas Maccabee orders prayers and sacrifices for fallen soldiers [12:45]. If this is being discussed with a protestant, they'll need to refer to a separate section of their bible called the Apocrypha to find the books of the Maccabees. The book of Revelation [21:27] states that no unclean thing can enter into heaven, so logic requires purgatory. If there wasn't a purification process, then very, very few people would enter heaven.

**8. Wasn't invented by medieval Church** – As far back as the first century Christians offered prayers for those who had died. The writings of the Church Fathers relate the practice of commemorating anniversaries with Masses and special prayers. It was a common practice in the early years for people to set aside money in their wills to have Masses offered for them after their death.

---

### **How can you help the souls in purgatory?**

1. Pray the Rosary for departed friends, relatives and the most forgotten souls.
2. Daily, recite this simple prayer: "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace."
3. Visit a loved one's grave and say a brief prayer for them.
4. Have a Mass celebrated for loved ones on the anniversary of their death