and those "*Righteous men made perfect*" – those who have to go through purgatory.

In Jesus' parable in Luke 12:42-48, there are three types of servants: "*it will be good for the faithful and wise manager*" (heaven). He who "*knows but does not do what he knows is right will be put into the place of the unbelievers"* (hell). Finally, "*he who does things deserving of punishment but does not know"* will be disciplined – purgatory.

In 1 Peter 3:18-20, we read that Christ went to preach to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago. It proves that a third place can exist. Also, Jesus' words: "*I tell you that you will not get out till you have paid the last penny*" (Lk 12:59) cannot refer to hell, from whence there is no release.

Look at Col 1:24, Paul said he rejoiced in "*my sufferings for you, and (I) fill up those things that are wanting in the sufferings of Christ*". The obvious meaning of this passage is that Christ's sufferings, though fully satisfactory for our sins, leave us in a position to "*join our sufferings to the Cross*" thereby making them valuable, or "meritorious", enabling us to "*apply*" salvation in our lives and on behalf of others. It is a wonderful privilege we have been given to assist as "*co-mediators*", in a way, in the salvation of mankind, particularly for those who may never have a chance of hearing the gospel preached. God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4).

Expiation after forgiveness

Some say God does not demand expiation after forgiving sins. Tell that to King David. When he repented, Nathan told him: "*The Lord, on His part, has forgiven you; you shall not die but since you have utterly spurned the Lord by this deed, the child born to you* (Bathsheba's) *must surely die*" (2 Sam 12:14). Even after David's sin was forgiven, he had to undergo expiation (purgation, in this life). Can we expect less?

Similarly, in Nb 20:10-13, because Moses doubted and struck the rock at Meribah twice to yield water, he was not allowed entry by God into the Promised Land. This was his "*purgation"*, illustrating that purging or atoning for sin forgiven can take place in this life as well as in the next.

In the Old Testament, the abode of the dead (the grave) was known as "Sheol". There appears to have been three sections: the bosom of Abraham for the righteous, Hades, a place of temporary suffering (purgation) and a third section: Gehennah, where suffering was eternal (hell). Non-scriptural writings such as the 2nd century "*Acts of Thecla*" refer to prayers for the dead undergoing purgation. Many Psalms, such as 18:6, speak of being "*lifted from the grave*".

Inscriptions in the Roman catacombs indicate that the early Christians prayed for the dead in purgatory, a practice, by the way which continues in the eastern Orthodox Churches too. The Fathers of the Church, those generations of saints and scholars following the Apostles, such as Origen, Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine of Hippo, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, John Chrysostom and Pope Gregory the Great, all mention prayer for the dead undergoing purgation in their writings.

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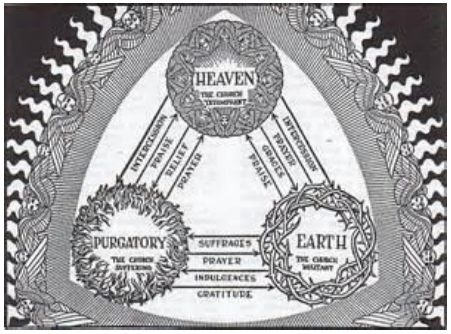

Communion of Saints and Purgatory

St. Paul wrote to the Gentiles who believed in Jesus: "You are no longer strangers and sojourners but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone" (Eph 2:19-20).

For Catholics, the saints refer to exceptionally holy believers whom they believe to be with the Lord in heaven. Paul calls all his fellow believers "saints", not just the notably holy ones (see Rom 12:13, 1 Cor 16:1). This is also what the Apostles' Creed, one of the earliest statements of Christian faith means when it proclaims: "I believe in the Communion of Saints". The phrase means the bond of unity among those living and dead, who are or have been committed followers of Christ. St. Paul calls this the Body of Christ (Rom 12:5).

The dead remain in communion with those living on earth

Catholics also believe that the saints who have died remain in communion with those living on earth, and indeed with those undergoing purgation, being cleansed of the "remains of sin" of which the guilt has been

forgiven. The distinction between God's people who are living or dead in terms of their human, physical existence does not affect their membership of Christ's church. God is beyond time and sees our human life on earth as a brief fleeting phase in comparison with our total, eternal life as spiritual beings. Jesus insisted that those who have passed from this life are not "dead". Jesus said in Mk 12:26-27. "*He (God) is not the God of the dead, but of the living*" referring to those who have passed on.

Jesus even demonstrated to Peter, James, and John that the "saints" of the Old Covenant are alive when He spoke with Moses and Elijah on the mountain of transfiguration (Mk 9:4). The story of the good thief in Lk 23:43 of whom Jesus said: "*This day you will be with Me in paradise"* illustrates that the "*saints*" who have passed from this life are united with God in heaven. Christians living and dead are part of a mighty army led by Jesus, our Commander, a vast throng of angels and saints who have lived before us.

The saints support us by intercessory prayer

Chapter 11 of the Letter to the Hebrews calls to mind the Old Testament "Saints" and concludes: *"Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us …."* (Heb 12:1). It is a teaching of the Catholic Church that members of the "Communion of Saints" can support one another by encouraging one another in intercessory prayer.

If the prayer of a righteous man "*availeth much*" while on earth, surely, he does not become "unrighteous" when he is with the Lord? (Js 5:16). His intercessory prayer in Christ, the one Mediator, would be even more efficacious.

Veneration was offered the angels in Jos 5:14, Daniel 8:17 and Tobit 12:16. We learn that the angels and saints place the prayers of the holy on earth at God's feet (Tob 12:12, Rev 5:8, 8:3), which is to say support the prayers with their intercessions. These verses also indicate that the angels and saints are the ones of whom intercessory prayer is requested, and that they take their prayers to God.

The ancient Jews believed in the intercession of the saints. Judas Maccabeus saw in a vision "most worthy of credence" how two deceased men, the High Priest, Onias and the prophet Jeremiah, interceded with God for the Jews (2 Macc 15:11-6). Jeremiah himself wrote that Moses and Samuel made intercession for the Jews, apparently meaning after their deaths (Jer 15:1).

Intercessory prayer of the saints, far from obscuring the unique Mediatorship of Jesus, demonstrates its power. We pray and intercede "over each other" in prayer groups. Why should such intercessions cease when we are in glory?

The Scriptures and the Catholic Church strictly forbid any attempt to delve into the occult by "summoning up the dead" (Dt 18:10, Jer 29:8 and the CCC para 2115-2117). In no way is intercessory prayer of the Communion of Saints with regard to those in heaven and undergoing purgation in any way connected with the summoning of the dead to foretell the future or for any other reason whatsoever. All forms of spiritism are strictly forbidden to Christians.

PURGATORY

Scripture and the teaching of the Church affirm the existence of heaven and hell. But what of purgatory? The name is not found in the Bible; neither for that matter is "Trinity", "Incarnation", or "Mass".

Why do people need to be purged or cleansed of sin after they die? Don't the merits of the death of Jesus Christ suffice for the total remission of sin? The answer is "yes". If one dies in some "bondage" to sin, or is crippled by sin's effects, the sin and its effects must be forgiven, removed and purged before the person sees God "unveiled", face to face (Rev 21:27, Heb 12:29, Ex 33:20, Is 6:1-3, 6:5, 6:7, Mt 5:8).

In the Old Testament deuterocanonical book, 2 Macc 12:43-46, we read: "*It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins*". Judas Maccabeus had arranged for an atonement offering to be made in Jerusalem after taking up a collection of 2000 drachmas in silver for those soldiers who had fallen in battle on whom had been found idolatrous lucky charms of the idols of Jamnia, contrary to the prohibition in Deut 7:25. This was done to make full atonement for their sin.

Although the meaning of 1 Cor 15:29 is debated, it is clear that living Christians can help those already dead: "*Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead*?" The uninterrupted teaching of the Church is that our prayers do benefit dead Christians.

Some sins are forgiven in the afterlife

Matthew 12:32 implies that some sins can be forgiven in the afterlife: "*Anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit won't be forgiven, either in this age, or the age to come*". Without purgatory, the last portion of Jesus' statement seems frivolous. 1 Cor 3:15 is clear: "… *He himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames*". In Heb 12:23 several groups of people are mentioned: "*the Church of the firstborn*" – those who go directly to heaven