

THE SENTINEL

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PURGATORY

By Purgatory the Church understands a place in which souls who depart this life in the grace of God suffer for a time because they still need to be cleansed from venial sin or have still to pay the temporal punishment due to mortal sin, the guilt and eternal punishment of which have been remitted. All the souls in purgatory have died in the love of God and are certain to enter Heaven. But as yet they are not pure and holy enough to see Him. The Church simply teaches two things regarding purgatory,—first that there is a purgatory; second, that the souls detained there are helped by the prayers of the faithful and, above all, by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar. The doctrine of purgatory is both reasonable and consoling. While we have God's word for it that nothing defiled can enter Heaven, our reason rebels at the thought that God could cast from him forever a soul that departs this life stained with lesser sins. Purgatory, therefore, where the soul may atone for these smaller sins and make full satisfaction to divine justice, is worthy of the wisdom and mercy of God. It is very consoling to the bereaved soul to know that by its prayers, alms, good works, but especially by the Holy Sacrifice, it can help the dead, shorten the time of their exile, and hasten the day of their eternal happiness.