

Purgatory

Forgiveness and reparation (a kind of “repairing”) are two different things as this example shows:

A boy accidentally breaks the neighbor’s window playing ball, the owner of the house forgives him for his carelessness, but still expects him (or his parents) to pay for the window.

“O LORD, our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them, though you punished their offenses.” Psalm 99:8

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), we are *forgiven* the sins we confess, when the priest gives us absolution, but we are still given a *penance* to do after we leave the confessional. The penance is to help us make reparation for our sins after they have been forgiven. Any reparation that is still left to do for our sins when we die, is completed in Purgatory.

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church

1030 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.

1031 The Church gives the name *Purgatory* to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned... Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire:

St. Gregory the Great speaking on *Mt* 12:31 said “As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come.”

1032 This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: "Therefore [Judas Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin." From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers... for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead:

St. John Chrysostom, speaking on *Job* 1:5 said “Let us help and commemorate them. If Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice, why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them.”

Other quotes from the Bible and the Early Fathers of the Church

The Early Fathers spoke of a place after death where expiation is made for sins. St. Paul also speaks of such a place in Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 he says:

“If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, the work of each will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire (itself) will test the quality of each one's work. If the work stands that someone built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage. But if someone's work is burned up, that one will suffer loss; the person will be saved, but only as through fire.”

Tertullian: “The faithful widow prays for the soul of her husband, and begs for him in the interim repose (Purgatory) ... and offers prayers on the anniversary of his death (*Monogamy* 10 [A.D. 213]).

Origen: “If a man departs this life with lighter faults, he is condemned to fire which burns away the lighter materials, and prepares the soul for the kingdom of God, where nothing defiled may enter. For if on the foundation of Christ you have built not only gold and silver and precious stones (I Cor., 3); but also wood and hay and stubble, what do you expect when the soul shall be separated from the body? Would you enter into heaven with your wood and hay and stubble and thus defile the kingdom of God; or on account of these hindrances would you remain without and receive no reward for your gold and silver and precious stones? Neither is this just. It remains then that you be committed to the fire which will burn the light materials; for our God to those who can comprehend heavenly things is called a cleansing fire. But this fire consumes not the creature, but what the creature has himself built, wood, and hay and stubble. It is manifest that the fire destroys the wood of our transgressions and then returns to us the reward of our great works. (*Homilies on Jeremiah* 13: 445, 448 [A.D. 244]).