**Upper Room: February 2021/March 2021**

**Host or designated reader/leader begins the Upper Room prayer hour by first reading this message from Fr. David:**

Dear friends in Christ:

We consider death and Purgatory in this Upper Room. If you asked yourself the question “Am I perfect?” What would you say? Close? Nearly? Far from it! Purgatory is about perfection and preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven. It’s also about mercy. It’s God’s realm (the afterlife) and He knows what He is doing for us in making us ready to appreciate the gift of Heaven. Let’s have a discussion about death and Purgatory in this Upper Room, there isn’t much written about Purgatory in the Catechism or the Bible about Purgatory. But that’s ok.

In Christ;

Fr. David

**Prayer to the Holy Spirit**

L: **Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth Your Spirit, O Lord, and they shall be created.**

R: And you shall renew the face of the earth

L: **Let us pray – God our Father, pour out the gifts of your Holy Spirit on the world. You sent the Spirit on Your Church to begin the teaching of the Gospel; now let the Spirit continue to work in the world through the hearts of all who believe. Through Christ our Lord.**

R: Amen

L: **You, O lord, will open my lips.**

R: And my tongue shall announce Your praise.

L: **Incline unto my aid, O God.**

R: O Lord, make haste to help me.

L: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit**.

R: As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen

**Lesson**

CCC 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.

*Dying while imperfect (with sin), or not being conformed to God’s will completely happens often; why does this imperfection play a factor in our place before God in Heaven? In other words why is purgation necessary in your opinion? Or do you see it differently? Explain*

CCC 1031 The Church gives the name “Purgatory” to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire:

***Read to the group these two passages from the Bible* 1 Corinthians 3:10-17 *and* 1 Peter 1:3-7**

*St. Paul uses the image of different quality products in laying a foundation for a building and alludes to the stability of the building as directly related to what is being used. How does this image relate to the building of our souls? What do you use for the building up of your soul/spirit?*

*St. Paul says that the person will be saved “but only as through fire”… this is a reference to purification, can you imagine how Purgatory looks and feels? What feeds your imagination about Purgatory? Is Purgatory a loving or a fearful place? I don’t think we can know anything for certain about and the afterlife (it’s cloaked in mystery) and our beliefs about it won’t change the reality of Purgatory (that’s not how it works – “truth is truth”) but we must have an idea about it. Please discuss.*

*St. Peter uses the image of fire-tried-gold in creating the idea of a soul being made ready to give due honor, worship and praise to God at the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Gold being put to the fire eliminates imperfections from the ore, if there was one thing that could be “burnt” or purged from your perfectly imperfect life, what would that be (without getting too personal)?*

*Human trials are oftentimes considered by the faithful to be Purgatory on Earth. What are the aspects of our sufferings and trials that can prepare or lead us to be better prepared for Heaven? How does suffering make us more perfect?*

CCC 1031 continued: 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.

*Discuss the teaching that “Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” is the belief that God hasn’t the power to forgive my sins and how this might even relate to a common disbelief in Purgatory.*

CCC 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 in suffrage 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:

*What do you have to do to have a mass said for a deceased person? Do they have to be Catholic in order for a mass to be said for them? What is a mass of the living? How many masses should you have said for a good Catholic – a bad one? Ever think about fasting and other forms of mortification to atone for sin?*

CCC 1032 Continued: 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.

*How can we put into proper context the power of the mass and the power of prayer and fasting for people and the dead? Try to think of a prayer, from the offering of a mass or other, that you remember was answered by God and share it with the group.*

**Please pray the 5th decade of the sorrowful mystery and make sure you go to confession during Lent.**