

Saint Catherine of Siena

1347 - 1380

PURGATORY

Saint Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church and co-patron of Italy, refers to the description of Purgatory given to her by Jesus: “And if you turn to Purgatory, you will find my sweet and priceless Providence toward those little wretched souls that foolishly wasted time, and being now separated from the body, they do not have any more time to be able to merit. For them I have provided, by way of you, of you who are still in the mortal life and have time for them and, by means of almsgiving and the divine office that you have said by my ministers, together with fasting and orations done in a state of grace, you are able to shorten for them the time of penalty, trusting in my mercy. O sweet Providence!”

“Do not have disgust for sickness. Think of how great the divine grace is that, in times of sickness, places restraint to many vices that would have been committed having health. In addition, sickness atones and purges sins committed: they merit infinite penalties and God, because of His mercy, punishes them with finite penalties.

When a soul ponders that he has offended his Creator, the Total and Eternal Good, he believes it a great grace on the part of God that He would punish him in this life, and not having decided to punish him in the next, where penalties are infinite.

If we consider our sins and our defects, and how much we have offended God, who is infinite good, for which we should undergo an infinite penalty not only for the great faults but moreover for a small one, we would convince ourselves that truly we are worthy of a thousand infernos. And yet He, with mercy, punishes us in this finite time, in which, bearing with patience, is lessened and is merited.”

“It does not occur this way for the penalties that the soul sustains in the other life. For this, if one finds himself in the pains of Purgatory, he can lessen, but he does not merit. We endure, then, with good will this small penalty. Small, in truth, one could say, this and every other, for the brevity of time. Since, in this life, the struggle is as great as much as the time. And how much is our time? It is as much as the tip of a needle. Every struggle is small, because the life of man is nothing much, very little. In fact, the struggle of the past I do not have, being that it is in the past. That which is still to come, I do not have, because I am not sure of having the time, since I have to die, but I do not know when. There is, therefore, only this point of the present left to endure.”

