

## Souls in Purgatory

*Maria Simma : Author of the book “My experience with souls in Purgatory”. Maria Simma tried three times to enter a monastery, but met with refusal because of ill health. Since 1940, she began to have visions of the souls in Purgatory, accompanied by severe physical suffering.*

*Maria, can you tell us what the role of Our Lady is with the souls in Purgatory? She comes often to console them and to tell them they have done many good things. She encourages them.*

*Are there any days in particular on which she delivers them?*

*Above all, Christmas Day, All Saints Day, Good Friday, the Feast of the Assumption, and the Ascension of Jesus.*

*Maria, why does one go to Purgatory? What are the sins which most lead to Purgatory?*

*Sins against charity, against the love of one’s neighbor, hardness of heart, hostility, slandering, calumny — all these things.*

*Saying wicked things and calumny are among the worst blemishes which require a long purification?*

*Yes.*

### **Purgatory : First Example**

Here, Maria gives us an example which really struck her which I would like to share with you. She had been asked to find out if a woman and a man were in Purgatory. To the great astonishment of those who had asked, the woman was already in Heaven and the man was in Purgatory. In fact, this woman had died while undergoing an

abortion, whereas the man often went to church and apparently lead a worthy, devout life. So Maria searched for more information, thinking she'd been mistaken — but no, it was true. They had died at practically the same moment, but the woman had experienced deep repentance, and was very humble, whereas the man criticized everyone; he was always complaining and saying bad things about others. This is why his Purgatory lasted so long. And Maria concluded: *“We mus not judge on appearances.”*

### **Purgatory : Second Example**

Other sins against charity are all our rejection of certain people we do not like, our refusals to make peace, our refusals to forgive, and all the bitterness we store inside. Maria also illustrated this point with another example which gave us food for thought. It's the story of a woman she knew very well. This lady died and was in Purgatory, in the most terrible Purgatory, with the most atrocious sufferings. And when she came to Maria, she explained why: She had had a female friend; between them arose a great enmity, caused by herself. She had maintained this enmity for years and years, even though her friend had many times asked for peace, for reconciliation, but each time she refused. When she fell gravely ill, she continued to close her heart, to refuse the reconciliation offered by her friend, right up to her deathbed. I believe that this example has great significance concerning rancor which is maintained. And our words, too, can be destructive; we can never emphasize enough how much a critical or bitter word can truly kill — but also, on the contrary, how much a word can heal.

*Maria, please tell us: who are those who have the greatest chance of going straight to Heaven?*

Those who have a good heart towards everyone. Love covers a multitude of sins. Yes, Saint Paul himself tells us this!

*What are the means which we can take on earth to avoid Purgatory and go straight to Heaven?*

We must do a great deal for the souls in Purgatory, for they help us in their turn. We must have much humility; this is the greatest weapon against evil, against the Evil One. Humility drives evil away.

### **Purgatory : Third Example**

I can't resist telling you a very lovely testimony of Father Berlioux (who wrote a wonderful book on the souls in Purgatory), concerning the help offered by these souls to those who relieve them by their prayer and suffrages. He tells the story of a person particularly devoted to the poor souls who had consecrated her life to their relief.

“At the hour of her death, she was attacked with fury by the demon who saw her at the point of escaping from him. It seemed that the entire abyss was united against her, surrounding her with its infernal troops. “The dying woman struggled excruciatingly for some time when suddenly she saw entering her apartment, a crowd of unknown people of dazzling beauty, who put the demon to flight and, approaching her bed, spoke to her with the most heavenly encouragement and consolations. With her last breath, in great joy, she cried; ‘Who are you? Who are you, please, you should do so much good to me?’”

“The benevolent visitors replied: ‘We are inhabitants of Heaven, whom your help has led to Beatitude. And we in our turn come in gratitude to help you cross the threshold of eternity and rescue you from this place of anguish to bring you into the joy of the Holy City.’”

“At these words, a smile lit up the face of the dying woman, her eyes closed and she fell asleep in the peace of the Lord. Her soul, pure as a dove, presented to the Lord of lords, found as many protectors and advocates as souls she had delivered, and recognized worthy of glory, she entered in triumph, among the applause and

blessings of all those she had rescued from Purgatory. May we, one day, have the same happiness.”

The souls delivered by our prayer are extremely grateful: they help us in our lives; it's most perceptible. I strongly recommend that you experience this yourself! They do help us; they know our needs and obtain many graces for us.

*Maria, I am thinking of the Good Thief who was next to Jesus on the Cross. I really would like to know what he did for Jesus to promise him that this very day onwards, he would be in the Kingdom with him?*

He humbly accepted his suffering, saying that it was justice. And he encouraged the other thief to accept his too. He had the fear of God, which means humility.

### **Purgatory : Fourth Example**

Another beautiful example related by Maria Simma shows how a good action makes up for a whole life of sin. Let's hear it from Maria herself:

“I knew a young man of about twenty, in a nearby village. This young man's village had been cruelly stricken by a series of avalanches which had killed a large number of people. One night, this young man was in his parents' house when he heard an avalanche just next door to his house. He heard piercing screams, heartrending screams, ‘Save us! Come, save us! We are trapped beneath the avalanche! Leaping up, he rose from his bed and rushed downstairs to go to the rescue of these people. His mother had heard the screams and prevented him from leaving; she blocked the door, saying ‘No! Let others go and help them, not always us! It's too dangerous outside, I don't want yet another death!’

But he, because he had been deeply affected by these screams, really wanted to go to the rescue of these people; he pushed his mother aside. He said to her: ‘Yes! I'm going! I can't let them die like this!’ He went out, and then he himself, on the path,

was struck by an avalanche and was killed. Three days after his death, he comes to visit me, at night, and he says to me: 'Have three Masses said for me; by this, I will be delivered from Purgatory.' I went to inform his family and friends; they were astonished to know that after only three Masses, he would be delivered from Purgatory. His friends said to me: 'Oh, I wouldn't have liked to have been in his place in the moment of death, if you'd seen all the bad things he'd done!' But this young man said to me: "You see, I'd made an act of pure love in risking my life for these people; it's thanks to this that the Lord welcomed me so quickly into his Heaven. Yes, charity covers a multitude of sins..."

This story shows us that charity, a single act of love given freely, had been sufficient to purify this young man from a dissolute life; and the Lord had made the most of this moment of love. Maria in fact added that this young man might never again have had the opportunity to offer such a great act of love, and might have turned bad. The Lord, in his mercy, took him just at the moment when he appeared before him at his most beautiful, most pure, because of this act of love. It is very important, at the hour of death, to abandon oneself to God's will.

### **Purgatory : Fifth Example**

Maria told me of the case of a mother of four children who was about to die. Instead of rebelling and worrying, she said to the Lord: "I accept death, as long as it is your will, and I put my life in your hands. I entrust my sons to you and I know that you will take care of them." Maria said that, because of her immense trust in God, this woman went straight to Heaven and avoided Purgatory. Therefore, we really can say that love, humility and abandonment to God are the three golden keys to going directly to Heaven.

### **Offer a Mass for them.**

*Maria, can you now tell us what are the most effective means to help deliver the souls*

*in Purgatory?*

The most efficient means is the Mass.

*Why the Mass?*

Because it is Christ who offers himself out of love for us. It is the offering of Christ himself to God, the most beautiful offering. The priest is God's representative, but it is God himself who offers himself and sacrifices himself for us. The efficacy of the Mass for the deceased is even greater for those who attached great value to the Mass during their lives. If they attended Mass and prayed with all their hearts, if they went to Mass on weekdays — according to their time available — they draw great profit from Masses celebrated for them. Here, too, one harvests what one has sown. A soul in Purgatory sees very clearly on the day of his funeral if we really pray for him or if we have simply made an act of presence to show we were there. The poor souls say that tears are no good to them, only prayer. Often they complain that people go to a funeral without addressing a single prayer to God, while shedding many tears; this is useless!

### **Purgatory : Sixth Example**

Concerning the Mass, I will quote a beautiful example given by the Cure of Ars to his parishioners. He told them:

“My children, a good priest had the unhappiness to lose a friend he cherished tenderly, and so he prayed very much for the repose of his soul. One day, God made known to him that his friend was in Purgatory and suffered terribly. The holy priest believed that he could not do better than to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for his dear friend who had died. At the moment of the consecration, he took the host between his fingers and said ‘Holy Eternal Father, let us make an exchange. You hold the soul of my friend who is in Purgatory, and I hold the Body of Your Son in my hands. Well good and merciful Father; deliver my friend and I offer you your Son with all the merits of his death and Passion.’

“The request was answered. In fact, at the moment of the elevation, he saw the soul of his friend, shining in glory, rising to Heaven; God had accepted the deal.

“My children, when we want to deliver from Purgatory a soul dear to us, let us do the same; let us offer to God, through the Holy Sacrifice, His Beloved Son with all the merits of His death and Passion. He will not be able to refuse us anything.”

### **Don't waste your earthly sufferings**

There is another means, very powerful, to help the poor souls; the offering of our sufferings, our penance, such as fasting, renunciations, etc, — and of course involuntary suffering like illness or mourning.

*Maria, you have been invited many times to suffer for the poor souls, in order to deliver them. Can you tell us what you have experienced and undergone during these times?*

The first time, a soul asked me if I wouldn't mind suffering for three hours in my body, for her, and that afterwards I could resume working. I said to myself: “If it will all be over after three hours, I could accept it.” During these three hours, I had the impression that they lasted three days, it was so painful. But at the end, I looked at my watch and I saw that it had only lasted three hours. The soul told me that by accepting that suffering with love for three hours, I had saved her twenty years of Purgatory!

*Yes, but why did you suffer for only three hours to avoid twenty years of Purgatory? What did your sufferings have that was worth more?*

It is because suffering on earth does not have the same value. On earth, when we suffer; we can grow in love, we can gain merits, which is not the case with the sufferings in Purgatory. In Purgatory, the sufferings serve only to purify us from sin. On earth, we have all the graces. We have the freedom to choose.

All this is so encouraging because it gives an extraordinary meaning to our suffering;

the suffering which is offered, voluntary or involuntary, even the smallest sacrifices we can make, suffering or sickness, mourning, disappointment...if we live them with patience, if we welcome them in humility, these sufferings can have an unheard-of power to help souls. The best thing to do, Maria tells us, is to unite our sufferings to those of Jesus, by placing them in the hands of Mary. She is the one who know best how to use them, since often we ourselves do not know the most urgent needs around us. All this, of course, Mary will give back to use at the hour of our death. You see, these sufferings offered will be our most precious treasures in the other world. We must remind each other of this and encourage each other when we suffer.

### **And don't begrudge your prayers**

Another very effective means, Maria tells us, is the Stations of the Cross, because, by contemplating the suffering of the Lord, we begin little by little to hate sins, and to desire salvation for all people. And this inclination of the heart brings great relief to the souls in Purgatory. The Stations of the Cross also move us to repentance; we start repenting when faced with sin. Another point, very helpful to the souls in Purgatory, is to say the rosary, all fifteen mysteries, for the sake of the deceased. Through the rosary, many souls are delivered from Purgatory each year; it must be said here as well that it is the Mother of God herself who comes to Purgatory to deliver the souls. This is very beautiful, because souls in Purgatory call Our Lady the “**Mother of Mercy.**”

The souls also tell Maria that indulgences have an inestimable value for their deliverance. It is sometimes cruel not to make use of this treasure that the Church proposes for the profit of souls. The subject of indulgences would be too long to explain here, but I can refer you to the marvellous text written by Pope Paul VI in 1968 on the subject. You can ask your parish priest for it, or simply ask at your usual religious bookstore. Therefore, we can say that the great means of helping the souls

in Purgatory is prayer in general; all kinds of prayer.

### **Purgatory : Seventh Example**

Here I would like to give you the testimony of Hermann Cohen, a Jewish artist who converted to Catholicism in 1864 and greatly venerated the Eucharist. He left the world and entered a very austere religious order; he frequently adored the Blessed Sacrament for which he had a great veneration. During his adoration, he would beg the Lord to convert his mother, whom he loved so much.

Well his mother died without having been converted. so Hermann, sick with sorrow, prostrated himself before the Blessed Sacrament, in deep grief, praying: “Lord, I owe you everything, it is true. But what have I refused you? My youth, my hopes in the world, my well-being, the joys of a family, a rest — maybe well deserved — all sacrificed as soon as you called me. And you , Lord, Eternal Goodness, who promised to give back a hundredfold, you have refused me the soul of my mother. My God, I succumb to this martyrdom, I will stop my complaints.” He cried his poor heart out. Suddenly, a mysterious voice struck his ear: “Man of little faith! Your mother is saved. Know that prayer is all-powerful in my presence. I gathered all those you had addressed to me for your mother, and my Providence took account of her in her last hour. At the moment she expired, I came to her; she saw Me and cried: ‘My Lord and my God’! Have courage, your mother has avoided damnation and fervent supplication will soon deliver her soul from the bonds of Purgatory.

And we know that Father Hermann Cohen, soon afterwards, learned through a second apparition that his mother had risen to Heaven.

I recommend strongly as well the prayers of St. Bridget which are most recommended for the poor souls.

*The souls in Purgatory can no longer do anything for themselves; they are totally*

*helpless. If the living do not pray for them, they are totally abandoned. Therefore, it is very important to realize the immense power, the incredible power that each one of us has in his hands to relieve these souls who suffer.*

We wouldn't think twice about helping a child who has fallen in front of us from a tree and who had broken his bones. Of course, we would do everything for him! So, in the same way, we should take great care of these souls, who expect everything from us, attentive to the slightest offering, hopeful for the least of our prayers, to relieve them from their pain. And it might be the finest way to practice charity. I think, for example, of the kindness of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel, towards the man left half-dead on the roadside bleeding from his wounds. This man depended completely on the good heart of the passer-by.

*Maria, why can one no longer gain merits in Purgatory, when one can on earth?*

Because at the moment of death, the time to earn merits is over. For as long as we are living on earth, we can repair the evil we have done. The souls in Purgatory envy us this opportunity. Even the angels are jealous of us, for we have the possibility of growing for as long as we are on earth. But often, the suffering in our lives leads us to rebellion and we have great difficulty in accepting and living it. How can we live suffering so that it bears fruit? Sufferings are the greatest proof of the love of God, and if we offer them well they can win many souls. But how can we welcome suffering as a gift and not as a punishment (as we often do), as a chastisement? We must give everything to Our Lady. She is the one who knows best who needs such and such an offering in order to be saved.

### **Purgatory : Eighth Example**

On the subject of suffering, I would like to relate an extraordinary testimony that Maria told us of. It was in 1954, and a series of deadly avalanches had struck a village next to Maria's. Later, other avalanches had struck, but they had been

stopped, in a completely miraculous way, before reaching the village, so that there was no damage. The souls explained that in this village had died a woman who had been ill and was not properly treated; she had suffered terribly for thirty years. And she had offered all her suffering for the sake of her village. The souls explained to Maria that it was thanks to the offering of this woman that the village had been spared the avalanches. She had borne her sufferings with patience. Maria tells us that if she had enjoyed good health, the village could not have been saved. She adds that sufferings borne with patience can save more souls than prayer (but prayer helps us to bear our sufferings).

We should not always consider suffering as a punishment. It can be accepted as expiation not only for ourselves but above all for others. Christ was innocent himself and He suffered the most for the expiation of our sins. Only in Heaven will we know all that we have obtained by suffering with patience in union with the sufferings of Christ.

*Maria, do the souls in Purgatory rebel when faced with their suffering?*

No! They want to purify themselves; they understand that it is necessary.