

### **Why I Am Catholic...Purification.**

"The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.' . . . In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time. . . 'If they live her life, her members are sanctified; if they move away from her life, they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity.'" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 827)

Since the Priest Scandal of 2002, the Catholic Church—especially in the United States—has been undergoing a time of great purification. That purification has been happening in many different forms and for different reasons at Catholic parishes, seminaries, and schools all over the world. Here at St. Clement's that purification continues as well as Christ prepares us for renewal, growth, and new and exciting things.

Spiritual purification is part of the ancient three-step spiritual growth process of the early church: "unceasing illumination, unceasing purification and unceasing union with God in love." ([www.catholic-church.org](http://www.catholic-church.org)) The White Robed Monks of St. Benedict (of San Francisco) explain that especially for early monasteries: "the spiritual life is divided into three stages: purification (the 'purgative' way), meditation on the word of God (the 'illuminative' way), and union with God (the 'unitive' way)." ([whiterobedmonks.org](http://whiterobedmonks.org))

In the 1500s, the great reformer St. John of the Cross brought back these concepts and was a leader of the Catholic Reformation that purified the Church after the losses of the Lutherans, Anglicans, and Calvinists/Presbyterians. "If, then, one desired to attain perfect union with God, one was required to undergo a purgation of the body and the soul. John of the Cross developed this theology of purification in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night of the Soul*. For St. John, the soul must be completely purified in all of its faculties and powers before it can be fully illuminated by the light of divine union. (*Francesco C. Cesareo, Answers.com*)

Father Jordan Aumann, O.P., in his book *Spiritual Theology*, devotes an entire chapter to Progressive Purgation (Purification) and speaks about: "Purification of the External Senses, Purification of the Internal Senses, Purification of the Passions, Purification of the Intellect, Purification of the Will, and Passive Purgations." "The purpose of the active purification of the external senses is to restrain their excesses and to subject them to the rule of reason illumined by faith. A disciplined human body is an excellent instrument for sanctification, but in the present state of fallen nature it has an almost irresistible tendency to anything that can give pleasure to the senses. If it is not subjected, it becomes indomitable, and its demands become more and more excessive until it constitutes an obstacle incompatible with the spiritual perfection of the soul."

St. Paul tells us: "Now those who belong to Christ [Jesus] have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires." (Gal 5:24) And: "I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified." (I Cor 9:27)

The four internal senses: "imagination, memory, common sense, and the estimative power" also need our attention and the purifying power of grace. The Way of Purification is a lifelong process. And if not completed in this life, may be necessary as well in the next life. Purgatory—the place of purification in the next life—is the first place many believers go before entering the heavenly banquet. Purification is necessary for believers—all of us are sinners in need of the constant grace of God who in his mercy forgives our sins and purifies us in mind, body, and soul.