

NORTH SHORE CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

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A Family Narrative

An Amazing Story of Grace

Peter F. Carpentier



Testimonies of God's Amazing and Wondrous Salvific Grace

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Introduction



Dear Friend:

A Family Narrative consists of familial events personally experienced by me in the years following my coming to Christ through the ministry of Billy Graham in 1978 and my reception of the Gift of the Holy Spirit in August of that year.

As you will later read, once my heart and mind were renewed in this manner God assisted me in many ways to pull myself from the miry clay of a dissolute life to one of prayer and service joined to a concrete willingness to acknowledge His Rule and Reign over my daily life.

During the ensuing years God also permitted me to experience familial events of a mystical nature which were truly incredible and amazing. These experiences both buttressed my faith and opened my heart to the Consuming Fire of God's Personal Love for me.

As I reflect on the years following my conversion, I find myself deeply indebted to the teaching ministry of John Paul Jackson—who, for a number of years, helped me (and many others) understand prophetic ministry. John Paul always emphasized how personal growth in the prophetic required a deep humility—and that this would require both daily prayer and fasting to attain.

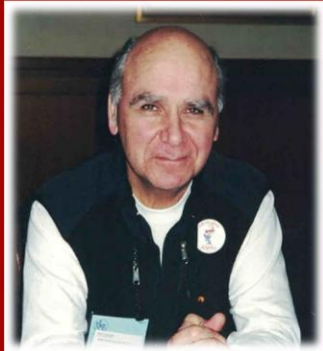
I am not anyone 'special' and the gifts of God given to each of us are irrevocable and are to be used to glorify Him. What a pleasure and treasure it is to know and serve the Living God!

I trust and pray that your reading of **A Family Narrative** will assist you in your own personal journey to come and know the Living God and to experience the Fire of His Personal Love.

At the end of **A Family Narrative** there is appended an article regarding Purgatory which may be helpful to you to understand its historical context.

Peter F. Carpentier, Esq. M.Div.

PREFACE



Peter F. Carpentier, Esq., LLM, M.Div.
Born: May 17, 1942, Waterbury, CT.
Founder: North Shore Christian Ministries

Some initial commentary is provided before each testimonial.

The testimonials are presented in chronological order and the best way to process and understand them is to read them sequentially.

Each testimonial demonstrates the unmerited grace extended by God to various family members in miraculous ways—a son, a mother, a sister, a brother, and a husband, father and stepfather.

The lesson gleaned is that God's mercy is infinite and that He delights in offering His salvific love to save family members through the doorway found in the repentance of one family member.

In this case, a son who was lost—but then found.

It just may take some time and prayerful perseverance.

The First Testimonial

Peter F. Carpentier

Commentary

I am very deeply indebted to the Roman Catholic Church for many personal blessings—including education and a basic orientation towards the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Yet, I, along with many in Church leadership, believe that the Church has not paid enough attention to the ministry of evangelization which is the work of reaching people's hearts through personal encounters. Several of the testimonials which you will read here are just that—a personal encounter with the Living God leading to a deepened experiential faith. This experiential faith is the foundation stone of the Christian life and catechesis (primarily the work of helping those already converted through a proper evangelization process understand what they have come to believe) finds its proper role and purpose rooted in this doctrinal truth.

Consequently, an improper emphasis on catechesis to the exclusion of evangelization can lead to flawed operative assumptions—particularly as pertains to the sacrament system. While the sacraments are valid in themselves ("from the work performed"), many times individuals receiving them are ill-prepared to access their operative grace because they have not been properly evangelized. For too many, it is merely the reception of a merit badge. Evangelization is the first essential—and this requires both encounter and a deepened experiential faith.

Such is at the heart of my own personal testimony—which follows:

The Personal Testimony of Peter F. Carpentier, ESQ.

(Circa: August 1978)

**A fall from grace and from God's goodness—how does it occur?
Well, if you do not know Him, you really don't have too far to fall —at all.**

I was born a Roman Catholic Christian on May 17, 1942 in an era governed by the precepts of Vatican I.

According to my birth certificate, I was the eldest of four children born to Arthur and Geraldine Carpentier, yet, I would learn later in life that my true father (who remains unknown to me) had gone off the war (WW II - for the duration) leaving my single mother with a critical dilemma—**what to do!** Arthur was her answer, and yet, as traumatic as this difficult choice proved to be for her (Arthur was alcoholic, and sometimes violent)—in the end—God's inexhaustible love would redeem the times.

Three of my step-siblings were born of this marriage of convenience—Patricia, Gregory and Gail.

In my childhood and teenage years I witnessed (on too many occasions to recount) the drunken rage and stupor of an alcoholic stepfather which deeply marred my spirit. During those years I attended parochial schools through high school, and then, following high school, attended two Catholic seminaries for a total of three and one-half years to become a priest. However, I eventually left the seminary system finding it very dry and unfulfilling. I did not fully understand it then, but the priestly life being offered me did not include intimacy with God through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Instead, I was being offered a life lived under the power of the law linked to submission and unquestioning obedience.

To undergird this perception, in the three and one-half years of my seminary education never once did I read or study the Scriptures—nor was this study ever offered. Instead, religious formation consisted of wearing clerical garb, attending daily Mass (Latin), saying formal prayers (the rosary, etc.) and reading the lives of the saints. It was thought that this, coupled with a somewhat standardized curriculum, and unquestioned submission to the Magisterium (the teaching authority of the church), was all that was necessary for priestly formation. Consequently, I would remain scripturally ignorant until my conversion in 1978—when the Scriptures were finally opened for me.

After leaving the seminary, I completed my college education at the University of Connecticut and graduated with a degree in English and a minor in Latin (1965). I then entered active military service spending five and one-half years in the Navy as a Naval Aviator. I left active duty in 1970, but remained active in the Naval Reserve at S. Weymouth, MA flying patrol aircraft (the P-2 and the P-3). In 1970 I attended Boston University School of Law graduating in 1973 and then attended an additional two years at BU to obtain a Masters in Taxation degree. I then worked a short stint as an attorney with the FAA in Washington, DC, followed by a return to Marblehead, MA where I engaged in a private tax law practice for a few years. It was during this period that I was hired as General Counsel for a major regional food wholesaler (1977) and acquired a home in Marblehead, MA. There, my 'new birth' would occur in 1978. I married my precious wife Suzanne in 1981, and then worked to obtain a Masters in Divinity from Weston School of Theology in 1987. (app. 1)

During the many years before the intervention of the Holy Spirit into my life in 1978 I knew a deep and dark loneliness married to a permanent aching in my heart. Yet, as I viewed myself as a 'survivor', and in spite of my emotional baggage, I was determined to prove to the world that I could become a 'somebody' and make it on my own. So, I pressed on and I buried my pain and grief as best I could.

Yet, devoid of a deeply rooted faith in Jesus I was not equipped to meet head on the challenges of living in contemporary society as a single young man. While I recognized sin and acknowledged its existence, I did not have the necessary discernment and power that comes from intimacy with God (through the gift of the Holy Spirit) to obey the law. I was to become a victim of sin and its dispossessing consequences. I never wanted to sin and wished to please God, yet the empowerment to do so was lacking. As a result, sin deceived me, and offered me a form of light which would lead me into a terrible darkness. As a hungry moth I rushed to that light, and it nearly cost me my life.

It was in this vulnerable period that I met an attractive stewardess (1977). This brief relationship led to a pregnancy that she wished to terminate. I knew this was evil, and even asked her to marry me. But, she would have none of that. I gladly gave her the \$200 needed for the abortion. There was really no love between us and eventually we split up shortly after this event. I remember being relieved of the anxiety of this pregnancy. I also knew that a staged marriage would only have led to tragic consequences and ultimately divorce.

Of the many evils committed during this dark time the sin of abortion grieved me the most. I was inwardly convulsed by its gruesome reality. I confessed this sin to a priest almost immediately trying to wash it from memory. But, this confession did not bring light into the darkness of my life. I needed something more. I needed deliverance. I needed a miracle.

If, at this time, you had asked me if I was a 'good person', I probably would have said "Yes". If you had asked me if I was saved, I would probably have said: "I hope so." But, in reality, I was a walking dead man headed for perdition. I did not know how to escape the snare of life's conflicts, nor did I understand the confusing web of events intertwined into my daily life.

Well, God in His great mercy was to provide the needed exit strategy, and this is how it began:

One Friday in August, 1978, on a beautiful and warm summer evening, I am in my bachelor's pad in Marblehead, MA getting ready to go downtown to one of my favorite haunts (Jacob Marley's) for a 'few beers'. My house is smallish. I am in the process of rebuilding it following a devastating fire which occurred under previous ownership. After a ton of hard work, it is now livable, but 2x4's and other construction items are still visible. I was planning on this weekend to press on—working towards the completion of what had turned out to be a rather large undertaking.

As I prepare to go out, I turn on the TV to kill some time. Immediately on the TV appears the image of Billy Graham preaching about Jesus to thousands of people who fill a very large stadium. At the end of his message he invites anyone wishing a personal relationship with Jesus to come forward to make a personal commitment to Him. Many do. I watched all of this this with a curious interest. I can't say that I knew much about Billy Graham, other than the fact that he was a renowned Protestant evangelist. In fact, my ignorance was such that I did not even know how to open the Bible to the scriptural verses he referenced. At the end of his altar call I thought to myself: "Interesting." I then shut off the TV and meandered off to Jacob Marley's. Yet, God had captured my attention.

Another work week passes by and it is another lovely Friday evening in Marblehead. As in the prior week I am preparing to go off to my favorite haunt. Also, as in the week before, I turn on the TV to fill in the time.

Then—would you believe it—there he is again—in full color—Billy Graham—again—preaching about Jesus—again—inviting anyone wishing a personal relationship with Jesus to come forward to make a personal commitment to Him—again—many do!

This time I watched and listened to Billy Graham's message and invitation intently. During this time he also mentioned that if you really wanted to know about Jesus, and how to come to Him, you could send for his book **How to be Born Again**. He then gave an address to use for this request, indicating that this book would be promptly mailed to you as a free gift. My curiosity heightened, I wrote down the address and during the week mailed off a letter requesting the book.

Obeying that instinct was providential—and I shiver to think where I would be today had I not done so!

Well, sometime later (perhaps a week or two) Billy Graham's book arrives in the mail. I look at it, and since it is not very large, I decide to read it in bed at night before going to sleep. Now, this is where the unimaginable occurs! By this, I mean that as I begin to read the book I am actually stunned by the exposition of scriptural truths presented. All of this is radical and new to me. My overriding emotion was one of incredulity and amazement. I remember saying over and over again: "I never knew this!" "Why did they not tell us this?" "I never knew this!" "Why did they not tell us this?"

I felt as though the Catholic Church had intentionally kept me, my friends and my family, in a perpetual state of 'lock down' (to use a prison term) to ensure our obedient behavior. I was overwhelmed, shocked and incensed—all at the same time! **What was so new?** For the first time in my life, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the role of the Holy Spirit, was clearly presented to me without bias and free of confusing doctrinal banter. It was utterly freeing. It is impossible for me to understate this, so great was this revelation!

Of course, this range of evocative emotions all relates back to my earlier description of my Catholic upbringing and education, including seminary training. This simple gospel message was never meaningfully or clearly presented for consideration to me—or to my friends. It was likely assumed as known, but it was in fact buried under the baggage of a historical tradition where privilege and prerogative was so often evoked as primary truth.

Nonetheless, my journey home had begun! Getting cleaned up would not occur overnight, but God was planning to give me an energizing 'jolt' to move things forward.

I understood after reading Billy Graham's life-changing book that I needed to pray. But honestly, I did not know how to pray other than formal religious prayer. Yet, I did remember that fasting was a form of ascetic prayer, and for some reason this appealed to me. I then and there decided to fast on bread and water one day a week as a form of prayer. I did this faithfully on Wednesdays. As I began this practice, I noticed a certain 'softening' occurring within me. I could actually perceive my inner man morphing into something new and I began to feel 'lighter'. Moreover, the weight of my heart ache began to subside and I began to experience joy which had always eluded me before. Then, on a lovely Saturday morning, after about ten weeks of my fasting regiment, I arose from bed to continue the almost perpetual restoration of my house.

Little did I know what lay in store for me!

So, there I am, driving a nail into a 2x4 to frame the upper stairway area when the Holy Spirit comes suddenly! He pours the Fire of His Love into my heart and then in my ear announces the words: "**Expect great things!**" I must have dropped my hammer as the next thing I remember is my running around on the plywood floor of the unfinished parlor like a drunken sailor singing in Latin:

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

[English]
Holy, Holy, Holy
Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Whoever heard of a God willing to leave His glorious throne to visit His creature, alone in his home, working with a hammer and driving nails, in order to make Himself known? I had never heard of such a God, and I could never believe that He cared enough for me to stage a transcendent visitation.

But, He did! Love came and rescued me!

On that day, God came to me in great mercy while I was dead in sin, and delivered me from the depths of Hell.

I would never be the same again!

Getting fully cleaned up did not occur immediately. It took some time and processing. In fact, the process continues to this day. I needed to learn about the things of God. I needed discipleship and formation. I also needed a great deal of inner healing.

During this sometimes very difficult journey, I remained faithful to the Roman Catholic Church seeking to serve it (as well as other Christian traditions as my ministry became ecumenical) by any available means, primarily through use of the 'Alpha Course' and sponsoring teaching conferences emphasizing healing and deliverance ministries.

Finally, for as long as the Lord permits and provides, I (like my mentor Billy Graham) intend to serve the Lord with all of my heart until the day He calls me home!

Blessed Be His Name!

The Second Testimonial

Geraldine (Kelleher) Carpentier [Part I]
"I feel as though I have been cheated all of my life!"

Commentary Baptism in the Holy Spirit



Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an empowering experience, equipping believers for witness and ministry. This is the story of such an empowerment occurring in the early 80's as experienced by my mother and sister during a time of worship at a Catholic Charismatic prayer meeting in Florida.

My mother was born in St. John's, Nova Scotia, Canada on June 13, 1917. During the Great Depression, she, along with her parents and her many siblings moved to Melrose, MA, where my grandfather was able to find work. They were an Irish Catholic family submitted to, and formed by, the many legalistic conventions of the Roman Catholic Church which was then immersed in a philosophical and theological fundamentalism which was singularly cultic, and in which both shame and guilt were writhing appendages from which it was very often difficult to escape.

This fundamentalism shaped and formed my mother's prayer life and her way of thinking. She was always 'spiritual', and endured her life with grace, but she did not know that a personal relationship with Jesus through the gift of the Holy Spirit was possible and only a stone's throw away. She would one day discover this truth in a profound way, but only after she had passed through much of her own life's journey. It was God's plan that such a discovery would be indelibly linked to my own story of salvation.

Thus, it was that I, along with my brother and sisters, were also shaped and formed by our mother's adherence to her deeply held religious convictions and by the rigorous legalistic spirit imbued in them. Ultimately, this authoritarian structure would be rejected by me (as it would be by many of my contemporaries) resulting in an unrestrained plunge into the ways of the world seeking its wisdom.

So, when in the summer of 1978, when in a singularly miraculous way—through the ministry of Billy Graham, I was baptized in the Holy Spirit (following a time fasting and prayer) my mother was confronted with a son unrecognizable to her. This son carried a Bible with him boldly proclaiming it anywhere and everywhere he went. From her perspective this was a fearsome and frightful reality, and she was tempted to conclude that her son had lost his way. She was deeply troubled by all of this and believed I had turned away from the 'one true religion' found only in the Roman Catholic Church.

However, after several intervening years, and largely due to a terrible and troubling event, this deeply rooted fundamentalist perspective would be definitively expunged.

THE EVENT

My Mother's & My Sister Pat's Journey To Life In The Spirit

During the eighties, my sister Pat and my Mom were both living in Florida as upon her retirement from Pratt and Whitney Mom had decided to move from Southington, CT to Florida to be near my sister Pat and her children—who had moved there from Waterbury, CT a few years earlier. Everything appeared to be working out well for Mom and Pat there when the unthinkable and unimaginable occurs. Early on one morning I receive a call from Mom and she tells me that Pat's husband had abandoned her and his family and had run off with an eighteen year old girl.

Shocked, and knowing that this tragic event would likely overwhelm my sister, I immediately booked a flight to Tampa, Florida to comfort my precious sister. Upon arrival, I rented a car and made the drive to Mom's house in Seminole, FL. After spending some time with Mom, I drove to Pat's house (very close to Mom's) to visit her.

Upon arrival, I find her enormously disconsolate—grieving and deeply wounded. My sister, a wonderful, joyful mother of five children had suffered a paralyzing betrayal, and I immediately realize that she desperately needs to find an interior source of strength to endure this terrible trial.

During this period, there was a powerful move of the Holy Spirit occurring throughout the world known as the Charismatic Movement and Catholic life had been deeply impacted and renewed by this movement. I also knew that there were many places of prayer where Pat could go for healing prayer.

I do not remember the precise facts, but I believe that Pat was aware of a local Catholic Charismatic prayer meeting that evening which we then attended together. It turned out that this prayer community was a group of older women who with great compassion prayed for Pat, and it was wonderful to personally observe and very healing for her. When we left that evening's time of prayer I remember saying to her: "Pat, you will have to find a group of people with whom to pray, and I encourage you to find a younger prayer group locally which you can attend."

The following day I flew back to Boston having done the best I could to comfort and care for my precious sister—so wounded, and yes, so terribly and violently rejected!

Pat takes me up on my suggestion to find a younger prayer group and she soon learned about a large Catholic charismatic worship meeting occurring weekly at a local Catholic Church. She then asked Mom to attend with her. Ever since my conversion I had been telling Mom about the power of the Holy Spirit, and about the wonderful things that the Holy Spirit was doing—and it must have whetted her appetite. She responded to Pat: "I will go with you, but only to get Peter off my back!" So, off they went. It was a Friday night.

God's in-breaking occurs!

During this time, I was still living in Marblehead, MA, and on the following Saturday morning I receive an early morning call from Mom. As it was very unusual for Mom to call me early on a Saturday, I was concerned that it might involve some issue with Pat. I said: "Hi Mom, how are you doing?" She then responded very quickly saying: "The Lord told me to call you to say thank you." Obviously, I was a bit perplexed, but then she goes on to tell me that both she and Pat had been filled with the Holy Spirit on Friday night during worship and she was overjoyed at the 'new birth' experience that she and Pat had received together—simultaneously it seems. I then quickly ended the call needing to process what I just had heard and shared this with my wife Suzanne.

Then a few days later came the letter of all letters:

"Peter, I feel as though I have been cheated all of my life. If I knew then what I know now, I would have raised you kids differently."

And so, it began:

Mom became an evangelist to the elderly in Pinellas County, Florida—bringing them by the carload to Life in the Spirit Seminars, Bible studies, church meetings and encouraging them in their walk with the Lord.

It was amazing—and she led many, many souls to the Lord.

And—

My sister Pat found great strength and consolation from the intimate relationship she daily experienced with her new lover—Jesus!

My Sister Pat's Death



My sister Pat died of cancer on October 27, 1986 at the age of 43 in the odor of sanctity. She had a passionate love for her new spouse Jesus and offered up her suffering for the salvation of souls.

Just before her death I visited her with our new born baby Cassandra, and from her medical bed she told me about the little demons running around her bed at times trying to torment her. She just laughed at them and told them to go to Hell. She also told me that when she said to the Lord that she should really stay around to take care of Mom Jesus responded: "Don't worry about your mother. I will take her quickly." In fact, as you will read, Mom passed away joy filled within one week of a medical incident.

During the drive to Pat's funeral Mass the car was 'flooded' with the scent of roses—surely as a sign to us that Pat was now in the Presence of her Lover—Jesus.

REFLECTION

Every Christian is loved by God the Father to the core of their being—as if he or she was the singular focus of God's infinite and passionate love. Pray and ask for this empowering experience of the Holy Spirit so that you too will come to know the unsurpassed joy of His transcendent love. Do not hang on to what the material world offers you. Jesus, by His death on the Cross, has obtained for you the gift of intimacy with God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Third Testimonial

Geraldine [Kelleher] Carpentier [Part II]

"Mom is going to make it home, just fine."

Commentary

My Mother was always a woman of faith, but as you will read in the poem she wrote after her 'Baptism in the Spirit', she did not always know how to attain intimacy with the Father until her encounter with the Holy Spirit. However, once she understood that she had free access to the Father's Love, she was an unstoppable force for the Kingdom and able to move mountains through her unflappable faith in the Lord Jesus.

My Mother was also devoted to Mary the Mother of Jesus and she and Aunt Alice (who lived with my Mother in Florida) faithfully prayed the rosary for the salvation of souls each evening. For many Christians such a devotion seems to devalue true worship of the Lord. For some this may be true, but we have discovered that a proper devotion to Mary only opens wide the access road to Jesus. Mary will then partner with those who love her in this manner and assist them through her great power of intercession.

My Mother's Death

I remember that it was a beautiful summer day in July in Rowley, MA when I received a call from Florida from my niece Kathy telling me that my mother had been admitted to the hospital for a cardiac catheterization. She did not think that it was anything I should be alarmed about—but she wanted me to know that this procedure was taking place.

Yet, as only the Holy Spirit can do, I was prompted to buy an airline ticket and to go and to be with her.

Upon arrival at Mom's house, I discovered that she was still in hospital and that she was in critical condition—in fact, she was dying. Of course, I immediately went to the hospital to visit her which began a weeklong painful journey during which time I was constantly called to prayer in the form of a continuous rosary for my Mom. I later learned that during the cardiac catheterization a blood clot had been dislodged which severely restricted blood circulation and that surgical intervention was not possible.

Mom was conscious in the beginning and I could speak with her, but she was somewhat delusionary which deeply troubled me. Then, it seems, she was quite normal for a time during which all the visitations began from family members. Mom spoke with great joy about her impending death and her reunion with family members and meeting Jesus and His mother Mary. She remained, in her dying moments, the consummate evangelist exhorting and encouraging everyone. She even spoke to her attending doctors with great compassion—and her transcendent peace amazed them.

At the end of each visit I would go back to her house to rest—remaining prayerful and often contacted the hospital for updates. On one of these occasions, very early in the morning, I received a call from the hospital stating that my mother was passing away and that I should come. I quickly left and upon arrival at the hospital I went to her room where she was lying unconscious and on life support. Saddened, I sat in a chair at the edge of her bed watching her shallow breathing while continuing to pray the rosary. While praying in this manner—at some point, I audibly heard the words "Hail, Holy Queen". So prompted, I then began to recite: "Hail, Holy

Queen, Mother of Mercy --- ". As I began to say this prayer I then audibly heard: "She is gone now." I believe this word came from room speaker as she was being monitored remotely. But, honestly, I just don't know.

But, given the events, I did understand that Our Lady had just come with her angels to take Mom into the heavenly realm. For a time after this I just sat there emotionally depleted and exhausted, but comforted that this part of the journey was over. I knew that the rest of the journey, while difficult, would also be laced with joy because I knew Mom was home—now awaiting the arrival of her remaining children into the eternal realm of heaven.

Later in the morning, my sister Gail, who had flown in from CT to see Mom, visited the hospital with me to say her own goodbye.

Although Mom died in Florida, she was to be buried in Connecticut in a grave site next to her husband Arthur (my stepfather) and it would be necessary to fly her body back home. However, before that, and because of the great love of the Catholic Christian community for her locally in Florida, there was to be a funeral service at the local funeral home giving her many friends the opportunity to pay their last respects. Both Gail and I looked forward to this event. Literally, hundreds of her friends attended and there was a time of great fellowship and wonderful prayer. Following the service Gail was scheduled to fly back to CT. Once there, she was to prepare for the funeral Mass and the reception for family members that would take place following this Mass.



At the end of the Florida service my sister Gail began to become anxious regarding the flight arrangements for Mom's coffin. As Mom's coffin was still open, I turned to look at it and saw standing at each end of her coffin Cherubim angels—one at her head and one at her feet. These angels appeared to be standing (as it were) on small puffy clouds with one of the Cherubim standing at her head looking directly at me. I was not able to fully see the second Cherubim standing at her feet. It also appeared to me that these Cherubim had a distinctly feminine character. The Cherubim angel I saw was dressed in white with blonde hair, perfectly beautiful, and full of joy and God's peace.

Upon seeing this I said to my sister Gail: "Don't worry Gail, Mom is going to make it home just fine." In fact, Mom was placed on the same flight as my sister—something which was unanticipated and unplanned. Once back in Connecticut, the funeral service for Mom was a joyous event as death had long lost its sting.

Later, while cleaning out Mom's Florida home I found a journal she had been keeping and it contained many precious prayers and certain visions she had begun experiencing as a consequence of her 'new birth'—which had unlocked her deep-seated spiritual gifting. It is appended at the end of the testimonials. (app. 2)

But, Friends, Mother had not yet completed the work the Lord had assigned to her.

In a day and year yet to come, from the eternal realm,

I would once again hear her voice speak to me.

It was a day which would ultimately lead—

To the miraculous release of a soul from purgatorial existence—

Her husband—and, my own stepfather.

The Fourth Testimonial My Brother-Gregory Carpentier

“This too shall pass.”

Introduction



It is difficult to lose a brother as a result of war. It is more difficult when that war (the Vietnam conflict)—when exited by the US in 1973, continued to erode the lives of those adversely impacted by its tragic consequences—drugs, sexual excess, moral disorientation and the continued living of a life governed by demonic impulses. (app. 3) Such was Greg's fate, and I have met many more like him over the years. There was no intrinsic value to that war which destroyed so many. No, rather it was a war orchestrated by demonic powers with only one agenda—the erosion and destruction of this nation and the elimination of its Christian ethic.

In the end, the powerful prayers of a loving mother and his siblings brought healing and deliverance to a beautiful man who would enter eternal life cleansed and redeemed. No longer did his bipolar personality plague him—having been cast out by the power of prayer conjoined with love. No longer was he guided by foul demonic forces. No, he would enter eternal life free of these entanglements—to the glory of the Living God.

My Brother Greg

My brother Gregory was a beautiful man—tall, broad, strong and having a tremendous sense of humor. He had a very gentle spirit and really radiated wonderful kindness.

But, his life was to be long and arduous and he would be caught up in a world of drugs and alcohol and other kinds of worldly abuse, and it would require a great deal of prayer and intercession, and ultimately, the miraculous work of the Mother of God to pull him from the mire of this world at his death.

Like myself, Greg, following high school, spent a few years in a Catholic seminary (St. Thomas in Bloomfield, CT), and like myself, he would leave being unable to root himself in a place which had largely forgotten the primary purpose for its existence.

While Greg was working at pursuing further education after leaving the seminary, but before he could obtain a deferment, he found himself drafted into the army during the Vietnam conflict. There he underwent artillery training and following this training he was shipped to Vietnam in 1968. Greg spent one tour of duty there during terrifying and unrelenting warfare. He also received the Army Commendation Medal while serving there.

While Greg was in Vietnam, I was stationed in Brunswick, ME, and twice deployed to Sigonella, Sicily, where we flew anti-submarine missions—largely trying to locate and identify Soviet threats.

From time to time, Greg and I would correspond, and I was looking forward to returning home from my second deployment to meet Greg, who would soon be discharged upon returning to the states. In fact, I can vividly remember meeting him after his discharge at Mom's house in Southington, CT where we decided to go to a bar in Waterbury that we once frequented. At this time, I was still in the Navy with some time left on my six-year contract and still stationed in Brunswick, ME.

During our time at the bar I was alerted to Greg's fragile condition when an automobile driving past the bar back-fired loudly (we were sitting at the bar adjacent to the street window) and Greg literally hit the deck in an explosive second. We laughed a bit about this, and then proceeded back to Mom's house. The following day I headed back to NAS, Brunswick, ME. Later on, through my Mom, I came to learn that Greg was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder ('PTSD') and that she was seeking help for him.

This sad event began the long sad saga of Greg's spiral into drugs and alcohol, and the many attempts of our mother to intervene and to obtain help for him. During this time, the VA was not inclined to assist Vietnam veterans in any meaningful way, and Greg, as well as many others, were pushed to the end of the line. Ultimately, he was declared ten percent disabled and received a small monthly stipend.

Then, much to our dismay, Greg disappeared from our lives for many years living a transient and homeless lifestyle and he was nowhere to be found despite our best efforts. During much of this time I was a reserve pilot flying in the Naval Reserves after leaving active duty. There I came to know a senior chief who worked for the Federal Government and who had access to military records. I provided him with Greg's social security number and this chief was able to track the mailing address for Greg's disability check to a YMCA located somewhere in the San Diego, CA area, but he could not provide a specific address.

I then called my sister Gail (who lived in CT) and gave her this information. Following this call, my sister took it upon herself to call the Salvation Army office in San Diego and requested that it post a notice at all Salvation Army shelters with her telephone number indicating to Greg that his sister Gail missed him and that he could call her 'collect' at any time.

Incredibly, Greg saw this notice and called Gail collect. She was quite surprised, yet rejoiced that her initiative had produced fruit. Gail told Greg that he was terribly missed by all of us and invited him to return back to CT. Apparently, the timing of this call was such that Greg immediately drove nonstop across the US to Meriden, CT where he took a room at a local YMCA. There, Gail visited Greg which began the long task of integrating him back into the family. Eventually, with my approval, he took public transportation to Boston, MA where I picked Greg up and drove him to our home in Marblehead. There, he lived with us (Suzanne and our young daughter Casey) for a time.

We did not know what to expect—but hoped that over time we could work with Greg to restore his physical and emotional health as well as his spiritual well-being.

Drugs were Greg's Achilles heel, and I warned him that should he begin to take drugs while living with us that I would have to ask him to leave. The inevitable occurred, but I did not have to toss him out onto the street and was able to locate him in a house on Front Street in Marblehead which was vacant for a few months. This house was part of an estate I was probating. Amazingly, he settled in there well and never presented me with an issue.

Over time I managed to qualify Greg for Section 8 housing, and he moved from place to place until eventually finally settling in Beverly, MA in a rented small one-bedroom apartment. He stayed there for many years until his death. However, he continually ended up in trouble (including a six-month incarceration in NH) and we never knew what was going to happen next.

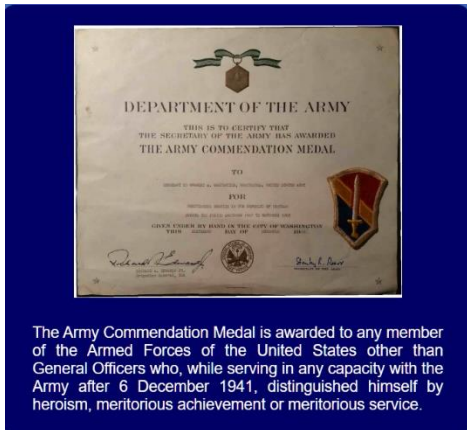
Then, on one Thanksgiving Day we all attended dinner at my brother-in-law's house (Robert) and Greg came along. He and I decided to go for a walk when he laid on me a time bomb—he had for the third time been charged with dealing drugs and he was heading for a criminal trial which could land him in prison for a considerable period. It was then, while walking in the cold and deeply concerned, that I heard my angel audibly say: "This too shall pass." While this comforted me, I still had to endure the events that followed and really wondered what this 'word of knowledge' could mean.

Well, it took about a year to play out, and I remember well being involved with his defense attorney trying to resolve the impossible impasse erected before us. But my angel was correct, as the district attorney permitted my brother to act as a witness for the prosecution by identifying the dealer from whom he had purchased his drugs and the DA agreed to a

reduction in charges as a settlement. Greg walked out of Court without sentencing subject to a period of probation. He had miraculously avoided incarceration.

From that point on Greg managed to avoid any more issues of a serious nature and settled into a quiet lifestyle in which he attended family events and even began to attend Sunday Mass. On occasion I would visit him and have lunch with him and we began to integrate him into our family activities.

Greg's Death



However, after a few years of this peaceful settled life came the bad news. Greg had a serious case of prostate cancer and he would not be a survivor. He had never received good medical care and the VA had not acted in a timely manner to diagnose this serious medical condition.

So, now began another of life's painful journeys as Suzanne and I worked hard to obtain adequate care for Greg which finally led to his admittance into a VA home for the dying. It was during this period that I began to have Masses repeatedly said for Greg as I was concerned for his eternal salvation given his past lifestyle. And, while he had begun to attend Mass regularly, I was not sure that he had gone to confession. In fact, I decided to be profuse in my Mass requests for him and remember having probably twenty Masses said for him before his death.

You might think that I was a bit compulsive, but I knew many graces would be required for him to passage to the fullness of the Lord's embrace. My sister Gail also had Gregorian Masses said for Greg following his death.

I visited Greg daily at the VA home where he received the last rites of the Church which comforted me greatly. It was also at this time that I was further consoled regarding my brother's eternal destiny.

This is what occurred: On the day before his death I was pushing Greg in a wheelchair outside in the fresh air. It was a bright and sunny day. There was also a wonderful and loving priest outside walking among the patients handing out and pinning on the sick the Miraculous Medal of the Mother of God. He came to Greg and pinned one on him.

Now this is very meaningful for several reasons. One, Greg did have a devotion to Mary, and secondly, we know that Mom (now deceased) was interceding for her son and asking the intercession of Mary. Upon leaving, the very last thing that I saw was my brother do was to look over and make sure that the Miraculous Medal was still there. I will never forget that moment.

The following day, while I was making the trek from Rowley to the VA home in Brockton, I received a cell phone call telling me that Greg had died during the night. I was grieved by this report, but I continued my journey so that I could say my final goodbye to him at the VA home. Following this, funeral arrangements were made, and Greg was moved by the funeral home to Rowley, MA for viewing and a funeral Mass at St. Mary's church. Many people showed up for his funeral at which Greg was given full military honors and we all saluted our flag. The reception following the burial was at the Rowley County Club, and there was a wonderful sense of peace there and throughout the entire day.

At his death the VA also declared Greg to be one-hundred percent disabled due to the nature of his death. Clearly, too little, too late, and only a token of the proper respect truly due to him.

Greg's life's journey had ended, and all of life's hardships and misfortunes were now a thing of the past. Given the prayers of so many I had no doubt that Greg had made the passage to eternal life, but the day would come when I would receive a clear and reassuring sign.

Contemplation

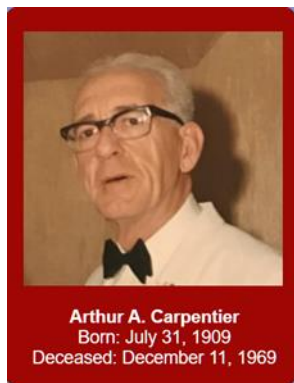


I do not know how many months after Greg's funeral and burial that this occurred, but in a very quick dream vision given me by the Lord, I had the privilege of seeing my brother Greg in a state of contemplation. He was young (thirties), dressed in a grey robe (very much like monks would wear) and sitting solemnly and quietly on what appeared to be a large stone reflecting—it seems, on his spiritual state. In this picture, I found great hope and a sense of celebration. Not only was Greg on his way—he was almost there.

The Fifth Testimonial

Arthur A. Carpentier

Introduction



This is the miraculous story of a soul delivered from purgatorial suffering many, many years following his earthly death. If you are a Christian who is Protestant, or a Christian who is Orthodox, or just a curious individual seeking truth, I earnestly recommend that you first read the article posted at the North Shore Christian Ministries web site regarding the historical understanding of 'Purgatory': (<https://www.northshorecm.org/Purgatory.html>).

Purgatory also refers to a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church which posits that those who die in a state of grace undergo a purification in order to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the fullness of heaven (the 'beatific vision') (CCC 1030). This doctrine is linked to the universal tradition of 'Prayer for the Dead'. St John of Damascus sums up the patristic consensus regarding this doctrine like this:

"One who has departed unrepentant and with an evil life cannot be helped by anyone in any way. But the one who has departed even with the slightest virtue, but who had no time to increase this virtue because of indolence, indifference, procrastination, or timidity, the Lord Who is a righteous judge and master will not forget such a one."

Needless to say, as you read this testimonial you will understand how the existence of Purgatory finds its ultimate validation in my own experiential reality. No one can take from you what you have personally observed and experienced—especially when it is validated with a stunning exclamation mark!

While belief in Purgatory is not necessary for salvific faith—properly understood—it is to be seen as a further extension of God's mercy—offering salvation to unknow numbers of souls open to God's light—even those not fully evangelized.

This understanding should encourage us to fervently continue in prayer for those we have come to know and love.

Friends, I believe that the light souls carry with them at death may be increased by our prayers—and that such light may open the doorway of Life in God to them. So, let us persevere in prayer for them.

My Stepfather Arthur A. Carpentier

His Death

Prior to my mother moving to Florida to be with my sister Pat, my mother lived in Southington, CT working for Pratt and Whitney aircraft. During this period I was stationed at NAS Brunswick, ME as a Naval Aviator with Patrol Squadron 23.

In 1969 my stepfather was admitted to Waterbury Hospital in CT and was dying from lung and throat cancer (he had been a lifelong heavy drinker and smoker).

When I could, I made the four-hour trek from Brunswick, ME to Mom's mobile home in Southington, CT and then further journeyed to Waterbury Hospital to visit him. I can still vividly remember the last time I visited. When leaving, it appeared to me that he wanted to say something—but did not.

Needing rest and recuperation from a very active schedule, I elected not to make the long trek to Waterbury on the following weekend.

On Friday night of that weekend, during a squadron event at the Officer's Club, the Skipper of VP-23 (Thorny Smith) approached and informed me that the squadron Duty Officer had received a call from my mother and that my father had passed away. Overwhelmed, I fell backwards a bit against the wall behind me, overcome by a wave of emotion. This surprised me—and for the first time I became aware that I still had a measure of love for my stepfather in my heart—despite the violence and trauma of my early childhood. After all, he was the father figure in my life—and there were moments when the viper of alcohol and rage had not smitten him—albeit very few.

The next thing I distinctly remember is attending the wake and funeral for my stepfather where I was genuinely surprised at the small turn out of family and friends. Everything seemed cold and barren. I also remember looking at my stepfather's corpse during the wake—indifferent and without any discernable emotion. Such was my own spiritual formation that I never considered whether my stepfather was saved or damned—as I did believe (in principle) in eternal life. Nor did I consider it my obligation to pray for his soul. As a good Catholic (in truth—very nominal at best), I thought that the funeral Mass was sufficient and that I had—as they say, done my Christian duty.

After my coming to Christ in 1978 this hard-heartedness towards my stepfather began to soften and on at least three different occasions that I can remember I attempted to work through reconciliation with him. I did this by prayerfully forgiving him and asking the Lord to forgive me for the bitterness I held in my heart against him.

Yet, it never, never occurred to me that he would need my prayers. After all, he had died many, many years ago!

My Stepfather Arthur A. Carpentier

His Release From Purgatory

Time passes, it is the summer of 2005 and since 1989 I have resided in Rowley, MA. Eleven years have elapsed since the death of my mother and over thirty-six years have passed since the death of my stepfather. Yet, on this summer day I am about to be made aware of a profound and ominous spiritual truth:

Purgatory does exist and souls can spend decades, perhaps even eons in its environs, and my stepfather had not yet escaped its grasp. He was still in that place of purgation!

This is how it unfolds: I am in my upstairs bedroom preparing for church when I see in an open vision before me—just for a moment, a mass of bloody tissue suspended in the air before me at eye level:



And—

I hear my mother audibly and distinctly say: "**We want him where we are!**"

Following this plea, I understand immediately that Arthur, my stepfather, required further prayers to be released from his long period of purgatorial suffering.

There, his wife, his daughter Pat and his son Greg were awaiting him.

The plea was clear, so that he could be "**where we are**".

Now I recognize that this will come as an implausible shock to many who read this!

First, that Purgatory exists— but even more incredibly, that God would permit a deceased mother to petition her living son for prayers of release for her husband—and that son's long deceased stepfather!

This is an amazing grace and a stupendous miracle, but an even greater one was awaiting in the wings.

My reaction to this revelation was not one of skepticism, since from the time of my rebirth through the ministry of Billy Graham I had experienced many mystical events. It seemed to be part of my spiritual DNA and spiritual heritage and I had begun to move in the revelatory and prophetic. So, my reaction to this call for prayer and intercession was immediate and I began to pray for my stepfather.

Several weeks had gone by following this event and it is Sunday morning and I am preparing—along with my wife Suzanne and another couple, to make the trip to Framingham, MA to attend a service at a new Bridge Church plant. The founder of Streams Ministries (John Paul Jackson) would be preaching, and it promised to be (and was) a powerful time in the Holy Spirit.

So, I, Suzanne and our friends make the drive to Framingham, MA for this service with great expectancy. Once there, during the service there was a time of powerful communal worship which drew the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit. In response, I knelt on the floor bowing down to worship the Lord with thanksgiving and praise with uplifted hands.

As I am bowing down worshipping in this manner, I again clearly hear my Mother's voice as she joyfully declares: "**He is with us now!**"

This was then confirmed by my witnessing a brilliant flash of white light to my left emanating from a supernatural spirit.

Utterly amazing!

In fact, it was Father's Day, June 19, 2005, the day of release on which my stepfather was entered into the fullness of Heaven.

**Praise be to God!
Our God is indeed an amazing and wondrous God!
There is none like Him!
Be Blessed and Believe!**

DAS ENDE

App. I (2020)

RESUME

Peter F. Carpentier J.D., LL.M., M. Div.
7 Jalbert Drive
Nashua, NH, 03060

Date of Birth: . 5/17/42

Married to Suzanne (1981)-Children-Cassandra -(5 children); David-(3 children)

EDUCATION/FORMAL

1984-1987	WESTON SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY Cambridge, MA	Masters in Divinity
1974-1975	BOSTON UNIVERSITY Boston, MA	Masters in Taxation (LL.M.)
1970-1973	BOSTON UNIVERSITY Boston, MA Honors: Finalist-Homers Albers Moot Court Competition	Juris Doctor (J.D.)
1964-1965	UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT Storrs, CT	Bachelor in Arts (English)
1964	ST. BERNARD SEMINARY Rochester, NY	
1960-1963	ST. THOMAS SEMINARY Bloomfield, CT	Associate in Arts (A.A.)

EDUCATION/TECHNICAL

1965 -1966 US NAVY FLIGHT SCHOOL, PENSACOLA, FLORIDA
Eighteen Months of Aviation and Officer Candidate Training

PRESENT AVOCATION

Board member of Alpha New England, Inc., a 501(c)(3) religious organization emphasizing the evangelization of people groups through utilization of the *Alpha Course* both in church and local settings (such as prisons).
Director of North Shore Christian Ministries (NSCM) a ministry subset of Alpha New England.

Unbound: Healing, inner healing and deliverance ministry training.	Life In the Spirit Seminars
Bible study instructor	Alpha and Youth Alpha: 'Train the Trainer' courses
Prison Ministries	Worship Concerts

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

2000-2008

Regional Counsel (Office of the General Counsel)

AETNA

Cambridge, MA

1991-2000

Corporate Counsel

THE CHICKERING GROUP

Cambridge, MA

1981-1991

Private Commercial Practice

Salem, MA

A private practice emphasizing commercial, corporate, insurance and real estate matters.

1977-1991

General Counsel

CRESSEY DOCKHAM & CO, INC.

Andover, MA

1974-1977

PRIVATE TAX PRACTICE

Marblehead, MA

This practice involved the representation of small corporations and tax planning to achieve desired tax results and also included estate planning for individuals and some tax litigation.

1973-1974

Counsel/Regulations

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

Washington, .D.C.

1965-1970

UNITED STATE'S NAVY

Commissioned Officer-Naval Aviator

After flight training, I was assigned to Anti-Submarine Warfare duties and flew multi-engine aircraft in the European theatre with the 6th Fleet. I also served as a flight instructor and test pilot at the Naval Air Facility, Washington, D.C., during my last year of service and prior to my entry into law school.

OTHER:

1970-1989

UNITED STATE'S NAVAL RESERVES

VP-92 Naval Air Station, S. Weymouth, MA

Flew operational missions in the Reserves until retirement in 1989 as a Commander.

BAR MEMBERSHIPS

Massachusetts

December 1973

Florida

June 1976 (now retired in FL)

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

St. Mary's Religious Education Confirmation Teacher: Three years

St. Mary's: Established and facilitated Saint John Paul II Men's Group

Civil Air Patrol (CAP)

St. Mary's Youth Alpha Confirmation Program: Five years

Town of Rowley Board of Assessors: Three years

SPECIAL INTERESTS AND SKILLS

Commercial pilot, navigation, writing, video and video editing.

App. 2

Following is the prayer written by my Mom in her journal (probably sometime in 1993):

Father, Abba, you created a soul (mine);
You enclosed it in a body, whole, clean, and pure;
To be the temple of the Holy Spirit;
And, gave all of us two coins to start out life.
One was time, the other self-will;
You gave us eyes to see the beauty of your Creation;
Ears to hear the Word;
A mouth to proclaim all that You have done;
Hands to raise to You in praise;
And, feet to lead us in good directions.
But, I forgot You Oh Lord;
And thought that I was the ruler of my life.
I never asked You what I should do;
And did what I thought best.
But your words do not return to You empty.
Every mistake I made was turned to good by You.
How much better and easier,
Life would have been for all of us;
If I had the Grace to live with You,
For You,
And in You,
From the beginning.
I thank you for teaching me even now.
Your Love is so great and powerful;
I thank You for Your Mercy.

App. 3

President Nixon's exit plan with the North Vietnamese government worked out in January of 1973 neither ended the war (except for the United States) nor restored the peace. It is generally recognized that the Viet Nam war ended with the 'Fall of Saigon' on April 30, 1975.



Historical Review of the Concept of Purgatory

The concept of a need for a Christian believer to undergo purgation following death has led to a centuries long debate. The following narrative (drawn from various online sources) is an historical summation regarding this concept which will at once establish its historical roots as well as the agreement of most ancient Christian traditions that purgation of a soul following death is necessary in some (or, even many) instances, and that such a purgation is rooted in God's mercy and love.

"Purgatory" refers to a doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church which posits that those who die in a state of grace undergo a purification in order to achieve the holiness necessary to enter heaven (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1030). The doctrine is linked to the universal tradition of Prayer for the Dead. St John of Damascus sums up the patristic consensus on the doctrine like this:

"One who has departed unrepentant and with an evil life cannot be helped by anyone in any way. But the one who has departed even with the slightest virtue, but who had no time to increase this virtue because of indolence, indifference, procrastination, or timidity, the Lord Who is a righteous judge and master will not forget such a one." (St John of Damascus)

What St John was saying was that, while there is no forgiveness of sins after death for the unrepentant, for the faithful departed God will make up for what is lacking so that they can be maximally happy with him in heaven forever. It has been the conviction of Christians and Jews throughout history that their prayers for the faithful departed actually benefit them and help them to rest in peace and to finally receive their eternal happiness.

The way of defining purgatory that is most acceptable to the Eastern Orthodox mind is to say that those who are being saved by Repentance and Baptism and participation in the sacramental life of the Church, but whose sins, nonetheless, continue to create lasting effects such as passions, addictions, attachments to worldly things which inhibit their spiritual growth and progress toward theosis, are given the grace of having these lasting effects expiated so that they can receive the Vision of God. The way of spiritual progress moves beyond Baptism through three stages, Purification, Illumination, and finally Theosis. For those who die in a state of faith and repentance but before having completed these stages of spiritual progress, their eternal salvation is not in doubt, but this does not abrogate the need to pass through these stages.

That said, Greek Orthodox Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia [Metropolitan Kallistos Ware] acknowledges several schools of thought among the Orthodox on the topic of purification after death. This divergence indicates that certain Catholic interpretations of purgatory, specifically the satisfaction model, more than the concept itself, are what is universally rejected. Also, there are Orthodox sources that indicate some sins can be forgiven after death (Mt

12:32) but which also reject the teaching of purgatory because of the doctrine of indulgences and idea of literal purgatorial fire that are tied to it. Still other Orthodox hold to the notion of the Toll Houses and that those who pass through them after death have no assurance of final salvation.

Rather than say that the doctrine of Purgatory is a heresy, it is more accurate to say that it is an ancient ecumenical tradition which, due to the mysterious nature of the subject matter, Christians throughout history have interpreted and explained in a very wide variety of ways, some of which were strongly rejected by Eastern Orthodox Christians. (Emphasis Added)

A Condition of Waiting

Some Eastern Orthodox sources, including the [Ecumenical Patriarchate], consider Purgatory to be among "inter-correlated theories, unwitnessed in the Bible or in the Ancient Church" that are not acceptable within Orthodox doctrine and hold to a "condition of waiting" as a more apt description of the period after death for those not borne directly to heaven. This waiting condition does not imply purification, which they see as being linked to the idea "there is no hope of repentance or betterment after death." Prayers for the dead, then, are simply to comfort those in the waiting place.

Concordantly, the Catholic Encyclopedia indicates that the souls of the faithful departed detained in purgatory are "shut out for the time being from the sight of God." This is because, only the pure in heart can see God (Mt 5:7, Rev 21:27). Man's ultimate happiness is to know and love God and to be fully united to him forever. Because the soul is given to know this the soul suffers the loss of divine intimacy knowing he is separated even temporarily from the full vision and union with God. However, because in death, the soul becomes incapable of sin (Rom 6:7), the souls in purgatory know they cannot lose eternal life through sinning. Furthermore, being aware that their time in purgatory is only temporary the souls are happy that they are being made ready to enter into the fullness of divine life. The ancient Liturgies and the inscriptions of the catacombs speak of a "sleep of peace", which would be impossible if there was any doubt of ultimate salvation.

Purification

Going back to the reason for the soul's time of waiting, the Catholic Encyclopedia says that this has to do with the souls purity, because, only the pure in heart can see God (Mt 5:7, Rev 21:27). This is entirely consistent, even with modern Orthodox thought. Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos writes:

"Knowledge of God, as will be explained further on, is not intellectual, but existential. That is, one's whole being is filled with this knowledge of God. But in order to attain it, one's heart must have been purified, that is, the soul, nous and heart must have been healed. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' " (Orthodox Psychotherapy Section The Knowledge of God according to St. Gregory Palamas by Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos published by Birth of Theotokos Monastery, Greece (January 1, 2005) ISBN 978-960-7070-27-2).

Kyriacos C. Markides also confirms that purification is necessary in order to "see" God: The soul's journey toward God must go through three identifiable and distinct stages. At first there is the state of catharsis, or the purification of the soul from egotistical passions It is then followed by the state of fosis, or the enlightenment of the soul, a gift of the Holy Spirit once the soul has undergone its purification. Finally comes the stage of theosis, union with God, as the final destination and ultimate home of the human soul. The last two stages are impossible to attain without having the soul first pass through the fires of catharsis from egotistical passions. (Markides, 'The Mountain of Silence').

He goes on to explain that, according to the Athonite tradition, catharsis or purification is essential in assisting the soul to overcome the obstacles that keep us from the vision of God, namely, "the sum total of our worldly passions and desires. These passions are products of the enchantment and enslavement of our hearts and minds to the gross and transient material universe with its myriads of temptations and seductions." In life these effects of sin are purified through acts of mortification. (See Romans 8:13-14, I Corinthians 9:25-27, Galatians 5:18-25,

Colossians 3:5 "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is the service of idols."

The doctrine of Purgatory, far from being only concerned with a foreign (to Orthodoxy) legal metaphor, rather explains how a soul that has died prior to completing his or her purification, can finally attain union with God, through the grace of a final post-mortem expiation of the lasting effects of sin. Father Seraphim Rose sums up the Patristic doctrine in this way:

"In the Orthodox doctrine, on the other hand, which St. Mark teaches, the faithful who have died with small sins unconfessed, or who have not brought forth fruits of repentance for sins they have confessed, are cleansed of these sins either in the trial of death itself with its fear, or after death, when they are confined (but not permanently) in hell, by the prayers and Liturgies of the Church and good deeds performed for them by the faithful." [http://orthodoxinfo.com/death/stmark_purg.aspx]

Literal Fire or Encounter with Risen Christ

One of the primary objections to the classical Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is the supposed literal nature of the purgatorial fires. During the middle ages, the Western tradition began to lean more toward a literal interpretation of the fires and even torture of the souls in Purgatory. A book entitled "St. Patrick's Purgatory" is a particularly egregious example of this tendency. However, medieval Orthodox piety also expressed an overly literal view of the Aerial Toll-Houses. (Addressed Below)

However, Roman Catholic teaching does not require a belief in literal fire.

In Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical "Spe Salvi", he writes:

"Some recent theologians are of the opinion that the fire which both burns and saves is Christ himself, the Judge and Savior. The encounter with him is the decisive act of judgment. Before his gaze all falsehood melts away. This encounter with him, as it burns us, transforms and frees us, allowing us to become truly ourselves (Spe Salvi 47,)." Catholic Apologist Jimmy Akin writes that the interpretation of purgatory's fire has been complex. Historically, medieval theologians tried to understand how a physical fire could affect an immaterial soul.

In writing his encyclical, Benedict XVI apparently wanted to give the new proposal official recognition without requiring theologians and the faithful to reject other understandings of purgatorial fire. By proposing it as a theological opinion—rather than a Church teaching, he made it clear that this is a permitted and even a favored view but not the only one possible.

Father Seraphim Rose admits that the Latin Church Fathers taught about an allegorical fire which cleanses small unconfessed sins. [http://orthodoxinfo.com/death/stmark_purg.aspx]

Some Church Fathers, such as St. Cyprian and St. Augustine of Hippo, seemed to believe in a purification after death. However, the character of this purification is never clarified, and especially (as St. Mark of Ephesus underlined at the Council of Florence, it seems there is no true distinction between heaven, hell and the so-called purgatory: all souls partake differently in the same mystical fire (which, according to St. Isaac of Syria is God's Love), but because of their spiritual change they are bound to different reactions: bliss for those who are in communion with him; purification for those in the process of being deified; and remorse for those who hated God during their earthly lives.

Because of this confusion and inability of the human language to understand these realities, the Church refrains from theological speculation. Instead, she affirms the unbroken Tradition of prayers for the dead, the certainty of eternal life, the rejection of reincarnation, and the communion of the Saints (those living and those who have fallen asleep in the Lord) in the same Body of Christ which is the Church. Private speculation is thus still possible as it was in the time of the Church Fathers. (Emphasis Added)

Aerial Toll-Houses

Other Orthodox believe in the "Aerial Toll-Houses the Toll gate" theory by which the dead go to successive literal "toll gates" where they meet up with demons who test them to determine whether they have been guilty of various sins during life and/or tempt them to further sin. If they have not repented and been absolved of those sins, or if they give in to sin after death, they will be taken to Hell.

Pope Shenouda III

The Orthodox Church has neither explicitly recognized the term "purgatory" nor officially accepted such a state, which is distinct from the more general being "asleep in the Lord." In his book entitled "Why Do We Reject Purgatory?", Coptic Pope Shenouda III (Gayyid) of Alexandria presents many theological and biblical arguments against Purgatory. For example, he refers to 1 Thess 4:16,17, "And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord", in which Apostle Paul describes the Last Day saying that those faithful who are still alive will meet the Lord with those who rise from the dead and then remain with Him always, and wonders, "Are these faithful (alive on the Last Day) exempt from Purgatory? Or is God showing partiality towards them?"

However, a response to this objection from the Catholics is perhaps found in the Summa Theologica of Thomas Aquinas, in the discussion of the Final Conflagration. The Final Conflagration is the fiery apocalyptic transformation, accepted by the Fathers, of the Old Heaven and Old Earth into the New Heaven and New Earth on the Last Day, immediately preceding the General Resurrection and General Judgment. It is said that for those still living at the time of the Conflagration, it will transform their bodies; thus technically, in Catholic thought, those found living may also die for a brief moment (i.e., the "twinkling of an eye" mentioned in 1 Corinthians).

According to the Summa, the Final Conflagration will act as "purgatory" for those found living who still need cleansing/healing: "There are three reasons why those who will be found living will be able to be cleansed suddenly. One is because there will be few things in them to be cleansed, since they will be already cleansed by the previous fears and persecutions. The second is because they will suffer pain both while living and of their own will, and pain suffered in this life voluntarily cleanses much more than pain inflicted after death, as in the case of the martyrs, because "if anything needing to be cleansed be found in them, it is cut off by the sickle of suffering," as Augustine says (De Unic. Bap. xiii), although the pain of martyrdom is of short duration in comparison with the pain endured in purgatory. The third is because the heat will gain in intensity what it loses in shortness of time."