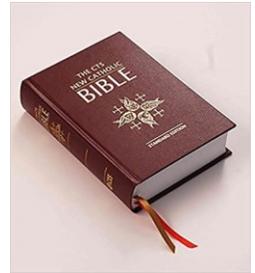


Does Hell Exist and How Do We Know?

Do people really go there?

Sister Mildred Neuzil's Vision of Hell

During Lent we ponder the Church's eschatological teachings on the four last things: death, judgement, heaven or hell. While hell is not a popular topic, it needs to be discussed, as there is a rise in satanism these days. Is hell real? Yes, it is! How do we know? We know from Sacred Scripture, from the teachings of the Catholic Church, from rational thought, and from the experience of chosen souls who were given a vision of it so they could witness to its existence and its horrors, advising us to avoid it at all costs. No one goes there but by their own choice. The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God in whom alone a person can possess the life and happiness for which he or she was created and for which he or she longs.



From Scripture:

The Bible continually warns of a place called hell. There are 162 references in the New Testament which warn of hell, and over 70 of these references were uttered by the Lord Jesus Himself. **In Mark 9:45** Jesus says: "If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell." **In Matthew 10:28** Jesus says: "And fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell." **Luke 3:17 states:** "His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." **In Revelation 14:11** we read: "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name." **In Matthew 25:34-42:** Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in..." Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not take me in..."

From Church Teaching:

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell where they suffer the punishments of hell, 'eternal fire.' The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs. **This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the**

bleamed is called hell.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1033-1035.) They are denied forever the eternal joys of the Beatific Vision. Theologians distinguish four meanings for the term **hell**: the “place” for the demons and the damned; the limbo of infants not baptized who enjoy a state of natural bliss (but study continues on this issue); the limbo of the Fathers and the just of the Old Testament, which ceased to exist once Christ’s death opened the gates of heaven to them; and purgatory, a temporary state where souls are further purified before admittance to heaven. In its narrowest sense, hell is the state of those who are punished eternally for unrepented personal mortal sin. While hell cannot be entered by those alive, holy souls, by divine grace, have had visions of hell in order to give witness to us of its existence and its horrors so we will avoid it at all costs.

The Vision of Hell Given to Chosen Souls:

St. Teresa of Avila cites her vision of hell in her autobiography. The word hell means hole, hollow, darkness. She describes it as a long narrow pass, like a furnace, low and dark, and close, with muddy ground and extremely foul odors and loathsome vermin. At the end of the pass was a closet and she saw herself confined in it.



“I felt a fire in my soul. I cannot see how it is possible to describe it. My bodily sufferings were unendurable. I have undergone most painful sufferings in this life...yet all these were as nothing in comparison with what I felt then, especially when I saw that there would be no intermission, nor any end to them.”

“Left in that pestilential place, and utterly without the power to hope for comfort, I could neither sit nor lie down: there was no room. I was placed as it were in a hole in the wall; and those walls, terrible to look on of themselves, hemmed me in on every side. I could not breathe. There was no light, but all was thick darkness. ...”

“Afterwards I had another most fearful vision, in which I saw the punishment of certain sins. They were most horrible to look at... I have read of the diverse tortures, and how the devils tear the flesh with red-hot pincers. But all is as nothing before this; it is a wholly different matter. In short, the one is a reality, the other a picture; and all burning here in this life is as nothing in comparison with the fire that is there. I was so terrified by that vision –and that terror is on me even now while I am writing –that though it took place nearly six years ago, the natural warmth of my body is chilled by fear even now when I think of it.”

Reference: <https://aleteia.org/2013/10/25/3-absolutely-terrifying-visions-of-hell/>

In October of 1936, **St. Faustina** recorded a vision of hell in her diary.



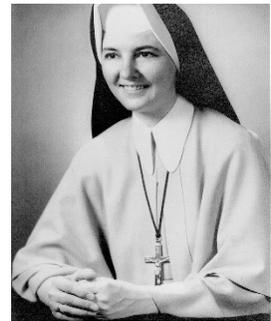
“Today I was led by an Angel to the chasms of hell. It is a place of great torture; how awesomely large and extensive it is! The kinds of tortures I saw: the first torture that constitutes hell is the loss of God; the second is perpetual remorse of conscience; the third is that one’s condition will never change; the fourth is the fire that will penetrate the soul without destroying it – a terrible suffering, since it is a purely spiritual fire, lit by God’s anger; the fifth torture is continual darkness and a terrible suffocating smell, and, despite the darkness, the devils and the souls of the damned see each other and all the evil, both of others and their own; the sixth torture is the constant company of Satan; the seventh torture is horrible despair, hatred of God, vile words, curses and blasphemies.”

“These are the tortures suffered by all the damned together, but that is not the end of their sufferings. There are special tortures destined for particular souls. These are the torments of the senses. Each soul undergoes terrible and indescribable sufferings, related to the manner in which it has sinned. There are caverns and pits of torture where one form of agony differs from another. I would have died at the very sight of these tortures if the omnipotence of God had not supported me. Let the sinner know that he will be tortured throughout all eternity, in those senses which he made use of to sin. **I am writing this at the command of God, so that no soul may find an excuse by saying there is no hell, or that nobody has ever been there, and so no one can say what it is like.**”

“I, Sister Faustina, by the order of God, have visited the abysses of hell so that I might tell souls about it and testify to its existence. ... What I have written is but a pale shadow of the things I saw. **But I noticed one thing: that most of the souls there are those who disbelieved that there is a hell.** ... How terribly souls suffer there! Consequently, **I pray even more fervently for the conversion of sinners.** I incessantly plead God’s mercy upon them. O my Jesus, I would rather be in agony until the end of the world, amidst the greatest sufferings, than offend You by the least sin.”

(Sr. Sophia Michalenko, C.M.G.T., *MERCY MY MISSION*, Life of Sr. Faustina H. Kowalska, S.M.D.M., Marian Press, Stockbridge, MA, 1967, Pgs. 117-118.)

Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil also had a vision of hell. St. Michael accompanied and sustained her on this frightening venture. Her February 24, 1958 letter described the horrifying experience.



“I found myself on a lonely road, one of course, I had never seen or been on at any time. Before me was a large structure, something similar to a gigantic cathedral or castle. It was huge, somber and foreboding. I was obliged to walk toward it though something inside me held back in a kind of dread. Then, at my side on the right, I felt the strong presence of St. Michael. He did not speak, but just having him there made me feel safe. We continued our journey and at last came to what appeared to be the front entrance to the strange building. As we drew nearer, the two great doors which had the qualities, as it seemed, of some sort of glass work, opened of themselves. I saw no one. The interior revealed an odd, indescribable darkness, pervaded by a weird sort of light which was not really light. We entered, and without looking back, I knew that the doors had closed inexorably behind us and that we would never leave the same way we had entered.

When I said that the light was not really light, I meant it was more like the distant glow of a raging fire. What appeared to be openings in this vast and horrible place looked more like windows, painted a vivid red, solid and impenetrable, like an unbreakable wall of fire. Yet they did not have the usual accompaniments of fire, like flames or smoke, just as I said before, a solid red like stained glass windows of some sort. I felt the frightening certainty of where we were. Just the same, I could not help asking my companion, “What is this place?” Gravely, solemnly he replied, **“This is hell.”** He said this in a way that I will never forget. I wondered that, except for the red openings, there was no appearance of fire anywhere. Answering these unvoiced thoughts my companion explained, **“The fire is in the souls of the lost, not an outward but an inward fire that never dies.”** I did not see these lost souls but I knew that they were all about us and I thought of the horror that was theirs and that it would never end. The silence was appalling. It was the silence of death without hope. As we continued our journey, there was not a breath of a sound. The intense and penetrating silence, or rather stillness, was terrifying beyond description. Yet that very silence screamed with the undying voice of despair—nothing, nothing, nothing—lost, lost, lost—forever, forever, forever. I was filled with the most terrible fears that I would never get out of this place. And oh, how I missed the light. **When explaining then to my companion, “But there is no light,”** he made answer, **“How can there be light where God is not.”** I kept begging St. Michael not to leave me. Never have I experienced such fear, such horror.”

As we walked on, we came to what appeared to be a large body of water. It looked like an enormous circular pool. It all but overflowed with some sort of dark substance. What that was I do not know but it was not water. I did not touch it to make certain but knew in my mind that it was not water. I was too terror-struck to investigate further. Lying about this pool, in a rather scattered manner were what appeared to be dead objects of some sort. We did not go close enough for me to see just what they were. I cannot imagine anything worse or more horrible than what I felt and saw in this place. I was told, at least so I understood it, that this was the least part of eternal punishment. What then must the rest be like? Besides, not by far, was all the least part shown me. I understood that no one could experience the full sight of hell and live.



When we left this, we came upon another aspect of eternal punishment which made a deep impression on me. On what appeared to be a rather wide ledge on the side of a mountain, I saw many, many people going back and forth, searching, searching. They were surrounded, engulfed in flames of fire. They seemed themselves to be a part of the fire as though it came from within them. My companion then explained to me that these were they who had no time for God while they lived upon earth. Now they were condemned to spend an eternity seeking Him Whom they would not find. An endless search, without hope, without ever the joy of finding and possessing. What a torture this must be! Oh, the justice of God!

On the morning of February 20, 1958, during Holy Mass, Sister wrote that the thought of the lost ones, especially the chosen, grieved her. Then Our Lord appeared to her at that moment and spoke these words: **“Beloved spouse, I condemn no one. If a soul is condemned, it has condemned itself.”** And I knew in my heart that this was so, though my eyes filled with tears. Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love itself. Without freedom, there is no real love as we understand it. (Catechism of Catholic Church, 1861.)

So awesome, yet terrible, is God’s gift to us of free will.

Pray, pray, pray for the salvation of souls!

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