

# HEAVEN

## *What the Saints say about Heaven*

With All Saints' and All Souls' Days just ahead of us, it seems as a good time to examine what happens to us after death or more specially, where our eternal souls go when our bodies die.

Lucky for me another writer has already covered the darker side of death for Alethea – Brantly Millegan's twin articles on the saints' terrifying visions of hell and their sobering peeks into purgatory ought to be enough to scare anyone straight into the confessional and back on the straight – and – narrow path. But true faith should be more about hope and joy than fear and dread – perfect contribution, after all, is about loving God so much we can bear to offend him; not jumping through requisite hoops to avoid burning for eternity in hell.

So, in the spirit of hopeful look at what awaits the faithful after death, I present you with ten perspectives on heaven according to the saints – some of whom were even lucky enough to experience it firsthand, before or after they died, and report back to us.

St. Faustina wrote extensively about her spiritual travels to both paradise and purgation in her diaries, which have been endorsed by the Church as approved revelations. After Faustina was traumatized by her visions of hell, she was given the Divine Mercy prayer to share with the world as a weapon in the war to save souls. But sadly, less attention has been given to her encouraging visions of heaven, about which she wrote.

“Today I was in heaven, in spirit, and I saw its unconceivable beauties and the happiness that awaits us after death. I saw how all creatures give ceaseless praise and glory to God. I saw how great is happiness in God, which spreads to all creatures, making them happy; and then all the glory and praise which springs from this happiness returns to source; and then enter the depth of God, contemplating the inner life of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, whom they will never comprehend or fathom. The source of happiness is unchanging in its essence, but it is always new, gushing forth happiness for all creatures.”

St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori told a story shared with him by a superior of the Jesuit order about a different superior who appeared to him after his death and gave a detailed report about

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what sort of treatment different people could expect in heaven. According to the departed superior, the rewards of heaven are not equal for all who enter, but all who enter are equally satisfied:

“Now I am in heaven, Philip II, King of Spain, is in heaven as well. We both are enjoying the rewards of paradise, but they are different for us. My happiness is much greater than his, for it is not like when we were still on earth, for then he was royalty and I was a commoner. We were as far apart as the earth and sky, but now it has been reversed: As lowly as I was compared to the king on earth, I now exceed him in glory in heaven. However, we are both happy, and our hearts are completely satisfied.”

Pope St. Gregory the Great spoke of the spiritual unity between the entire communion of Saints in heaven, and their seemingly infinite knowledge: “Beside all this, a more powerful grace is bestowed upon the Saints in heaven: for they know not only them with whom they were acquainted in this world, but also those whom before they never saw, and converse with them in such familiar sort as though in times past they had seen and known one another: and therefore when they shall see the ancient fathers in the place of perpetual bliss, they shall then know them by spirit, whom always they knew in their lives and conversation. For seeing they do in that place with unspeakable brightness, common to all, behold God, what is there that they know not, that know him who knoweth all things?”

Meanwhile, other Saints have offered similarly joyous visions and descriptions of heaven:

St. Augustine: “There, good will shall be so ordered in us that we shall have no other desire than to remain there eternally.”

St. Philip Neri: “If only we got to heaven, what a sweet and easy thing it will be there to be always saying with the Angels and the Saints, ‘Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus.’”

St. Anselm of Canterbury: “No one will have any other desire in heaven than what God wills; and the desire of one will be the desire of all; and the desire of all and of each one will also be the desire of God.”

St. Jean Vianney: “O my dear parishioners, let us endeavour to get to heaven! There we shall see God. How happy we shall feel! If the parish is converted we shall go there in procession with the parish priest at the head. ... We must get to heaven!”

St. Bernadette Soubirous: “My crown in heaven should shine with innocence and its flowers should be radiant as the sun. Sacrifice are the flowers Jesus and Mary chose.”

St. Thomas More: “Earth hath no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.”

Heaven is a wonderful place, and we should all strive to get there. But perhaps the most encouraging “heaven” quote of all comes St. Theresa of Lisieux, “The Little Flower,” who pointed out that as glorious as heaven is, God finds the presence of his children infinitely more desirable: “Our Lord does not come down from heaven every day to lie in a golden ciborium. He comes to find another heaven which is infinitely dearer to him – the heaven of our souls, created in his image, the living temples of the adorable Trinity.”

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