

The Secret of the Poor Souls in Purgatory

An interview with Maria Simma of Austria



Maria Simma (1915-2004)

Today, very little is taught in regular catechism classes about Purgatory, about the suffering that the Poor Souls experience in order to be completely purified to be able to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet Purgatory does exist, and the sufferings that the Poor Souls experience there are very real.

Since 1940 (she was then aged 25), a privileged soul, named Maria Simma, has had regular visits from the souls in Purgatory to explain their sufferings and to ask for prayers and Masses to be released from Purgatory. Her local Bishop and parish priest told her she could make known these visitations as long as there were no theological errors.

One day, Sister Emmanuel Maillard, a French nun known for her apostolate in favor of the Apparitions of Our Lady in Medjugorje, came across Maria Simma's book, called *The Souls in Purgatory told Me...* and read it with great interest: "This book struck me so much because it related very recent testimonies, and also explained very well the Church's doctrine on the subject... Straight away, I wrote to the editor who told me that Maria Simma is still alive. Quickly, I contacted her, and she agreed to meet me to answer my questions, which were many!"

This interview took place in 1997 at Maria's house in Sonntag, a very lovely village in the Vorarlberg Mountains in Austria. The following are excerpts from this interview of Sister Emmanuel of Medjugorje with Maria Simma, taken from a booklet entitled: *The Amazing Secret of the Souls in Purgatory*, published by Queenship Publishing Co., P.O. Box 220, Goleta, CA 93116, USA (Phone 800-647-9882, Fax: 805-967-5843):

(Note: Maria Simma died on March 16, 2004, in Sonntag, at the age of 89.)



Sr. Emmanuel with Maria Simma

Maria, can you tell us how you were visited for the first time by a soul in Purgatory?

Yes, it was in 1940. One night, around 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, I heard someone coming into my bedroom... I saw a complete stranger. He walked back and forth slowly. I said to him severely: "How did you get in here? Go away!" But he continued to walk impatiently around the bedroom as if he hadn't heard. So I asked him again: "What are you doing?" But as he still didn't answer, I jumped out of bed and tried to grab him, but I grasped only air. There was nothing there. So I went back to bed, but again I heard him pacing back and forth.

I wondered how I could see this man, but I couldn't grab him. I rose again to hold onto him and to stop him from walking around; again, I grasped only emptiness. Puzzled, I went back to bed. He didn't come back, but I couldn't get back to sleep. The next day, after Mass, I went to see my spiritual director and told him everything. He told me that if this should happen again, I shouldn't ask, "Who are you?" but "What do you want from me?"

The following night, the man returned. I asked him: "What do you want from me?" He replied: "Have three Masses celebrated for me, and I will be delivered."

So I understood that it was a soul in Purgatory. My spiritual director confirmed this. He also advised me never to turn away the poor souls, but to accept with generosity whatever they asked of me.

And afterwards, the visits continued?

Yes. For several years, there were only three or four souls, above all in November. Afterwards, there were more.

What do these souls ask of you?

In most cases, they ask to have Masses celebrated and that one be present at these Masses. They ask to have the Rosary said and also that one make the Stations of the Cross.

Maria, do the souls in Purgatory have, nevertheless, joy and hope in the midst of their suffering?

Yes. No soul would want to come back from Purgatory to the earth. They have knowledge which is infinitely beyond ours. They just could not decide to return to the darkness of the earth.

Here we see the difference from the suffering that we know on earth. In Purgatory, even if the pain of the soul is just terrible, there is the certitude of living forever with God. It's an unshakeable certitude. The joy is greater than the pain. There is nothing on earth which could make them want to live here again, where one is never sure of anything.

Maria, can you tell us now if it is God who sends a soul into Purgatory, or if the soul itself decides to go there?

It is the soul itself which wants to go to Purgatory, in order to be pure before going to Heaven.

Maria, at the moment of death, does one see God in full light or in an obscure manner?

In a manner still obscure, but, all the same, in such brightness that this is enough to cause great longing.

Maria, can you tell us what the role of Our Lady is with the souls in Purgatory?

She comes often to console them and to tell them they have done many good things. She encourages them.

Are there any days in particular on which She delivers them?

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

Charity covers a multitude of sins

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

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

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

So Maria searched for more information, thinking she'd been mistaken — but no, it was true. They had died at practically the same moment, but the woman had experienced deep repentance, and was very humble, whereas the man criticized everyone; he was always complaining and saying bad things about others. This is why his Purgatory lasted so long. And Maria concluded: "We mustn't judge on appearances."

Other sins against charity are all our rejections of certain people we do not like, our refusals to make peace, our refusals to forgive, and all the bitterness we store inside.

Maria also illustrated this point with another example which gave us food for thought. It's the story of a woman she knew very well. This lady died and was in Purgatory, in the most terrible Purgatory, with the most atrocious sufferings. And when she came to see Maria, she explained why.

She had had a female friend. Between them rose a great enmity, caused by herself. She had maintained this enmity for years and years, even though her friend had many times asked for peace, for reconciliation. But each time, she refused. When she fell gravely ill, she continued to close her heart, to refuse the reconciliation offered by her friend, right up to her deathbed.

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

Those who have a good heart towards everyone. Love covers a multitude of sins.

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

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

The Holy Mass



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

The most efficient means is the Mass.

Why the Mass?

Because it is Christ who offers Himself out of love for us. It is the offering of Christ Himself to God, the most beautiful offering. The priest is God's representative, but it is God Himself who offers Himself and sacrifices Himself for us. The efficacy of the Mass for the deceased is even greater for those who attached great value to the Mass during their lives. If they attended Mass and prayed with all their hearts, if they went to Mass on weekdays — according to their time available — they drew great profit from Masses celebrated for them. Here, too, one harvests what one has sown.

A soul in Purgatory sees very clearly on the day of his funeral if we really pray for him, or if we have simply made an act of presence to show we were there. The poor souls say that tears are no good for them: only prayer! Often they complain that people go to a funeral without addressing a single prayer to God, while shedding many tears; this is useless!

Earthly sufferings

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

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

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

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

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

All of this is so encouraging because it gives an extraordinary meaning to our sufferings. The suffering which is offered, voluntary or involuntary, even the smallest sacrifices we can make, suffering or sickness, mourning, disappointments... if we live them with patience, if we welcome them in humility, these sufferings can have an unheard-of power to help souls.

The best thing to do, Maria tells us, is to unite our sufferings to those of Jesus, by placing them in the hands of Mary. She is the one who knows best how to use them, since often we ourselves do not know the most urgent needs around us. All this, of course, Mary will give back to us at the hour of our death. You see, these sufferings offered will be our most precious treasures in the other world. We must remind each other of this and encourage each other when we suffer.

Let me add something important: the souls in Purgatory can no longer do anything for themselves; they are totally helpless. If the living do not pray for them; they are totally abandoned. Therefore, it is very important to realize the immense power, the incredible power that each one of us has in our hands to relieve these souls who suffer.

We wouldn't think twice about helping a child who has fallen in front of us from a tree, and who had broken his bones. Of course, we would do everything for him! So, in the same way, we should take great care of these souls who expect everything from us, attentive to the slightest offering, hopeful for the least of our prayers, to relieve them from their pain. And it might be the finest way to practice charity.

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

Because at the moment of death, the time to earn merits is over. For as long as we are living on earth, we can repair the evil we have done. The souls in Purgatory envy us of this opportunity. Even the angels are jealous of us, for we have the possibility of growing for as long as we are on earth.

But often, the suffering in our lives leads us to rebellion, and we have great difficulty in accepting and living it. How can we live suffering so that it bears fruit?

Sufferings are the greatest proof of the love of God, and if we offer them well, they can win many souls.

But how can we welcome suffering as a gift, and not as a punishment (as we often do), as a chastisement?

We must give everything to Our Lady. She is the one who knows best who needs such and such an offering in order to be saved.

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

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

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

What is the role of contrition or repentance at the moment of death?

Contrition is very important. The sins are forgiven, in any case, but there remains the consequences of sins. If one wishes to receive a full indulgence at the moment of death — that means going straight to Heaven — the soul has to be free from all attachment.

Maria, I would like to ask you: at the moment of death, is there a time in which the soul still has the chance to turn towards God, even after a sinful life, before entering into eternity — a time, if you like, between apparent death and real death?

Yes, yes! The Lord gives several minutes to each one in order to regret his sins and to decide: I accept, or I do not accept to go and see God. Then we see a film of our lives.

I knew a man who believed in the Church's teachings, but not in eternal life. One day, he fell gravely ill and slid into a coma. He saw himself in a room with a board on which all his deeds were written, the good and the bad. Then the board disappeared as well as the walls of the room, and it was infinitely beautiful. Then he woke up from his coma, and decided to change his life.

Maria, does the devil have permission to attack us at the moment of death?

Yes, but man also has the grace to resist him, to push him away. So, if man does not want anything to do with him, the devil can do nothing.

Maria, what advice would you give to anyone who wants to become a saint here on earth?

Be very humble. We must not be occupied with ourselves. Pride is evil's greatest trap.

Maria, please tell us: can one ask the Lord to do one's Purgatory on earth, in order not to have to do it after death?

Yes. I knew a priest and a young woman who were both ill with tuberculosis in the hospital. The young woman said to the priest: "Let's ask the Lord to be able to suffer on earth as much as necessary in order to go straight to Heaven." The priest replied that he himself didn't dare to ask for this. Nearby was a religious sister who had overheard the whole conversation. The young woman died first, the priest died later, and he appeared to the sister, saying: "If only I had had the same trust as the young woman, I too would have gone straight to Heaven."

Maria, are there different degrees in Purgatory?

Yes, there is a great difference of degree of moral suffering. Each soul has a unique suffering, particular to it; there are many degrees.

Maria, are the sufferings in Purgatory more painful than the most painful sufferings on earth?

Yes, but in a symbolic way. It hurts more in the soul.

Maria, you know, many people today believe in reincarnation. What do the souls tell you concerning this subject?

The souls say that God gives only one life.

But some would say that just one life is not enough to know God and to have the time to be really converted, that it isn't fair. What would you reply to them?

All people have an interior Faith (conscience); even if they do not practice, they recognize God implicitly. Someone who does not believe — that doesn't exist! Each soul has a conscience to recognize good and evil, a conscience given by God, an inner knowledge — in different degrees, of course, but each one knows how to discern good from evil. With this conscience, each soul can become blessed.

What happens to people who have committed suicide? Have you ever been visited by these people?

Up to now, I have never encountered the case of a suicide who was lost — this doesn't mean, of course, that that doesn't exist — but often, the souls tell me that the most guilty were those around them, when they were negligent or spread calumny.

At this moment, I asked Maria if the souls regretted having committed suicide. She answered yes. Often, suicide is due to illness. These souls do regret their act because, as they see things in the light of God, they understand instantly all the graces that were in store for them during the time remaining for them to live — and they do see this time which remained for them, sometimes months or years — and they also see all the souls they could have helped by offering the rest of their lives to God. In the end, what hurts them most is to see the good that they could have done but didn't, because they shortened their lives. But when the cause is illness, the Lord takes this into account, of course.

Are there priests in Purgatory?

Yes, there are many. They didn't promote respect for the Eucharist. So Faith overall suffers. They are often in Purgatory for having neglected prayer — which has diminished their Faith. But there are also many who have gone straight to Heaven.

What would you say, then, to a priest who really wants to live according to the Heart of God?

I would advise him to pray much to the Holy Spirit — and to say his Rosary every day.

Have you been visited by souls who, on earth, practiced perversions? I am thinking, for example, about the sexual domain.

Yes, they are not lost, but they have much to suffer to be purified. For example: homosexuality. This truly comes from the Evil One.

What advice would you give, then, to all those people afflicted by homosexuality, with this tendency in them?

Pray a lot for the strength to turn away from it. They should above all pray to the Archangel Michael; he is the great fighter par excellence against the Evil One.

What are the attitudes of heart which can lead us to losing our soul for good, I mean going to Hell?

It is when the soul does not want to go towards God, when it actually says: "I do not want."

Jesus said that it was difficult for a rich person to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Have you seen such cases?

Yes! But if they do good works, works of charity, if they practice love, they can get there, just like the poor.

What do you think of the practices of spiritism? For example: calling up the spirits of the departed, Ouija-boards, etc.?

It is not good. It is always evil. It is the devil who makes the table move.

What is the difference between what you are living with the souls of the departed, and the practices of spiritism?

We are not supposed to summon up the souls — I don't try to get them to come. In spiritism, people try to call them forth.

This distinction is quite clear, and we must take it very seriously. If people were only to believe one thing I have said, I would like it to be this: those who engage in spiritism (moving tables and other practices of that kind) think that they are summoning up the souls of the dead. In reality, if there is <M>some response to their call, it is always and without exception Satan and his angels who are answering. People who practice spiritism (diviners, witches, etc.) are doing something very dangerous for themselves and for those who come to them for advice. They are up to their necks in lies. It is forbidden, strictly forbidden, to call up the dead. As for me, I have never done so, I do not do so, and I never will do so. When something appears to me, God alone permits it. *(End of interview.)*