

Saints Who Saw Hell

Hell is a self-made, self-stoked and self-perpetuating. Hell is not so much a place as a state, a way of being: “These sufferings are nothing in comparison with the anguish of soul. It is the soul itself that is tearing itself in pieces. Hell is the final guarantee that what we do here and now really matters. “If Hell doesn’t exist, then all roads lead to the same destination, whether it’s Heaven, or annihilation, or something else. And if all roads lead to the same place, it ultimately makes no difference which road we take. On the other hand, if our choices will lead us ultimately to one of two utterly different destinies, then our choices have crucially different consequences,” “The more horrible we understand Hell to be, the more deeply we fathom what God wants to save us from, the more grateful we are that he desires to save us,” he said. “Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to Hell, because there are none to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them.” Mother Mary-Our lady of Fatima apparition. God allows these visions as an act of mercy. Though they are often horrific, they reveal a truth that both charity and justice demand be revealed. When Jesus preached about Hell his language, too, was terrifying: unquenchable fire, gnawing worms that never die, weeping and gnashing of teeth.



Content:

1. Anne Catherine Emmerich: **“No One could behold without trembling”**4
2. St. Teresa of Avila: **“On fire and torn to pieces”**5
3. St. John Bosco: **“Indescribable terror”**6
4. Sr. Lucy of Fatima: **“Shrieks and groans of pain and despair”**7
5. St. Maria Faustina Kowalska: **“A place of great torture”**8-9
6. Saint Veronica Giuliani 1660-172710-12
7. St. Catherine of Genoa **“As Much Pain as in Hell”**13
8. St. Lidwina of Schiedam **“A Spirit All on Fire, Resembling
Incandescent Metal”**14-15

- For the Scripture says, No one who believes in him will be put to shame. There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. **For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.** ' '-(Romans 10:10-13)
- "Out of one hundred thousand sinners who continue in sin until death, scarcely one will be saved."- **Saint Jerome, Father and Doctor of the Church**
- "The number of the elect is so small — so small — that, were we to know how small it is, we would faint away with grief: one here and there, scattered up and down the world!" - **Saint Louis Marie de Montfort**
- "The greater number of Christians today are damned. The destiny of those dying on one day is that very few — not as many as ten — went straight to Heaven; many remained in Purgatory; and those cast into Hell were as numerous as snowflakes in mid-winter." -**Blessed Anna Maria Taigi, mystic**
- "The number of the damned is incalculable." -**Saint Veronica Giuliani, mystic**
"A great number of Christians are lost." -**Saint Leonard of Port Maurice**
- "Taking into account the behavior of mankind, only a small part of the human race will be saved."-**Sister Lucia, visionary of Fatima**
"I was watching souls going down into the abyss as thick and fast as snowflakes falling in the winter mist." -**Blessed Benedict Joseph Labre, mystic**
"The number of the saved is as few as the number of grapes left after the vineyard-pickers have passed." -**Saint John Vianney, the Cure of Ars, mystic**



1. Anne Catherine Emmerich: “No One could behold without trembling”

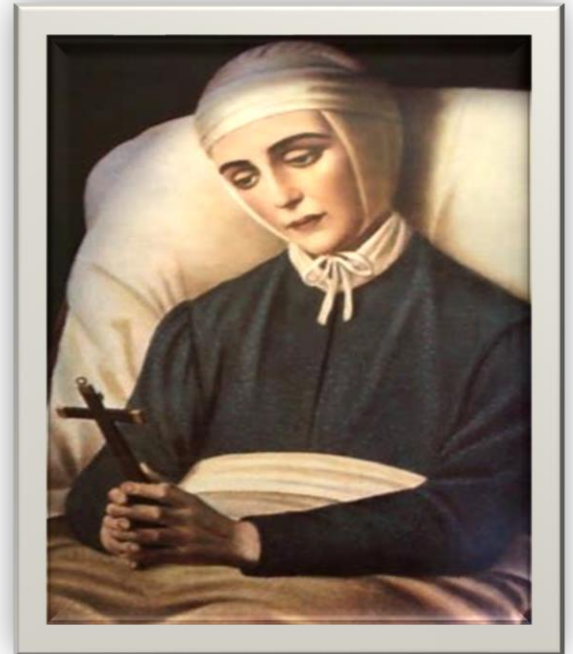
Anne Catherine Emmerich lived in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in the Holy Roman Empire. She was a mystic who claimed to have had visions of all sorts of spiritual things. Here is an excerpt of one of her visions of hell:

“The exterior of Hell was appalling and frightful; it was an immense, heavy-looking building, and the granite of which it was formed, although black, was of metallic brightness; and the dark and ponderous doors were secured with such terrible bolts that no one could behold them without trembling.

“Deep groans and cries of despair might be plainly distinguished even while the doors were tightly closed; but, O, who can describe the dreadful yells and shrieks which burst upon the ear when the bolts were unfastened and the doors flung open; and, O, who can depict the melancholy appearance of the inhabitants of this wretched place! All within it is, on the contrary, close, confused, and crowded; every object tends to fill the mind with sensations of pain and grief; the marks of the wrath and vengeance of God are visible everywhere; despair, like a vulture, gnaws every heart, and discord and misery reign around. In the city of Hell nothing is to be seen but dismal dungeons, dark caverns, frightful deserts, fetid swamps filled with every imaginable species of poisonous and disgusting reptile.

In Hell, perpetual scenes of wretched discord, and every species of sin and corruption, either under the most horrible forms imaginable, or represented by different kinds of dreadful torments. All in this dreary abode tends to fill the mind with horror; not a word of comfort is heard, or a consoling idea admitted; the one tremendous thought, that the justice of an all-powerful God inflicts on the damned nothing but what they have fully deserved is the absorbing tremendous conviction which weighs down each heart.

“Vice appears in its own, grim disgusting colours, being stripped of the mask under which it is hidden in this world, and the infernal viper is seen devouring those who have cherished or fostered it here below. In a word, Hell is the temple of anguish and despair.



2) St. Teresa of Avila: “On fire, and torn to pieces”

“The entrance seemed to be by a long narrow pass, like a furnace, very low, dark, and close. The ground seemed to be saturated with water, mere mud, exceedingly foul, sending forth pestilential odors, and covered with loathsome vermin. At the end was a hollow place in the wall, like a closet, and in that I saw myself confined.

“I felt a fire in my soul. 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.

“I did not see who it was that tormented me, but I felt myself on fire, and torn to pieces, as it seemed to me; and I repeat it, this inward fire and despair are the greatest torments of all.

“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.

“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.

“It was that vision that filled me with the very great distress which I feel at the sight of so many lost souls, especially of the Lutherans – for they were once members of the Church by baptism – and also gave me the most vehement desires for the salvation of souls; for certainly I believe that, to save even one from those overwhelming torments, I would most willingly endure many deaths.”



3) St. John Bosco: “Indescribable terror”

St. John Bosco (1815–1888) was an Italian priest, educator, and writer. He founded the Society of St. Francis de Sales, an apostolate dedicated to educating and caring for boys from poor families. He also helped establish other educational and devotional institutions, including the Institute of the daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Cofounded by Maria Domenica Mazzarello, this religious congregation of women was devoted to the care and education of girls from poor families.

St. John reported frequent and extraordinary dreams. In many ways, they were more like visions than dreams, though they came to him in his sleep. Unlike merely natural dreams, they had unusual and even supernatural aspects.

Sometimes St. John’s dreams came to him for the sake of the boys under his care, whom he loved deeply and wanted to help on their way to heaven. One night in 1868, he dreamed of the boys who were making their way to hell instead. He knew the night vision was given by God so he could warn them. So, he told them some days later about the guide who had come to him in the dream and led him down a difficult path, showing him the boys whose souls were in danger as they descended.

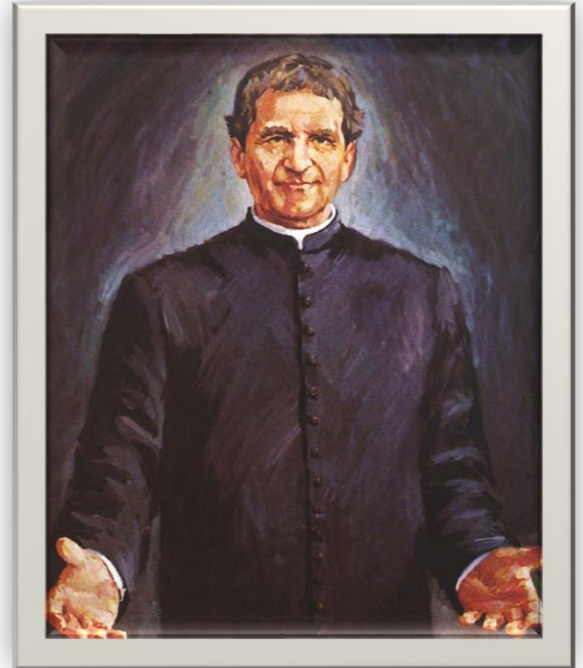
“As soon as I crossed its threshold, I felt an indescribable terror and dared not take another step. Ahead of me I could see something like an immense cave which gradually disappeared into recesses sunk far into the bowels of the mountains. They were all ablaze, but theirs was not an earthly fire with leaping tongues of flames. The entire cave – walls, ceiling, floor, iron, stones, wood, and coal – everything was a glowing white at temperatures of thousands of degrees. Yet the fire did not incinerate, did not consume. I simply can’t find words to describe the cavern’s horror.

“My hand was stinging, and I kept rubbing it to ease the pain. When I got up this morning, I noticed that it was swollen. Having my hand pressed against the wall, though only in a dream, felt so real that, later, the skin of my palm peeled off. “Bear in mind that I have tried not to frighten you very much, and so I have not described these things in all their horror as I saw them and as they impressed me. We know that Our Lord always portrayed Hell in symbols because, had He described it as it really is, we would not have understood Him. No mortal can comprehend these things.”

We continued our descent, the road now becoming so frightfully steep that it was almost impossible to stand erect. And then, at the bottom of this precipice, at the entrance of a dark valley, an enormous building loomed into sight, its towering portal, tightly locked, facing our road. When I finally got to the bottom, I became smothered by a suffocating heat, while a greasy, green-tinted smoke lit by flashes of scarlet flames rose from behind those enormous walls which loomed higher than mountains.

“Where are we? What is this?” I asked my guide.

“Read the inscription on that portal and you will know.”



I looked up and read these words: “The place of no reprieve.” I realized that we were at the gates of hell. The guide led me all around this horrible place.

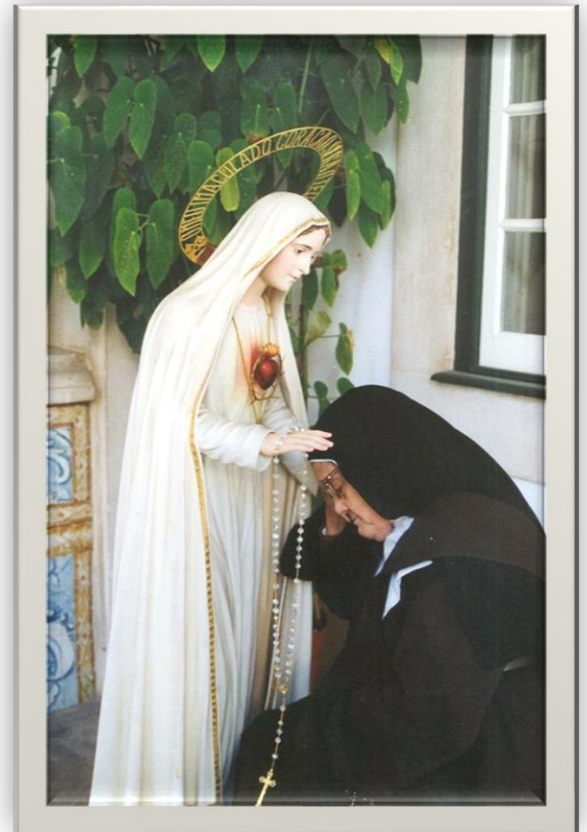
At regular distances bronze portals like the first overlooked precipitous descents; on each was an inscription, such as: “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41). “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Mt 7:19).

4) Sr. Lucy of Fatima: **“Shrieks and groans of pain and despair”**

“We saw, as it were, a vast sea of fire. Plunged in this fire, we saw the demons and the souls of the damned.

“The latter were like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, having human forms. They were floating about in that conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames which issued from within themselves, together with great clouds of smoke. Now they fell back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fright (it must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people say they heard me).

“The demons were distinguished from the souls of the damned by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals.”



5) St. Maria Faustina Kowalska: “A place of great torture”

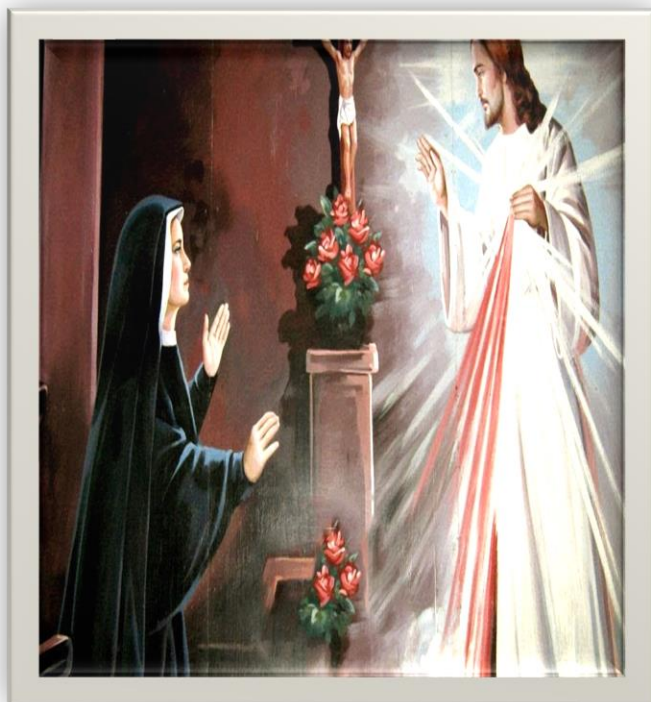
St Maria Faustina Kowalska (1905–1938) was a Polish nun of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. She spent most of her time in the convent performing the most humble of tasks in the kitchen, in the garden, or as the porter. Yet she received extraordinary revelations from Jesus over a period of years, seeing him and having conversations with him.

Our Lord spoke with Faustina about his mercy and gave her the mission of spreading devotion to his mercy. Under obedience to her superior, she recorded the revelations she received in notebooks, numbering about six hundred pages. These notes later came to be published under the title *The Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul*.

Pope St. John Paul II called St. Faustina “the great Apostle of Divine Mercy.” The revelations she received helped to increase devotion to God’s mercy through the worldwide publication of her diary and the Divine Mercy Image of Jesus (which was revealed in one of her visions); the praying of the Divine Mercy Chaplet and the Divine Mercy Novena; and the celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday each year on the Octave Day of Easter.

In her diary, the saint reports how an angel once took her to hell. Some readers of her notes may be puzzled that a book about God’s mercy should include a description of such a vision. Yet as with many other such visions, the visionary is permitted to see the punishment of the damned as an act of mercy toward others, so that her witness might convince them to avoid such a miserable fate. The Divine Justice and the Divine Mercy are inseparable, united forever in the one nature of God. To reflect on God’s justice deepens our gratitude for his mercy and compels us to repent and seek his mercy. And if his justice terrifies us, yet his mercy gives us hope. No wonder, then, that Our Lord instructed St. Faustina to include as a “signature” of the Divine Mercy Image the simple words: “Jesus, I trust in you.”

“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! “I saw my guardian angel, who ordered me to follow him. In a moment I was in a misty place full of fire in which there was a great crowd of suffering souls. They were praying fervently, but to no avail, for themselves; only we can come to their aid. The flames, which were burning them, did not touch me at all. My guardian angel did not leave me for an instant. I asked these souls what their greatest suffering was. They answered me in one voice that their greatest torment was longing for God. “I saw Our Lady visiting the souls in purgatory. The souls call her ‘The Star of the



Sea.' She brings them refreshment. I wanted to talk with them some more, but my guardian angel beckoned me to leave. We went out of that prison of suffering. [I heard an interior voice, which said] 'My mercy does not want this, but justice demands it. Since that time I am in closer communion with the suffering souls.'" (*Diary of St. Faustina* 20)

"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. "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. "But I noticed one thing: that most of the souls there are those who disbelieved that there is a hell. When I came to, I could hardly recover from the fright. How terribly souls suffer there!" (*Diary of St. Faustina*, 741)

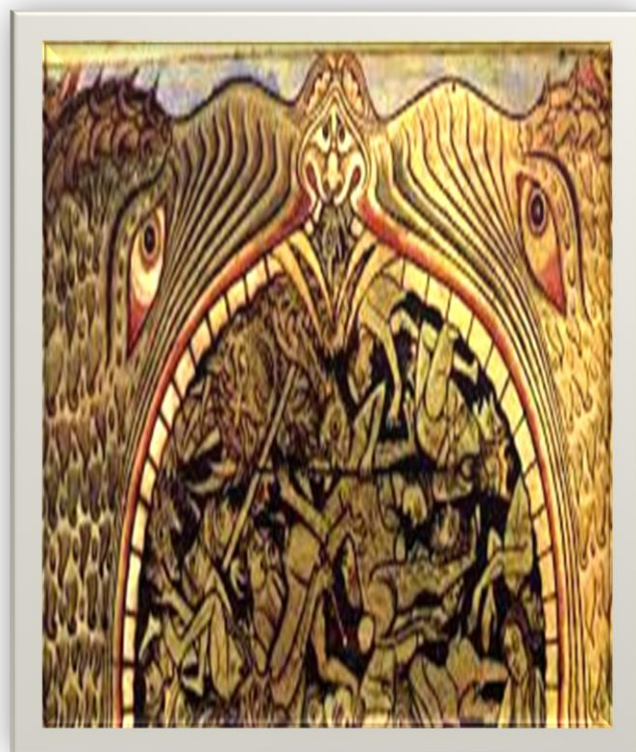
6. Saint Veronica Giuliani 1660-1727

Ursula Giuliani was born in Italy in the year 1660. Even from an early age this little girl was touched by God to fulfil His purpose in the world. Little Ursula would often insist on being taken to a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the baby Jesus, where she would say, "I am Yours, and You are all mine, dear Jesus!" Upon uttering this she would hear the response from the child Jesus, "I am yours, and you are mine!"



From an early age little Ursula was infused with a knowledge beyond her years and a heart that was full of love for all, but most especially the poor both physically and spiritually. When a poor man asked for some shoes Ursula gave him a pair of her own shoes, it was many year later that Jesus appeared to her and told her of her kindness to that beggar in these words, "These are the shoes you gave to Me when you were a little child. I was that beggar!" This was just one of many instances in which Ursula showed her love for the poor and impoverished. She also had a great love and devotion to spreading the Love of Jesus through His Passion which He suffered for love of sinners.

Several times, St. Veronica Giuliani was told about hell. By the order of God, have visited the Abysses of Hell so that I might tell souls about it and testify to its existence. The devils were full of hatred for me, but they had to obey me at the command of God, 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." (Diary 741) In one ecstasy, the Virgin Mary said to her: "Daughter, there are Christians who live like the beasts; there is no longer faith in the faithful; they live as if God does not exist; and my Son is holding the scourge in hand to punish them. Oh, how many priests, then, and how many religious (male & female) offend God! All of them stomp on the Sacraments, scorn the Most Precious Blood of Jesus and they keep it under their feet (they trample upon it). These people infect the Communities, entire cities; they are like the plague-stricken, they have the name of Christians, but they are worse than the infidels. Daughter, pray, fast and do penance, and have all the others do the same, so that God will put down the scourge." (D III, 999). One day the Virgin Mary described



to Saint Veronica certain places in Hell: “Daughter, I want you to describe the seven sites, the most painful, that are in Hell, and for whom they exist. The first is the location where Lucifer is shackled, and with him is Jude, who serves as his chair (seat), and there are all those who were followers of Jude. The second is the location where all the ecclesiastics (clergy / clerics) and the prelates of Holy Church, since being elevated in dignity and honors they have most perverted the faith, trampling the Blood of Jesus Christ, my Son, with many enormous sins. In the third location that you saw, there are all the souls of the male religious and the female religious. In the fourth, there are all the confessors, for having misled the souls of their penitents. In the fifth, there are all the souls of judges and of the governors of justice. The sixth location, instead, is that one destined for all the superiors (Mother Superiors/Father Superiors) of the religious. In the seventh, lastly, there are all those who wanted to live according to their own volition and have committed every sort of sin, especially carnal sins.” (D IV, 744). On another occasion, the Virgin turned to the Saint saying to her: “In a moment of rapture, you were brought into Hell to undergo new sufferings and, upon your arrival; you saw that many souls were plummeting down, and each one had their own place of torment. It was made known to you that these souls were from various nations, from all sorts of states, that is, of Christians and of infidels, of religious and of priests. These last ones are closer to Lucifer, and they suffer so much that the human mind cannot comprehend it. Upon the arrival of these souls, all of Hell celebrates and, in an instant, they experience all the torments of the damned for offending God.” (D IV, 353).

Jesus showed Sister Veronica hell, where the souls of unrepentant sinners chose to go to spend their eternity in its fiery depths, Sister Veronica wrote down in her diary what she saw. "At that moment I was once again shown hell opened, and it seems that many souls descended there, and they were so ugly and black that they struck terror in me." This holy sister upon seeing such a sight begged our Lord for mercy and prayed before the Divine Justice, with outstretched arms, "as long as I stand in the doorway, no one shall enter: O souls go back! My God, I ask nothing of You, but the salvation of sinners, Send me more torments, more crosses!" Our Lady appeared before Veronica and said to her, " Many do not believe that hell exists, and I tell you that you yourself, who have been there, have understood nothing of what hell is."

Jesus made two promises to Veronica about this diary: “The Lord himself made me understand I should write everything; because He wanted it; thus, and that these writings would be of great benefit to many souls; and that he wanted it to be for the whole of Christianity.” And on another occasion Jesus told her: “I inform you that I want to give special graces to whomever will trouble himself with this work. And I want everything, everything revealed. These are My works, my gifts, they are My singular graces, and all shall be for My glory.”

“After a long battle between human nature and the spirit, I suddenly seemed to experience something or other-I don’t know if it was recollection or rapture-which took me out of my own senses. But I was unable to understand what it was. At that very moment I think I had a vision of the Lord, who was leading me; I think he had

hold of my hand. I could hear harmonious sounds and angelic singing-in fact I think I was in heaven. “I remember I could see such a variety of things, but all seemed the delights of paradise. Then I saw a multitude of men and women saints. I think I also saw the Blessed Virgin. “I remember that the Lord gave me a great welcome. He was saying to everyone: ‘This one is ours now’, and then he turned to me and said: ‘Tell me what you want’. I asked Him for the grace to love Him and he seemed to communicate His love to me then and there. Several times He asked me what I was longing for. Now I can remember asking Him for three favors. One was that I should live up to the state of life I had undertaken; the second, that I should never depart from His holy will; and the third was that He would always keep me on the Cross with Him. “He promised to grant me everything. And He said to me: ‘I have chosen you for great things, but you will have to suffer much for love of Me.’ She had visions of souls that were about to fall into sin, and this made her suffer and increase her penances. Sometimes as a reward, Jesus would let her know of specific souls that had changed their ways and turned to Him. At other times, Jesus would let her know of a specific sinner that she needed to pray for. Sometimes she felt that Jesus wanted to give her a special grace and she would feel a longing for the conversion of sinners which would incite her to do more penances. Once when this happened, she took the crucifix that she had in her cell and said, “‘Lord, I won’t leave you until I feel that you want to convert a soul. Yes, my God, since my voice is not efficacious, let Your Holy Wounds speak for me.’ Suddenly I felt something new, as if I were outside myself. It seems to me that I understood that praying for sinners was so pleasing to the Lord. I showed off as if I was a mediator between God and sinners, but afterwards I felt it was presumptuous. I went to His feet to ask forgiveness.” Her longing to be a mediator between God and sinners was not a presumption as she thought, since it was later confirmed by Jesus himself. “I seem to remember that one time this crucifix told me with an audible voice: ‘My spouse, I am pleased with the charity you show towards those who are in my disgrace, that is why I confirm you as a mediator, something for which you have been longing.

On another occasion the Lord made her see some souls that were deformed and monstrous. Their sight terrified her so that she thought she would die. Then she heard a voice that told her: “For these there is no longer My mercy. They are and will be forever deprived of Me.” The she said: “Oh Lord, where is your pity? Who are these? Are they dead or alive?” She understood they were alive, and she heard the reply, “They are those who are dead to grace.

7. St. Catherine of Genoa “As Much Pain as in Hell”

St. Catherine of Genoa was a 15th century nun who spent much of her time caring for the sick, particularly those with the bubonic plague. She’s also famous for her mystical experiences of purgatory.

“No tongue can tell nor explain, no mind understands, the grievousness of purgatory. But I, though I see that there is in purgatory as much pain as in hell, yet see the soul which has the least stain of imperfection accepting purgatory, as I have said, as though it were a mercy, and holding its pains of no account as compared with the least stain which hinders a soul in its love. “I seem to see that the pain which souls in purgatory endure because of whatever in them displeases God, that is what they have wilfully done against his so great goodness, is greater than any other pain they feel in purgatory. And this is because, being in grace, they see the truth and the grievousness of the hindrance which stays them from drawing near to God.”

(Treatise on Purgatory)

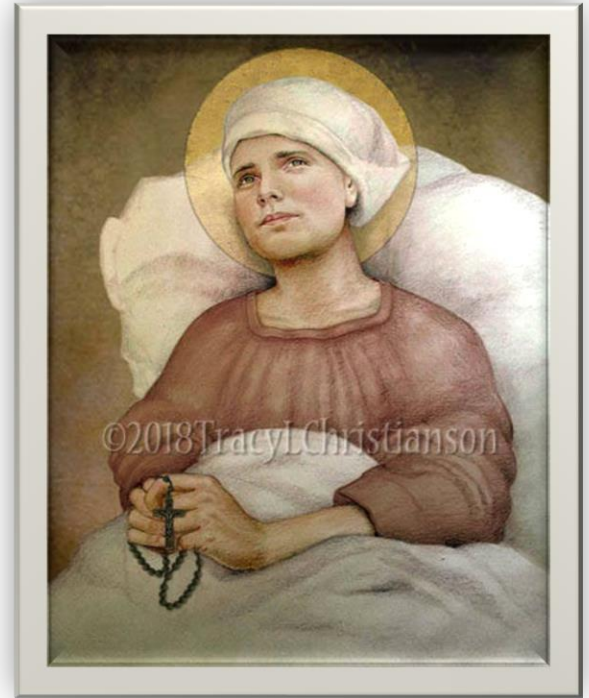


8. St. Lidwina of Schiedam “A Spirit All on Fire, Resembling Incandescent Metal”

St. Lidwina of Schiedam was a 15th century Dutch saint and mystic. As a teenager she had an ice-skating accident that left her debilitated the rest of her life. A sinful man was converted by her prayers and exhortation and was able to make a good confession, but he died soon after, unable to do much penance. After some time, she asked her guardian angel if he was still in purgatory, and she had this vision:

“He is there,’ said her angel, ‘and he suffers much. Would you be willing to endure some pain in order to diminish his?’ ‘Certainly,’ she replied, ‘I am ready to suffer anything to assist him.’

Instantly her angel conducted her into a place of frightful torture. ‘Is this, then, hell, my brother?’ asked the holy maiden, seized with horror. ‘No, sister,’ answered the angel, ‘but this part of purgatory is bordering upon hell.’ “Looking around on all sides, she saw what resembled an immense prison surrounded with walls of a prodigious height, the blackness of which, together with the monstrous stones, inspired her with horror. Approaching this dismal enclosure, she heard a confused noise of lamenting voices, cries of fury, chains, instruments of torture, violent blows which the executioners discharged upon their victims. This noise was such that all the tumult of the world, in tempest or battle, could bear no comparison to it. ‘What, then, is that horrible place?’ asked St. Lidwina of her good angel. ‘Do you wish me to show it to you?’ ‘No, I beseech you,’ said she, recoiling with terror, ‘the noise I hear is so frightful that I can no longer bear it; how, then, could I endure the sight of those horrors?’ “Continuing her mysterious route, she saw an angel seated sadly on the curb of a well. ‘Who is that angel?’ she asked of her guide. ‘It is,’ he replied, ‘the angel-guardian of the sinner in whose lot you are interested. His soul is in this well, where it has a special purgatory.’ At these words Lidwina cast an inquiring glance at her angel; she desired to see that soul which was dear to her,



and endeavor to release it from that frightful pit. Her angel, who understood her, having taken off the cover of the well, a cloud of flames, together with the most plaintive cries, came forth.” Do you recognize that voice?’ said the angel to her. ‘Alas! yes,’ answered the servant of God. ‘Do you desire to see that soul?’ he continued. On her replying in the affirmative, he called him by his name; and immediately our virgin saw appears at the mouth of the pit a spirit all on fire, resembling incandescent metal, which said to her in a voice scarcely audible, ‘O Lidwina, servant of God, who will give me to contemplate the face of the Most High?’ “The sight of this soul, a prey to the most terrible torment of fire, gave our saint such a shock that the cincture which she wore around her body was rent in twain; and, no longer able to endure the sight, she awoke suddenly from her ecstasy. The persons present, perceiving her fear, asked her its cause. ‘Alas!’ she replied, ‘how frightful are the prisons of Purgatory! It was to assist the souls that I consented to descend thither. Without this motive, if the whole world were given to me, I would not undergo the terror which that horrible spectacle inspired.’ “Some days later, the same angel whom she had seen so dejected appeared to her with a joyful countenance; he told her that the soul of his protégé had left the pit and passed into the ordinary purgatory. This partial alleviation did not suffice the charity of Lidwina; she continued to pray for the poor patient, and to apply to him the merits of her sufferings, until she saw the gates of heaven opened to him.” (*Purgatory*, by Fr. F. X. Schouppe, SJ, 16–19)