**Meditation on Hell**

Joseph Tetlow, S.J., *Choosing Christ in the World*

1.  I come into God's presence and offer myself to Him.

2.     Then, I compose myself in my real world. I consider how I live surrounded by conflict, violence and anger, in a deteriorating environment steeped in self-deception, untruth, and error, marred by terrorism and war. I have to make my way through all this.

3.     And now I ask of God what I yearn for: I ask God to let me feel the bone-deep sense of loss and pain that a person suffers who has lost love forever, so if I ever face a test, I will cling to God's love tenaciously.

*Then I consider Hell.*

1.           First, read Luke 16:19-31, Lazarus and the Rich Man.

2.          Then think about what Hell means.

•   First, alienation. We have inside ourselves an orien­tation toward others, and toward the Other, God. In Hell, we are orientated towards only ourself.

•   Second, loneliness. I miss others, but I cannot say who those others are.

•   Third, frus­tration. My whole self is meant to be an "alle­luia" spoken in praise and thanksgiving; in Hell, I can only snarl, frustrated of being my true self.

•  Fourth, absurdity. God wrote into myself those values—loyalty, fidelity, truth telling, honesty, service to others—that, being kept, would make me happy; but during my life, I chose other values that I demanded would make me happy—perhaps the values of pleasure, having power over others, feeling totally secure, spending money, and so on. Now, I know that the values I chose are ab­surd, without root in my own true self. I live absurd—now forever and ever.

3.         Then wonder what it would be like as a place. What are the sounds and sights of a place where people live totally for themselves? What does the atmosphere feel like, where ev­eryone lives lonely, selfish, and frustrated?

4.         For a while, imagine yourself in that condition. What kind of bitter anger would I feel at myself? Would I regret doing the things that got me here? Could I ever forgive myself?

*Finally, I turn to Jesus Christ and say something like this:*

Lord Jesus Christ, You have kept me from death after death, from the final loneliness. You have not let any creature send me down into death and into the pit. Oh, Lord, You have saved me and cherished me, even when I was mindless of You, maybe even when I really did not care about You. I can hardly believe such love; I can not understand it. Please, Lord, let me fear more than anything else that I might lose You and Your love . Let me name that loss Hell. You, Lord, keep me out of there. Amen.