

**CATHOLIC ANSWERS FOR TEENS...**

and others.

NIHIL OBSTAT

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IMPRIMATUR

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To

**Christ**

without Whom I Can Do Nothing!

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## APPENDIX

## **Introduction**

It is a tribute to our teenagers that today they ask questions. They learn that way.

Objectively, our opinions are as good as our reasons behind them. So, too, our faith must have reasons behind it, or it becomes superstition.

It is the Church's responsibility to answer questions for our Catholic youth, and it is their responsibility to listen to the answers.

Since this life is like a drop compared to the ocean of eternity, it behooves us to please our Creator, our judge and our loving Savior. It does take effort, but God is worth every bit of our effort to search out any truth about God.

The following pages are to give answers to our teens, for themselves and for others who might question the Catholic faith. These questions were given to me by our Youth Ministers, asking me to give answers.

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## HOW DO WE KNOW THAT GOD IS FOR REAL?

We know there is a Supreme Being from the order and design of creation, just from reason alone. Wherever there is enormous order and design, we know that an intelligent mind has put it together. Take the back of a watch, pull out all the parts with wheels, springs, little axles, etc., then throw them on the floor in pieces and see if they start telling time.

Go to a bicycle factory and see a pile of steel tubing, a box of spokes, wheel rims, handlebars, pedals and boxes of nuts and screws; come back the next day. If you see a means of transportation, you know that an intelligent being put them together in a certain way for transportation. It could not happen by chance.

Look at the human body, with its circulatory system, its digestive system, its respiratory system and reproductive system. These systems could never have fallen together by chance. Simply too much order and design. Even with the big bang theory, there had to be an intelligent mind to guide the landing of the planets so that we have an incredible order and design for this tiny satellite, the earth, 1/millionth the size of the sun, whirling on its axis at the rate of thousands of miles an hour, giving us day and night with a speed of 1000 miles a minute, giving us the seasons of the year, with gravity, oxygen and water to give us the survival of human life. With this kind of order there has to be a SUPREME BEING and INTELLECT. There is a Supreme Intellect. This we call God!

## **CAN A CATHOLIC BELIEVE IN EVOLUTION?**

Yes, a Catholic can believe in Evolution. One of our greatest saints in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, St. Augustine, said if God created, in the beginning, some animals, insects, fish and sea life, it is a greater glory to God to arrange for something to develop from a lower state to a higher state or to a different form of species.

The Church does not teach that the evolution of man's body is impossible. The body could have come from a well-developed ape and then God breathed a human soul into it.

The Church does teach, in the doctrine of Original Sin, that all humans came from one set of parents.

Science now recognizes the scientific theory that all humanity came from a single set of parents. It seems God could easily breathe "human life" into an ape, with the human life more to His own image, intellect, free will and eternity.

## WHAT DOES THE BOOK OF GENESIS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT EVOLUTION?

First, all Scripture SCHOLARS, Protestant, Jewish and Catholic, agree that the first eleven chapters of Genesis with two different descriptions of creation and two different narratives of the Flood, are a poetic introduction to the historic section that starts with Chapter 12. With this understanding, the Scriptures do not pretend to estimate the age of the earth nor the length of time that man existed, nor the details of creation.

The sacred writer, about 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. was teaching that God is the creator of all things in the universe. God certainly did not have to rest on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, but that was mentioned to remind the Jews to rest on the Sabbath. Noah would need far more than 200 boats to carry one species of every animal and insect as we have them today.

With two different narratives of creation and two narratives of the flood (one has the flood lasting 150 days, another 40 days) the author of Genesis never expected for those first 11 chapters to be taken literally.

The scholars call their study the study of the “Literary Forms” or “styles of writing” of the Sacred Scriptures.

The “fundamentalist” who reads the Old Testament, literally, suffers from a lack of scholarship and his ignorance has begotten for him many difficulties, such as the apparent conflict between religion and science.

## WHY ISN'T GOD MORE VISIBLE TO US?

Seeing God face to face is not necessary to believing in God. We don't see electricity and still know it exists by what it does. Reason tells us we know of God's existence through His visible creation. There is a curtain drawn between God and us, between the next world and this world. However, that curtain is lifted periodically, and there is an obligation to take note of this since we owe God for our very existence.

The curtain was lifted greatly by Jesus of Nazareth, who claimed to be human as well as God. This claim would never be accepted except that the one God in heaven backed up Jesus' claim by those "MIRACLES". The definition of a miracle is:

1. a sensible sign;
2. completely beyond the laws of nature;
3. done by God;
4. to back up truth.

The curtain has been lifted a bit on occasions, by apparitions of Jesus down through the centuries. He appeared to St. Paul, to St. Margaret Mary, to St. Faustina, to St. Catherine of Siena and many others.

There also have been apparitions of Jesus' mother at Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe, and many other places. With these, especially at Lourdes, France, there are these "sensible" signs, beyond the laws of nature, done by God to back up truth. The truth is "there is the other side of the curtain" and the validity of the claims of the visionary around whom the miracle exists. Anyone can claim one is having a vision, but the Church insists on miracles to believe the claimant.

As the bishop said to Juan Diego (1531), who claimed Mary was appearing to him, "I need a 'sign' from heaven." When Juan Diego saw Mary the next time and told her about the Bishop's request, she arranged roses (in December) in his mantilla. She told Diego to show the roses to the Bishop. When Diego opened his mantilla for the Bishop, the roses fell to the floor and the bishop fell to his knees when he saw the picture of Mary.

The sign was given and the bishop believed. Without the miraculous picture on Diego's tilma, why should anyone believe what Diego was saying? Scientists still can't determine the pigments of the color of this picture, which is still intact since 1531.

The devil can do preternatural things, BUT NOT IN THE NAME OF GOD, else God loses His power to put His stamp of approval on what He is saying or ratifying.

In 2015, LIFE magazine put out an edition entirely on the subject of miracles, with the front cover of a statue of Mary and the words: *Miracles, the Sign of God's Presence in Our Midst* (exact words). Our Sunday Visitor (2016) just published a book on the entire study of miracles entitled *Exploring the Miraculous*.

Why isn't God more visible to us? The answer is simple: He demands faith. He gives us all the reason to believe, then we must use our free will to believe. WE CAN'T TELL GOD WHAT TO DO! He makes the rules. With the miracles of Jesus in the early Church, and even today, God then tells us to look at all the evidence He has given us and BELIEVE.

There was a heavy flow of miracles in the early Church to get it started. There are still many miracles today, but not as many since we have the credible history of the past miracles in the Church. Every time the pope officially declares someone is in heaven, it must be proven that two first class miracles were worked by God through the intercession of that person, proposed to be a person in heaven.

Without miracles, who in the world would ever believe in Jesus of Nazareth, condemned and nailed to a cross until death? There are eleven recorded apparitions in the Gospels. On one occasion, 500 people gave testimony that they saw Him. We literally needed the great miracle of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

## **DO CATHOLICS BELIEVE IN THE BIBLE, ESPECIALLY THE NEW TESTAMENT?**

First, it is most important to see the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke as the best historical documents of the ancient Mediterranean world. The life and works of Jesus are verified by the Jewish historian, Josephus, and the Roman historian, Tacitus.

The historic documents of Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell us that Jesus founded a Church, a teaching Church. These history books present the Church with teaching authority. The Church then turned around and said these three Gospels are more than history. They are inspired by God in a unique way.

Since there were and are 20 different Gospels, it required God's teaching Church to tell us which ones are "inspired" in a unique way by God. The Catholic Church council (Council of Hippo, 393 A.D., Council of Carthage, 397 A.D.) taught that four were inspired - the three history books and the Gospel of St. John. Also, out of the five Acts of the Apostles, the one by St. Luke is the one taught by the Church to be inspired. There were hundreds of letters, and only certain ones were taught by the Catholic Bishops and the Pope to be part of the present New Testament. These other writings still exist today. So, our Protestant friends literally take our word for which books are inspired (Council of Hippo 393; Council of Carthage 397, etc.). Ultimately, the Council of Trent (1545-1563), with the pope and the Catholic bishops, irrevocably claimed 27 Books of the New Testament inspired by God.

Catholics treasure the Bible as the Word of God. However, the New Testament, as with the Old Testament, did not come down from heaven on a silver plate. If we did not have the historians telling us about Christ founding a teaching Church, Christians would have so many more, and different, books in the New Testament. And what assurances would we have that all of these are inspired by God?

**A FRIEND TOLD ME THAT CATHOLICS ARE NOT CHRISTIANS.  
IS THAT TRUE?**

The exact opposite is true. For the first 16 centuries of Christianity, the Christians were called Catholics. The early Christians were getting so numerous that St. Ignatius of Antioch, in the year 109 A.D., said they are becoming universal. So, they adopted the name Catholic, which means “universal”. Catholics were the first Christians and remain extremely Christian. Just check all the endings and the content of our prayers. It is all offered to the Father through Christ. We are so very Christian.

## **WHY DO WE NEED A POPE?**

First, we need a pope to help our unity. For 16 centuries, there was a united Christianity, but with the Protestant Reformation, the idea to reform the Church from the outside instead of the inside caused many to leave the Church the way Christ founded it. Secondly, once we see from the Scriptures that Christ founded a Church with one person in supreme control, only He could change that essential characteristic of His Church.

In summary, as far as needing a pope..., we need the Pope because that is the way Christ founded His Church. Secondly, for the sake of unity, one man in supreme control helps that unity.

## DID CHRIST REALLY MAKE PETER THE HEAD OF HIS CHURCH?

In Matthew 16, Jesus promised Peter that he would be the rock on which Jesus would build His Church.

As long as Christ was visible to His Church during His public life on earth, there was no need to give Peter supreme authority and, so, at Caesarea Philippi, Christ only *promised* him the authority. The incident began when Christ asked His Apostles: "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, Son of the Living God." It was then that Christ made His promise and said:

"Blessed are you Simon Bar Jona; because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to you: You are Peter and upon this *rock* I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. . . . And I will give to you the *keys* of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall *bind* on earth shall be *bound* in heaven, and whatever you shall *loose* on earth shall be *loosed* in heaven." (Matt. 16:16-18)

The other Apostles undoubtedly were disturbed, and Peter was probably shocked at the meaning of such a statement. This was a promise of vast authority repeated in three distinct metaphors: the symbol of the rock, the bearer of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the supreme lawmaker.

When Christ said to Peter: "Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jona . . . I say to you, you are Peter and upon this Rock I will build My Church," He changed his name from Simon to Peter, which means rock. We lose the impact of this new name in the English translation, in which two different words were used, "Peter" and "rock." In Latin, Greek, French and especially Aramaic, the language Christ spoke, there is only one word for the proper name of Peter and "rock," so that the passage really sounds like this: "I say to you, you art Rock and upon this rock I will build My Church."

In the days of Christ, buildings were founded upon hard ground – rock. Such a foundation was to give the building strength, stability and permanence. Peter (the Rock) was to give these same qualities to the visible society, which Christ was building and which He called His Church.

Christ was not referring to Himself as the Rock, but to Peter. The demonstrative pronoun "this" compels one to make a grammatical identification of "rock" with "Peter." ("Thou art Rock and upon this rock, I will build My Church.") Otherwise, the phrase "And upon *this* rock" would be without meaning. There is a further clarification in the context when one considers the following verse: "I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Again, Christ expressed the same idea: Peter will have supreme authority as the bearer of the keys.

When Christ told Peter: "And I shall give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven," it was like saying: "I will give you supreme authority over My Church." One meaning of the expression "kingdom of heaven" is "Church". There are places in Scripture where the expression "kingdom of heaven" obviously means the Church. On one occasion, Christ said: "The kingdom of heaven is like a net which is cast into the sea and it gathers in all kinds of fish, good and bad; and finally on the shore the good are separated from the bad." (Matthew 13:47-49)

The symbol of the keys, especially in the East, had been considered a symbol of power and authority; the giving of the keys to someone indicated a transfer of this power and authority. Christ thereby promised to Peter the supreme authority over His Church.

When Christ said, "Whatever you bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is loosed in heaven," He was using a metaphor frequently used in the Old Testament in reference to the making and relaxing of the laws. "Binding" meant establishing laws, commandments and censures for one's subjects. "Loosing" meant relaxing the laws or punishments.

The fact that Christ *promised* to give Peter supreme authority is sufficient to establish Peter's primacy over the Church. Still, we read in the Gospel according to St. John of a formal transfer of Christ's authority over to Peter.

After the Resurrection, Christ appeared to His disciples at the shore of Lake Tiberias and worked another miracle. They had not caught a single fish all night. In the morning, Jesus appeared and told them to go to "the other side of the boat." Now, the nets are about to break and Peter, by

himself, jumped in the water to greet Jesus. The following conversation ensued:

“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these do?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord, you know that that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you Love me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” A third time He said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed My sheep.” (John 21:15-17)

Christ solemnly entrusted the care of His flock to St. Peter by telling him to “feed” His flock. Even though the word “feed” is very picturesque and effective, in the original Greek in which the Gospel was written, it is even more expressive of the authority received by Peter. The Greek word employed for “feed” means “to be shepherd over.” In the Old and New Testaments, it meant “to rule with authority.” Pagan classical writers used its equivalent noun, Shepherd or Pastor, as synonymous with King or Ruler. Christ told Peter three times to be Shepherd of His flock and to rule them.

There can be no doubt that the “sheep” in the above quotations are Christ’s faithful. Did he not frequently speak of Himself as the Good Shepherd and One Who even gives His life for His flock?

Christ, having risen from the dead, was ready to ascend into heaven; but before doing so, He made Peter the shepherd over His flock – to lead, rule, and govern them.

After the Ascension of Christ, Peter began to exercise his authority in the following ways: (1) *Peter* proposed the election of a successor to Judas (Acts 1:16-16); (2) *Peter* showed his teaching authority as he preached the first sermon on Pentecost day (Acts 2:14-16); (3) when Peter and John were on the way to the Temple and came across the man lame from birth, it was *Peter* who performed the first miracle; (4) *Peter* was the one to whom God gave a vision explaining that the Mosaic rites of purification were no longer required (Acts 10:1-48); (5) filled with the Holy Spirit, *Peter* defended the other apostles before Annas and Caiaphas (Acts 4:8-12); and (6) at the Council of Jerusalem, *Peter* was obviously in charge and settled the "Gentile

Question" for the Church (Acts 15:6-11).

Peter's power of universal jurisdiction was not a personal privilege. It was not given primarily for Peter's personal gratification, but rather as a benefit for those over whom he rules. Therefore, the duration of Peter's primacy is not to be measured in terms of the brief span of Peter's mortal life, but by the ever-increasing centuries of the Church's existence.

Christ Himself planned the organizational construction of His Church. When He promised Peter the keys of His kingdom on earth, in the same breath, He promised perpetuity to His Church: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 28:16). Another time He said: "I will be with you all days even to the end of time" (Matthew 28:20). As the Church lives through the centuries, it retains the organizational makeup given it by Christ, its Founder. Since Christ did not change the organization of His Church, the office of Peter remains as permanent as the Church.

At the death of St. Peter in the year 67 A.D., many members of the Church were contemporaries of Christ – people who had seen and heard Christ. They knew the mind of Christ better than anyone in the 16th or 21st centuries, and they immediately elected someone to fill Peter's place as the leader of the Church. Linus was the first successor of Peter, and when he was martyred in the year 76 A.D., Cletus was elected and reigned until his martyrdom in 88 A.D. After Cletus, Clement ruled the Church. After Clement, Avaristus, and so on down to Pope Francis.

## WHY DO WE HAVE TO LIVE BY FAITH?

Scripture tells us that the ways of the Lord are strange; they are not the ways of men. Most men in the world today, if they had their choice, would not live by faith. They would choose to see God frequently, even daily, face-to-face. They would like to step out of their homes and look up at the sky and see God somewhere in the heavens, perhaps next to the sun. They would fall on their knees before their visible God and give Him an hour's adoration in their backyard or from the front porch. In the morning, they would ask the Supreme Being His will for them and they would prepare to live through the day with dedication and zeal. Whenever they went outdoors or looked out the window, they would see the satisfying nod of approval from God. Their evening prayers would be said with regular devotion as they knelt outdoors seeing their God. No matter how tired, they would kneel up straight and complete their prayers as they saw their God. But God does not operate this way with men. He has His own ways – and they are not the ways of men. Man must live not by his own ways, but by the ways of God. Man must live by faith.

Rewards of Faith: The main reward of faith is not in this life but in the next. A few instances of immediate rewards for faith have been seen by some in this life, a glimpse of how the scales of God's justice deal with man's faith in God.

There was a centurion of pagan Rome who suddenly believed in the God of Israel and who asked Christ to heal his fatally sick servant. He had so much faith in Christ that he said all Christ had to do was to say the word and his servant would be healed. Jesus turned to the crowds following Him and marveled, saying that He had not found such great faith in all of Israel. St. Matthew (8:5-13) writes that the servant was healed at that hour.

Because faith depends on the free will of a person and there is a reward for this faith, given all the motives for credibility, one is expected to move that free will to believe. So, too, using the free will not to believe is an offense against God and merits punishment.

## IS THE WILL FREE? WHAT ABOUT PREDESTINATION?

Through his personal experience, man knows he has a free will. Everyone is conscious of the power to choose one way or the other in performing certain actions. When one way, rather than another, is chosen, one knows that he has acted freely and that he could have chosen the other way. As you are reading now, you know that you have the free choice to stop reading or to continue reading. Innumerable are the examples of personal experience in which a person is conscious of the freedom that lies within oneself.

Those who deny the freedom of the will make the mistake of confusing “influence” with “destruction”. The will can be influenced by environment, circumstances and emotions, even by habit, but this influence, though it can be strong, does not destroy, but weakens the freedom of the will. Many men have been influenced by the emotion of anger to kill someone, but because they had the freedom of choice, they chose not to kill. The circumstances of poverty have influenced the poor to steal, but there are those who have resisted this influence. The environment of life in the backwoods has influenced many not to get an education, but there are those, like Abraham Lincoln, who willed to overcome the influence of their environment. Because the will can be influenced, there are those who believe that it is not free. Every good psychologist admits the will can be influenced (freedom is lessened by emotions or habit). The knowledge of human behavior from the past and the personal experience in the present demonstrates that this influence can be overcome, thereby showing that the will is intrinsically free.

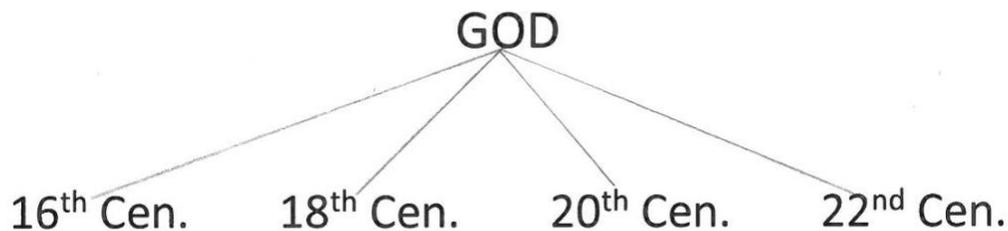
If God knows everything, even the way our free will moves, then does this not destroy our free will?

There are some for whom the fact of God’s knowledge of future events (which depend on the free will of man) presents a difficulty. A frequently mentioned example is the case of Judas Iscariot. Christ prophesied that Judas would betray Him, and those who believe that Christ is God say that Judas had no choice. He had to betray Christ because Christ – God – foretold that he would, and God cannot be wrong.

First, we note that two things are certain: 1) man knows from his own experiences that he is free, and; 2) God has infinite knowledge. (If God were ignorant of future events, He would not be all knowing and, therefore, would not be God.)

Second, we establish the fact that there is no “cause and effect” relationship between God’s knowledge of the future and man’s actions. If, for example, you decide to stop reading within a minute, God knows you will. But, His knowledge of this fact does not stop you within a minute. You know that you can read on for five minutes and stop. If you change your mind about stopping after a minute and decide to read for another five minutes, God knew that you would change your mind, but He did not cause your decision.

Third, we admit that there is a problem, or, shall we say, a mystery, in that God knows the future which depends on the free will of man. The mystery lies in God’s infinite knowledge, which teases man’s probing and groping mind. Man does not understand God’ knowledge and must admit it is a mystery. It is a secret that God has within Himself. He does not have to explain everything to man, but rather, man should realize and respect God’s right to His secrets.



The above diagram of the pyramid might be helpful in understanding the existence of the mystery of God’s knowledge. God is at the top and looks down and sees everything in the present, whether it is in the 16th or 21<sup>st</sup> century. God is above time, but man does not understand this because he tends to think of God in human terms. The finite intellect must be content to know that God is on a higher level than man and that His knowledge is not restricted by time.

## WHY DO CATHOLICS BELIEVE IN THE REAL PRESENCE OF JESUS IN THE CONSECRATED BREAD AND WINE?

We believe in Jesus' presence simply because He said so. In John, Chapter 6, one year before the Last Supper, when Jesus first talked about His Eucharistic presence, after a long dialogue with the people over Him being the Bread of Life, Jesus said that His flesh was "true food" and His blood was "true drink." He emphasized it and they took Him literally. They walked away. He let them go because He had to have meant it literally or He would have called them back. He asked His apostles if they too wanted to leave. They did not understand why or how He meant it literally, either. Peter spoke up and said leaving Jesus was not an option. Jesus meant it literally and would not call them back!

At our Lord's final supper, Jesus took bread and said: "This is my Body and this is my Blood" when He could have said this "symbolizes" my flesh and blood. He told His apostles to "continue to do this in My memory!"

When you love someone you want to be close to that person. Jesus figured out a way that He could have a physical presence that would get so close to us, as in the Eucharist. Being God, Jesus can do anything, even contain Himself under the appearance of bread and wine. Why would he do it? He would do it for the same reason He hung on the cross in agony: because He loves us so much.

When our Lord most solemnly pronounced the bread to be His body and the cup of wine to be His blood, the reason He told them to do what He did was so all of His followers could receive Him in the Eucharist.

We have the word of Jesus! How powerful is His word? It is by His sheer word that the wind and waves became suddenly calm. By His word, the deaf could hear, the blind see, the lepers were healed and the dead came back to life. His word is that strong and powerful. So we believe in His mysterious and real presence in the Eucharist because of the power of His word.

The writings in the second, third, fourth, and fifth centuries of the Church by the saintly Fathers are called Patrology or Patristics. These early saintly scholars have all written in such a clear way that when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we truly have the living Christ contained in the consecrated bread and wine.

**“When Jesus said, ‘This is my blood,’ no one can say it is not His blood.”** (St. Cyril, fourth century)

If the Lord was truly present in the bread and wine at the Last Supper for His apostles, how can we say He would not be present for us? If **He says** He is present, how can **we say** He is not? When Jesus stays in the Eucharist for our bodily consumption, in the tabernacle for the sick and for our adoration, it seems that He loves us **too much**. It is true. He does love us far more than our human standards would allow. Isn't this the same with the Crucifixion for the forgiveness of our sins?

## WHY DO CATHOLICS GO TO MASS EVERY SUNDAY AND SOMETIMES DURING THE WEEK?

If you ever wonder why you are going to Mass or “why not skip,” the answer is “I am a creature of God and MUST worship Him by making an offering to Him.” At the Mass we “RE-OFFER CHRIST TO HIS HEAVENLY FATHER.” We also offer our own works, joys, and sufferings in union with the offering of Jesus. Someone warned me one time after personal surgery: “Don’t let that suffering go to waste!” In other words: “Be sure to offer your suffering to God.”

As long as man has been on this earth, he has felt the desire to offer things to the Creator for the following reasons: adoration and praise, thanksgiving for favors, petitions, and reparations for offenses. The Hottentots tribe of ancient times offered sacrifices in Africa. The Aztec Indians offered human sacrifices in Mexico. The Israelites in the desert and in the Promised Land offered corn, wine, oil, sheep, bullocks, and doves; in short all kinds of animals and grain. In the book of Leviticus we read how God expected offerings.

At Mass, Jesus presents that same offering once made on Calvary. After the priest says the words of the consecration, he says this prayer of offering: “In memory of His death and resurrection, **WE offer** You this LIFE-GIVING BREAD AND THIS SAVING CUP,” the greatest sacrifice of all time is offered.

St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. Chapter 11) in speaking of the re-enacting of the Lord’s Supper:

“As often as you do this, you proclaim the death of the Lord  
Until He comes.”

When we proclaim His death, we proclaim His offering to the Father. We dare to join in with Christ and offer Christ to His Father.

My favorite picture is that of the crucified Christ offered into the arms of the Father. It is truly Christ offering, again, the sacrifice of Calvary transcending time and space.

God is serious about those Ten Commandments. That commandment to keep holy the Sabbath for the Jewish people was Saturday. The Spirit of the Commandment is that one day of the seven is dedicated to God. From the

beginning, that great day of the week was Sunday for the Christians, because Jesus rose from the dead on that day. He really wants that day for Himself. That's why Catholics go to Mass on Sundays. To ignore His invitation to worship Him, as He offers Himself to the Father for our sins, could obviously be serious. Though difficult, we should want to offer this Holy Sacrifice if we have any commitment to God.

We also read the Bible before the "sacrificial" part of the Mass. Every three years we cover the whole Bible. That is why Catholics participate at Mass!

## WHY DO CATHOLICS PRAY TO THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN?

In the Apostles Creed, which goes back to the time of the Apostles, it states that we believe in the communion of saints. This means there is a union between those who are on this earth and those with God.

At the wake in the Rite of Christian burial, we read:

“We believe that the ties of friendship and affection which knit us as one do not unravel in death.” (Ritual)

If we ask our friends and relatives to pray for us while we are together on earth, why would we stop asking them to pray for us if they are with God in heaven? The saints simply help us pray to God.

The saints don't answer our prayers. God answers our prayers of petition. The saints simply help us pray to God.

## WHY EXTRA DEVOTION TO MARY?

If you would like to honor someone in a different way, honor their mother, because it is their mother and you will please that person, greatly. If I think a great deal of a person, I will honor the mother; it is another way of pleasing that person.

Jesus is number one, our Savior, our Redeemer, the God-man who loves us beyond description. So, we honor His mother as another way of pleasing Him.

Mary could not have appeared one time on this earth in the past 21 centuries unless this is what Jesus wanted. She appeared at Guadalupe, Mexico, at Fatima, Portugal, at Rue de Bac Convent in Paris, France, at Lourdes, France and the list goes on. Her message is always, "listen to my Son." Jesus has made her an apostle down through the centuries, and He wants His mother honored.

In Luke's Gospel, it states that the angel addressed her as FULL OF GRACE. She could not have had any more of God's help and His life within her. If we were God, would we not have created our mother the best human possible? Secondly, at the wedding feast of Cana, she showed that if she asks her son to stop the embarrassment of the wedding party running out of wine, He would listen to her and even change His time table, saying His hour had not come. However, He did what she asked. He stopped the embarrassment of running out of wine for the bride and groom because His mother asked Him.

She has great intercessory power. So, Catholics ask her to help them pray. We also honor Jesus when we honor Mary.

## **PURGATORY IS NOT IN THE BIBLE. WHY BELIEVE IN IT?**

About 200 years before Christ, Judas Maccabee was the religious and military leader of the Jews. **As a religious leader**, he professed a belief in PURGATORY. He did not use the word, but he had prayers and offerings made for his dead soldiers. If they went to heaven, prayer did them no good. If they went to hell, prayer did them no good. He must have believed that prayers could help them.

The Book of Maccabee has been in the Christian-Catholic Bible, since the beginning of the New Testament times. Luther did not believe in purgatory so he took this book out of the Bible.

The Bible clearly states there is a “hell”, eternal punishment. The concept of never, ever, getting any relief from horrible punishment makes one easily believe in a state of “temporary” purgation.

Yes, the more that people believe in hell, the more they tend to believe in purgatory. In the book of Revelations (21:27), it states that “nothing defiled will enter the kingdom of heaven.”

St. Paul says in his writings that he makes up in his body that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. There is nothing lacking in Jesus’ suffering of Christ, but we must do something to make up for our sins. Scripture does tell us: “Charity covers a multitude of sins”.

The point of demarcation between God’s mercy and God’s justice is hidden from us on this side of the grave. As stated above, the traditional belief in a state of temporary suffering actually predates Jesus as we read in the Old Testament (2<sup>nd</sup> Maccabees, Chapter 12).

## WHAT ARE INDULGENCES, AND DIDN'T LUTHER LEAVE THE CHURCH BECAUSE HE OBJECTED TO THEM?

Luther objected to the WAY indulgences were **preached**, specifically by the Dominican, Fr. Tetzl. The Dominican was raising money for the building of St. Peter's in Rome and taught that, if one gave the money to the Pope, God would indulge one with mercy. Luther was right in his criticism, because it takes more than money to get an indulgence from the "remains" of sin. Guilt is forgiven by our sorrow, and the sufferings of Jesus offered for our sins, but there is some making up to God for the "remains" of sin. St. Paul said: "I make up in my body that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ." Our sins can be forgiven because of the offering of Jesus' on the cross for our sins, but we have to do something. As Paul said: "Charity covers a multitude of sins." It means that extra generosity to others helps us take care of the "remains" of sin.

So, there is the difference between the forgiveness of the guilt and the temporary punishment due to sin. It is like Johnny who was told not to play ball close to the kitchen window. Then, CRASH, the window is broken. He tells his mother he is sorry and she sweetly tells him that he is forgiven, but she tells him he has to stay in the house and help her clean for a couple of hours.

Indulgences are a reality with such a loving God. Jesus told Peter, "Whatever you bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16-17)

Indulge means to lessen the debt so to speak. We might use the word "spoil". My parents indulged me, spoiled me, and went beyond what was fair and generous. The Church's correct teaching on Indulgences is that if we say certain prayers and perform good, specific works, and if we are devoid of any attachment to sin, with the power given to St. Peter and His successors, there is given, on behalf of God, a lessening of the purging process due us in that place of purgation we call Purgatory.

We really don't know what that purification process is in what we call purgatory. Some people are not bad enough to go to hell and not good enough to go straight to heaven. I do believe that there are many very good souls who go straight to heaven.

There are plenary indulgences (complete remission of all the temporal punishment due to sin) and partial indulgences. Examples of gaining partial indulgences are:

- a. Raising one's mind to God with short prayers;
- b. Serving those in need;
- c. Visiting the Blessed Sacrament;
- d. Making a thanksgiving after Communion
- e. Other prayers, and always with prayer, as in the case of serving those in need.

The above are a few examples of indulgences given by God through the Church. This is not to limit God's own power to grant indulgences outside of the Church. The great value of indulgences through the Church is that it reminds us of the reality of indulgences and the certainty thereof. It is only in heaven that one will know for sure and to what degree the mercy of God has shown extra mercy to sinners.

## WHY DO CATHOLICS CONFESS SINS TO A PRIEST?

We read in many places in the Gospels that Jesus forgave people their sins. When Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His apostles, He told them they could use His power to forgive sins. He said to them on Easter Sunday:

“...Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven;  
Whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.” (John 20, 23)

When He did this, He left with His Church His own power to forgive sins. The priest only uses Christ’s power to forgive sins.

No one likes to go to confession, but everyone likes coming back from confession. One feels healed and relieved of a burden.

The Church does not say this is the only way that sins are forgiven. We can tell God we are sorry for sins and He is willing to forgive. However, if one has committed a mortal sin (serious matter, with full consent of the will and adequate reflection) a Catholic must receive the sacrament of Penance (Confession).

If our motivation is sorrow from a pure love of God for His own sake, and not the punishment due to us, even mortal sin is forgiven directly by God; but since no one can be absolutely sure of one’s motives, the Church tells us to play it safe and confess all mortal sins.

The only exception to not telling the mortal sins is a circumstance, such as the person can’t remember, is in a hospital with no privacy, or is in so much in pain one cannot remember. But sorrow for sins has no exception. One must be sorry for all the offenses against God.

When a Protestant minister converts to Catholicism, it is usually because of the Papacy or the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Once, a minister converted and told me he was looking for a Church that exercises the words of Jesus on Easter Sunday; the words of Jesus telling His apostles they could use His power to forgive sins.

## HOW DO WE KNOW IF WE ARE SAVED?

First, we are obliged to believe in a Supreme Being and commit to His will. In Paul's Epistle to the Romans he states that the order and design of creation is so obvious to man that man, with his intellect, is bound to believe in a Supreme Being. Only God knows what happens to people who die without the use of reason. We have to let God be God and cannot demand to know all of His secrets.

Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) encountered Christ and said, "...You are from God, what must I do to be saved?" Jesus answered, "Nicodemus, you must be born again." Nicodemus took this statement as a physical rebirth and questioned Jesus. Jesus replies, "...born again of water and the Holy Spirit", which means "baptism".

So, the answer is simply, we are saved if we believe in Jesus and do what He wants us to do. Also, one must live the faith that one possesses.

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who approaches Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." (Heb. 11:6)

If we know He wants us to be baptized, we have that obligation. Some people want what God wants, but do not know Christianity. We call that Baptism of Desire.

Catholics believe that sincere Protestants can be saved in that they have God's grace from baptism, sermons, singing of hymns, prayers and the reading of Scriptures and sermons (Vatican II – "Ecumenism").

Catholics also believe that the Catholic Church is formed the way Jesus formed it, with one in supreme control, the Pope, and with all the direct successors to Peter to the present Pope Francis. We believe that this and the Eucharist gives us the "fullness of Christianity", and if one is aware of this, one is obliged to pursue it.

## **DO CATHOLICS BELIEVE THAT PROTESTANTS ARE VALIDLY MARRIED?**

Absolutely, provided it is the first marriage for both, or if a previous spouse is deceased, even if the marriage is by a judge.

If both Protestant parties are baptized, we believe they have a “sacrament”, a sacred sign that gives grace.

In the Catholic Church, we adhere to “marriage is for life”.

The “annulment” process in the Catholic Church is, with a Church court, making a judgement on whether the marriage was valid. If for any of 11 reasons it was not valid according to the Church, it is still a civil marriage and the children are not considered “illegitimate”. If for any of the 11 reasons the marriage was not valid and declared such by a Church court, the annulment process allows a Catholic to marry again. One example of the eleven reasons would be if a person married without freedom – under social pressure.

## **WHY DO CATHOLICS HAVE MORE BOOKS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THAN PROTESTANTS?**

The word CANON in the Scriptures means the number of books in the Sacred Scripture.

Protestants and Catholics have the same number of books in the New Testament today. Before Christ, the Jews had two different “canons”. The Jews centered around Jerusalem and the leaders of the Israelites saw something sacred about 39 of their books. Around the year 250 B.C., many Jews migrated to Alexandria, Egypt, and they requested 70 scholars who knew Hebrew and Greek to come to Alexandria and make a translation of those 39 books. As Jewish history rolled on, the Jews in Alexandria with the rabbis found other writings which they declared to be also inspired by God (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Maccabees, Judith, Tobias, Wisdom, Baruch and Ecclesiasticus). It was this Alexandrian canon that the New Testament writers used as a reference in their writings.

Early Christian writers considered these 7 books also uniquely inspired by God, along with the other 39, giving Christians 46 books in the Old Testament for centuries. As we look at the early centuries of the Church, as we have mentioned, it is the Church councils which decided which of the hundreds of letters, Gospels and Acts were inspired. So, too, it is Church authority which decided for the Church which of the two, Jerusalem or Alexandrian, canons has the full set of Old Testament inspired books.

For 1600 years, Christianity adhered to the Alexandrian lists (canon), until Martin Luther, who took issue with the Church’s long teaching on purgatory, which has a reference in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Book of Maccabees. Luther decided that these 7 books (I and II Maccabees among the 7) would not be in the Bible. Luther also tried to throw out the Book of James and the Book of Revelation on his own authority, but the Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century could not find any, even mild, excuse to omit these books. So they were returned.

## WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC TEACHING ON THE REFORMATION?

The Church was in need of a reformation, and this will be true down through its history. Just because a Church leader is a member of the clergy, God does not take away his free will. So, we had reformers like Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, to name a few, who “reformed” the Church from the **outside** instead of from the **inside**. They had many followers and they rode the crest of the wave of popularity. As priests, they could now be married, since they broke from Rome. The Church definitely needed reform in some areas. God always sends “reformers” who would help the Church from the inside. For example, St. Benedict was a “reformer” in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, but a reformer from the inside. So was St. Dominic and St. Francis. So was St. Ignatius of Loyola; likewise, St. Catherine of Siena and the list goes on. We can add Pope Francis to the list of reformers.

The Protestant reformers gave up the Papacy and the doctrine of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. They gave up many doctrines of the Catholic Church and then they disagreed with each other. Henry VIII and the Church of England went their own way.

Branching from the Anglican Church, John and Charles Wesley founded the Methodist Church. The Methodists wanted more method, or organization, and so the Wesley brothers started the Methodist Church. John Smyth started the Baptist Church, and we also had Calvin, who started the Presbyterian Church with John Knox. Starting this exodus was Martin Luther with the Lutheran Church, all in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The Catholic position is that Jesus founded the Church with one man, Peter, as the rock, and his successors, and only He can change the way He established His Church. It is such a strong source for unity. Even Luther, in his last days on earth, lamented his actions, which brought about splits and re-splits of a large segment of those trying to follow Christ.

## WHY DO CATHOLICS CALL THEIR PRIEST “FATHER”?

The custom of calling the ministerial priests “Father” goes back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century. In St. Paul’s 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 4, he tells his readers that they have many advisors in the faith, but few “Fathers”. He goes on to say that he is their spiritual father in Christ with the Gospel. Paul, also in the Letter to Philemon (New Testament), referred to himself as the spiritual father of the run-away slave, Onesimus, whom he was returning to Philemon.

There is that passage in Matthew 23:9 where Jesus says:

“Call no man father, call no man teacher, and call no man rabbi.”

This passage from Matthew 23:9 must be read in the context in which it was written, which is that there is one supreme Father who is God in heaven. The one supreme teacher is God in heaven. It is obvious that, just as we call hundreds of thousands of people “teachers”, the passage must mean there is one Supreme Teacher, one Supreme Father, one Supreme Master and Teacher of the Jewish Law. The title refers to God and is not a prohibition on calling anyone else “teacher” or calling anyone else “father”, in the small sense of the word. It is natural to call our physical parent “father”. The passage from Matthew 23:9 is the emphasis that God is the Supreme Teacher, Father and Rabbi. St. Paul claims a spiritual fatherhood over the Corinthians and the run-away slave, since he brought about the life of God in them through the Gospels.

## DO CATHOLICS REALLY BELIEVE THAT THE POPE IS INFALLIBLE?

The word INFALLIBLE simply means that when the Pope teaches solemnly on a matter of faith or morals, the Holy Spirit guarantees that teaching as being without error. Therefore, such teachings must be held by the faithful. Such teachings are irrevocable. Since the Church Council of Vatican I ruled that the pope could declare on his own doctrines of faith infallibly, the Pope has done this only twice.

First, it must be done in that official formal way (I hereby declare and pronounce absolutely that something is an article of faith). He must speak officially as Pope (Ex Cathedra: From the Chair of Peter). Those two instances are:

- a) The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception that states Mary was full of grace nine months before she was born (Pope Pius IX – 1854). From the first moment of her existence, she was immaculate in the womb of her mother. In Luke's Gospel, when the angel told her she was full of grace, it meant from the first moment of her existence, she was conceived completely clean in the eyes of God.
- b) The Assumption that states Jesus resurrected (assumed) Mary's body after she died (Pope Pius XII-1950). This was believed as early as her death. There is no grave of Mary. It is not in the Bible, but it is the constant belief of the Church.

**WHY IN THE WORLD DID GOD CREATE ME?  
THERE ARE SO MANY PROBLEMS IN LIFE!**

First of all, God made us for heaven, but we must live in this “testing ground” to see if we are worthy to receive His gift of heaven.

The irony of the whole thing is that there is some happiness on this earth if we do the things we are supposed to do, if we think the thoughts we are supposed to think, and if we act the way the Lord has commanded us to act.

Our Quest for Happiness is the title of a chapter in one of Mathew Kelly’s books. It is also the title of a religious text book. It is so fundamental to our very existence. It is all summed up in St. Augustine’s 4<sup>th</sup> century famous statement. After many years trying to be happy with the world’s enticements, Augustine prayed:

“LORD, OUR HEARTS WERE MADE FOR YOU AND  
THEY WILL NEVER REST, UNTIL THEY REST IN YOU.”

To pray frequently and to do our duty according to our state in life for God gives us a strange peace and relative happiness that can be found in no other way.

We were made for heaven. Pure and simple! God would not dare give us this perfect happiness on this earth! He is saving it for heaven.

One can have it all – looks, wealth, and popularity – but, as a millionaire told me long ago, with every birthday one becomes aware that the above is slipping away one day at a time. Perfect happiness is also knowing it will last forever.

One must realize that life is a “testing ground” to see if we are worthy to receive that eternal life of PERFECT HAPPINESS. This is what makes life meaningful.

Getting to Sunday Mass and saying our daily prayers is the only way for a Catholic to live. How often teens and others foolishly say, “I don’t get anything out of the Mass.” They make the mistake of not having the right reason to participate in Mass. IT IS NOT WHAT WE THINK WE GET “OUT OF THE MASS,” IT IS WHAT WE BRING TO MASS AND GIVE TO GOD...OUR TIME...OUR EFFORT...OUR DEDICATION.

When one does not “feel” like going to Mass and goes anyway, giving themselves to God, that is when one can return with a sense of “accomplishment”.

We all have four psychological needs: to feel loved, accepted, needed, and that we have accomplished something. When we return from Mass, we definitely have accomplished something, the most important accomplishment of our week. With a modicum of faith in God at Mass, we should have the fulfillment of our need to feel loved by God. We do feel needed when we pray for the sick and give God the love that only we can give Him in our own unique way, offering our own unique sacrifices to Him. We definitely should feel “accepted” by a God who loves us with all our weaknesses and our daily resolutions. Getting to Mass and giving ourselves to God, we have accomplished a great deal and we are justified in the satisfaction that goes with this.

No, God would not dare give us heaven on earth. He is saving that for the eternal life with Him. Heaven is our reason for life on this earth.

## WHY CAN'T A CATHOLIC BE PRO-CHOICE?

Pro-choice as a term does not sound as bad as it really is. Pro-choice simply means a woman has the free choice to kill the baby in her womb, or not. The “choice” is hers. It means that the woman is legally free to kill innocent human life if she chooses to do so.

My freedom to stretch out my arms and hand stops at the point of another man's nose. It is just that simple. Others have rights, and the right to life is first and fundamental to our human nature. That baby has a right to life!

Not just Catholics, but also Protestants and the Jewish people, believe in the Ten Commandments given us in the Scriptures and ratified by Jesus. The Commandment “Thou Shalt Not Kill” is loud and clear. It is a serious law of God, binding on all humans who have a sense of human decency and respect for innocent human life.

We kill babies because mothers will not give up a few months of inconvenience. In 1973, the Supreme Court, even after the horrible mistakes of the Dred Scott decision (1857), claiming that black people were not persons, stated that the unborn was not a person and so they could be legally killed.

The whole medical profession states the woman who is pregnant is carrying a human person. Court decisions in this country have awarded monies to the person who is still in the womb.

I was a chaplain in the early '60s for a home of unwed mothers, who came to deliver their children and present them to childless couples who so longed to adopt children. I have counselled both: those who had abortions and those who gave their child to adopting parents. Those who let their child live and gave them to adopting parents were far happier.

The mercy of God is greater than any sin, and the merciful Lord takes back anyone who regrets breaking His serious laws.

There are Catholics who know abortion is wrong, committed that sin, repented and regretted and remained Catholic.

No, a person cannot be a Catholic and profess the principle that killing human life is OK and be, as they say, “Pro-Choice”.

## **WHY DOES THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAVE SO MANY VALUABLE ITEMS? WHY WOULD THEY NOT BE SOLD AND GIVEN TO THE POOR, INSTEAD?**

For starters, the Catholic Church (one billion members) is the largest donor of help for the poor in the world. In addition, Catholic religious orders of men and women spend their lives helping the poor. The world organization called Catholic Relief Services donates millions of dollars, yearly, to the needy and the poor. That is only one of many Catholic groups who give to the poor and needy.

There are great works of art that people have donated to certain Churches (St. Peter's in Rome for example), and with the intention and condition that these stay in those churches. We must honor the intention of those donors.

The Catholic Church owns much property, such as Churches and school buildings. These serve the purpose of having a place to worship and educate the children in the faith.

For a brief period of time, the Church owned 1/3 of Italy, known as the Papal States. Through political duress in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century this was reduced to one square mile known as Vatican City, where the pope and those who help the pope in the administration of the Church reside and work. It was admittedly a blessing when the Church lost all of that land to the country of Italy and kept that one square mile as an independent country.

As the Church exists through the centuries, we are in "happy times" of extreme concern for the poor. The social teaching of the Church upholds free enterprise because Socialism simply does not work. With several papal encyclicals, there are strong statements that the Church must help the poor, who can't help themselves. Every Catholic parish has an outreach ministry. For example, there is Catholic Charities, Stop Hunger Now, Bread for the World, Habitat for Humanity and yearly collections for the poor in Latin America.

The present Catholic Church leader, Pope Francis, has as his patron saint, St. Francis of Assisi, who gave up his inheritance and lived in great poverty. The present pope, as a Cardinal, lived in a humble apartment, took the bus to work and fixed his own meals.

Through the organization of the Propagation of the Faith, Catholic Relief Services and other papal entities, the Catholic Church remains the most generous organization to help the poor.

## WHAT DO CATHOLICS BELIEVE AS REGARDS SAME-SEX ATTRACTION?

We simply believe what St. Thomas Aquinas said in the 13<sup>th</sup> century:

“God did not create a perfect world. It is perfect to do what God intended it to be...a testing ground for us humans to see if we live according to His will and **merit** the **GIFT** of salvation.”

It is obvious that, to continue the human race, the design of God was to create two different sexes, for people to make a commitment for life so that children could be conceived, raised and supported.

We do not understand why God has allowed a minority to grow up with a same-sex attraction. There are various theories regarding the origin of this attraction, but no conclusive evidence. The truth is we simply do not understand why God has allowed this. It is one of God’s secrets and we need to let God be God with a right to His secrets.

The Church in the United States has encouraged an organization called COURAGE which exists to help those with same-sex attraction live a chaste and fulfilling life.

There should never be any discrimination against those who have this irregular sex attraction. The Church completely accepts homosexuals, but does not justify the sexual, physical expression of this affection. There are other physical sacrifices far more difficult that God asks of people in this world in testing our commitment to His will.

The concept of *same-sex marriage* distorts the traditional, biblical concept of marriage being between a man and a woman.

The “supreme court” of our land may call the same-sex union between two people “marriage”, but they have been wrong before (example: Dred Scott when they decided African Americans were not persons, and the Roe v. Wade decision claiming it is legal to murder the innocent unborn). Besides, they are outside their jurisdiction to redefine “marriage”. The Supreme Court simply has no right to legislate a new definition of marriage, as they have done with same-sex unions.

Our job as Catholics is not to judge the inner conscience of others, but to uphold the Biblical concept of marriage for the purpose of the continuation of the human

race and the conjugal love which helps parents in their commitment to the perpetuity of married life.

## AM I SAVED?

Only God knows the future for sure. With the existence of our free wills, no one can say with absolute certainty that we are saved until we have finished our lives and kept our free will in line with His will.

This concept of eternal salvation is the most important aspect of our lives. First, God wants us in heaven even more than we want to be there.

He sent His Son, Jesus, to be joined to our human nature, to suffer horribly unto death on the cross so that sins may be forgiven. However, sins cannot be forgiven unless one is sorry.

As St. Augustine said: "God created us without our willing it, but He cannot save us without our willing it."

The perfect happiness of heaven is such an infinite gift, that we must make every effort to be worthy to receive that gift.

One can certainly feel very secure as one stays close to Jesus, our SAVIOR. That means "prayer". I love that short prayer of telling God we trust in the fulfillment of His promises:

"O my God, relying on Your infinite goodness and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, help of Your grace and life everlasting through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen."

In the sense of staying close to Jesus with prayers and a constant attitude of remorse for sins, and continuing to try to keep the commandments of God, we can say at those moments: We are saved. This salvation is still a "gift" from God.

Our Baptist friends have a descriptive statement for one who gives up this relationship with Jesus. They call them BACK SLIDERS!

One of the Books of Wisdom in the Old Testament talks about the person who was sinful, but converts, will be saved. However, the one who was faithful to God

and stops and turns from Him, loses all the good in the previous part of his life, and if he dies in that state, he is lost.

Our salvation is the most important aspect of our lives. As Jesus said:

“What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?”

We simply cannot take the love God has for us, throw it back in His face and say: “Thanks, but no thanks!” We can’t make a fool out of God, or He would not be God.

Every time we make an Act of Hope (see above) we profess our trust in salvation.

## WHY DO THE PROTESTANTS HAVE A DIFFERENT ENDING TO THE LORD'S PRAYER THAN CATHOLICS?

Many Protestants still use the *King James* version of the Bible that goes back only to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. The **NEW** *King James* version simply changes the pronouns from the old English (thee and thou) to contemporary English.

The scholars, Catholic and Protestant, believe the best "translation" is from the Hebrew in which the Old Testament is written and from the Greek in which the New Testament is written. Obviously, the best comes from the oldest existing manuscripts. None of the oldest existing manuscripts have the end of the Lord's Prayer with the words:

"FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER AND THE GLORY".

Even the most scholarly Protestant translation from the oldest existing manuscripts, the Revised Standard Version (RSV), does not have this.

Since the Gospel tells us that Jesus gave us this prayer word for word, and it does not have this nice extra ending, we simply try to be as "Biblical" as we can and do not add this nice ending to the prayer, as Jesus gave it to us.

How did this ending ever appear in the *King James* version? The most common theory is that, as the monks were making copies of the Bible before the printing press, one monk must have gotten carried away with a special prayer that he wrote in the margin and the next monk must have thought that it was supposed to be the end of the prayer as Jesus gave it to us.

Since Jesus gave us the "The Lord's Prayer", and it ends, "...deliver us from evil. Amen", we Catholics finish the prayer the way Jesus taught us, according to the Scriptures.

Again, most recent Protestant translations of the New Testament, in the spirit of scholarship and exactitude of the translations of the oldest existing copies of the Bible, do not include "For thine is the kingdom..." as part of the Lord's Prayer.

In the case of the Hail Mary, this was not a prayer that the Lord gave us to say. The whole prayer is a human creation. We just quoted from the greeting from the angel Gabriel to Mary, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women." Then we picked up the quote of St. Elizabeth who, when Mary went to see her, said also, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is

the fruit of your womb.” This was not a prayer given us to say. The Church just found these nice greetings in the Scriptures and used them. Then the Church completely composed the last part, “...Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

## WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC TEACHING ON SUICIDE?

Suicide is defined as one taking one's own life. The Catholic Church approaches this issue from two angles.

First, NO ONE can argue against that commandment "THOU SHALT NOT KILL". This includes not only killing others, but also includes not killing oneself. Life was never meant to be "easy". It is a testing ground for us humans to be sure we are worthy to receive the gift of heaven at the end of this life. In the Gospels, Jesus says:

"If you will be my follower, take up your cross daily and come follow me."

Taking a human life is a serious violation of God's Law. God is the Lord of life and death. In past days, the Church took a strong stand against offering the Mass of Christian Burial for a suicide death, because the last act of a person was to break a serious law of God.

Secondly, for something to be a serious sin, one must know that it is seriously wrong, have full consent of the will, and do something that, in itself, is seriously wrong. Since we cannot judge a person's inner thoughts, the Church admits that we cannot judge a person's relationship with God.

Modern psychology tells us that the desire to "live" is so strong that, many times, a person would have to be out of one's minds to take one's own life. There are different degrees of depression, and some people, they say, can drop so far down into depression that they lose the ability to think clearly. Given this insight from the secular science of psychology, the Church gives the suicide victim the benefit of the doubt and allows the Mass of Christian burial to be celebrated for such a victim.

It is difficult to officiate at a suicide burial. The family is usually devastated and wondering if they could have helped the victim more. The minister can never give the impression that the suicide is OK, but must encourage others to hold back a judgment on the degree of the person's mental health at the time.

Doctor-assisted suicide is simply that: a direct act of the doctor, requested by the victim, to end one's life on this earth. The morality is the same as suicide,

seriously wrong for the doctor and for the victim. With more time to reflect on the issue, it could affect the morality in the sense of having more consent of the will, with more time to reflect.

## **WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC TEACHING ON EUTHANASIA?**

Euthanasia is more often someone else, with the power of attorney, making a decision to end a person's life directly, as an act of "mercy", with the better sounding word, euthanasia, instead of murder.

None of us likes to see an animal suffer long periods of pain, and we can choose to directly "put the animal out of its misery". But with humans, who can offer their sufferings to God, it is God's decision when human life leaves this earth.

When a person is dying, it is not murder to let the natural death process take place, given certain circumstances. There is always the important act of charity to make one comfortable while they are dying. However, it is wrong to directly take another's life. When there is doubt, Catholics should call their priest for guidance.

## WHY DO CATHOLICS HAVE PICTURES AND STATUES OF JESUS AND THE SAINTS?

Having pictures and statues to remind us of Jesus and His saints is very much like people keeping pictures, even statues, of people they do not want to forget.

God is infinitely above His saints (including His mother), but saints are friends of God and are living examples of the way we are supposed to follow Christ.

From whence did this reaction against statues and pictures arise? Maybe the reformers who left the Church used the Scriptures to criticize images of Jesus and the saints. There is this section in Exodus, Chapter 20 that states:

“Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven images of anything in the heaven above or on the earth below. Thou shalt not bow down to them or worship them. (Exodus 20:4-5)

However, in Exodus, chapter 25, it states:

“Thou shalt make, also, two cherubims of beaten gold on the two sides of the oracle (the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments).”

In the first quote, God forbids the making of the IMAGES FOR THE PURPOSE OF WORSHIP. This interpretation is made clear by “...thou shalt not bow down to them or worship them.”

Obviously, the images made to be worshipped are wrong. Other images, for reminders of heavenly beings, have even been proscribed by God.

I was once in the home of a member of the Assembly of God (Pentecostal) and was amazed at all of the holy pictures (typical Catholic ones) that the man and his wife had on the wall. More and more non-Catholic churches are slowly accepting images of Christ and His saints.

## WHY CAN'T NON-CATHOLICS RECEIVE COMMUNION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

A Catholic who receives Holy Communion is taught and is expected to believe that the consecrated Bread and Wine is truly the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

At Jesus' last meal before His execution, He pronounced the bread **to be** His Body to be given up for others:

“Take and eat all of this. For this **IS** My Body,  
which will be given up for you.”

He did the same with the consecrated Wine. Just as He said, This IS My Body, so, with the chalice, Jesus said:

“Take this and drink from it, for this **IS** the  
Chalice of My Blood, which will be poured  
out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Then He **COMMANDED**, NOT SUGGESTED, BUT **COMMANDED** His apostles to do the same thing as He did in His name. The apostles and their appointed successors did this from day one. The Church continues to believe it was, and is, truly the presence of Christ.

One year before the Last Supper, in Chapter 6 of St. John's Gospel, we have the narrative of Jesus speaking to a crowd in the synagogue in Capernaum and saying:

“I am the bread of life. I am the living bread that has come  
down from Heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live  
forever.”

The Jews murmured amongst themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his  
flesh to eat?”

Jesus only emphasized it more when He said:

“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood,  
you shall not have life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks

My blood has everlasting life and I will raise him up on the last day.  
For my flesh is real food, and my blood is real drink.”

The group of people listening walked away and said that this was a hard saying. Jesus let them walk, because He meant it as literally as He made it sound. Jesus did not call them back, but only turned to His apostles and asked, “Do you, too, want to go?”

Peter finally spoke up and simply said, “To whom shall we go? We have come to believe that you have the words of eternal life.”

Because Catholics believe what is contained in the Scriptures, that Jesus is really present in the consecrated bread and wine, and Protestants, for the most part, do not believe this, out of respect for Jesus’ presence, the Catholic Church does not feel we can invite all to receive what we believe is Jesus, when others do not share that belief.

If you love someone, you desire a closeness, an intimacy with them. So, Jesus devised a way to get so close to us, to come into our very bodies. That is why He **COMMANDS THIS TO BE REPEATED.**

After the consecration of the bread and wine at Mass, this truly, mysteriously, becomes Jesus, Himself.

The reason non-Catholics are not invited to the sacred banquet is that, generally, they believe it is only bread and wine, and no more. It is simply a respect for Jesus that we ask our Protestant friends to understand our position.

If a non-Catholic believes in the real presence and is sorry for sins, the present position of the Church is to investigate becoming a Catholic.

## WHY DO CATHOLICS SOMETIMES RECEIVE ONLY THE CONSECRATED BREAD AT COMMUNION AND NOT SHARE IN THE CUP OF THE LORD?

On Sundays, when people are prepared to spend more time in church, most parishes have Communion under both species. During the week, when people participate at Mass before work, the priest offers the people Jesus under one species.

The reason that it is optional is because of our belief that wherever you have the living Body of Jesus, you have His living Blood. So, if you received only one species (Consecrated Bread Or the Consecrated Wine) one receives Jesus, Body and Blood, soul and divinity in a mysterious but real way.

The Bible completely backs up the above teaching. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, 11:27, St. Paul writes that if one receives either the consecrated Bread OR the consecrated Wine unworthily, one is guilty of the Body AND the Blood of Jesus.

“Whoever eats this bread OR drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, will be guilty of the Body AND the Blood of the Lord.” (1 Cor. 11:27)

The reasons for both species is that it has a richer symbolism of the reality of our Lord’s presence in sacrifice. He made a point of saying: “This is my Body which will be given up for you.” Then He pronounced with His power that, “This is the Chalice of the new Covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins.” He so connected the Eucharist with His death.

The practical advantage of receiving just the Host is in the circumstance of the timeframe and bringing Communion to the sick and those in prison.

People should realize that it is completely optional to receive from the Cup if one has already received the Host.

## APPENDIX

The special objections Protestants have to Catholicism are mostly related to the Bible. They find it difficult to understand how Catholics can believe things which are not in the Bible. Secondly, they find places in the Bible which seem to contradict Catholic doctrines and practices.

It is true that some Catholic doctrines are not in the Bible, because Catholics believe in the teaching authority of the Church as another font of revelation. Also, it is the teaching of the Church that decided which books were to be in the Bible.

There is nothing in the Bible which really contradicts Catholic belief or practice. There are two common ways in which the Scriptures can be misinterpreted. **One** way is to quote a passage out of the context in which it was written, and the **other** is to neglect consulting related passages of Scripture when interpreting a difficult passage.

*Quoting Out of Context.* By quoting passages out of context, one can make the Bible say anything – even deny the existence of God. The phrase, “There is no God,” can be found in the Scriptures, but when read in its context, it says, “The fool says in his heart: ‘There is no God.’” (Psalm 13:1)

A passage frequently quoted out of context is “...man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.” (Gal.2:16) This passage has been used to show that faith without good works is sufficient for salvation. When the *verses before and after it are read*, it is seen that St. Paul was speaking of prescribed **works of the Mosaic Law** which no longer justify man, but justification comes now by recognizing Christ. Belief in Christ implies acceptance of everything He said, and He frequently spoke of the necessity of good works and obedience to the commandments.

*Failure to Consult Related Passages.* Consulting related passages at first might produce an apparent contradiction, but further study of the passages will help one arrive at the proper interpretation.

In Exodus, Chapter 20, it says ...”do not make images...to adore them.” In Chapter 25 it says “...make them for the sake of reminders (of angels).” There is no contradiction. To make images to worship them is seriously wrong. To make images to remind us of holy people or to decorate that which pertains to God is lawful and can help devotion.