



Catholic Arts

FALL 2024

The Magazine of Apologetics & Evangelization



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HOUR OF
OUR DEATH**

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With gratitude,

Christopher Check, President

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Catholic Answers

TABLE of CONTENTS

6 **CONNECT**
News of the Apostolate

18 **INDULGENCES**
from the
Catholic Answers Blog

24 **REMEMBER YOUR DEATH**
Joseph Shaw

28 **WHAT IS HEAVEN
REALLY LIKE?**
Jimmy Akin

34 **YES, WERE IN
THE END TIMES**
Fr. Samuel Keyes

38 **HELL IS REAL AND
IT'S ETERNAL**
Trent Horn

42 **DON'T SAY A EULOGY
AT MY FUNERAL**
Sarah Cain

44 **YOU CAN'T CHANGE YOUR
SOUL AFTER DEATH**
Karlo Broussard

46 **QUICK QUESTIONS**
Was Jesus omniscient?



THE MAGAZINE OF APOLOGETICS
AND EVANGELIZATION

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CONTENTS

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JIMMY AKIN (“What Is Heaven Really Like?,” p. 28) is an internationally known author and speaker. As the senior apologist at Catholic Answers, he has more than thirty years of experience defending and explaining the Faith. Jimmy is a convert to the Faith and has an extensive background in the Bible, theology, the Church Fathers, philosophy, canon law, and liturgy.



FR. SAMUEL KEYES (“Yes, We’re in the End Times,” p. 34) was raised Baptist and served as an ordained Anglican minister from 2011-2019. In 2019, he and his family were received into the Catholic Church through the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter. He was ordained to the Catholic priesthood in 2021 and serves as pastor of St. John the Baptist church in Bridgeport, PA.



TRENT HORN (“Hell is Real, and it’s Eternal,” p. 38) After his conversion to the Catholic faith, Trent Horn earned master’s degrees in the fields of theology, philosophy, and bioethics. He serves as a staff apologist for Catholic Answers, where he specializes in teaching Catholics to graciously and persuasively engage those who disagree with them.



SARAH CAIN (“Don’t Say a Eulogy at My Funeral,” p. 42), also known as the “Crusader Gal,” is a cultural commentator who makes videos about the decline of the West and authors the substack *Homefront Crusade*. Originally from England, she lauds the values that have so far prevented America from succumbing to the darkness that envelops Europe.



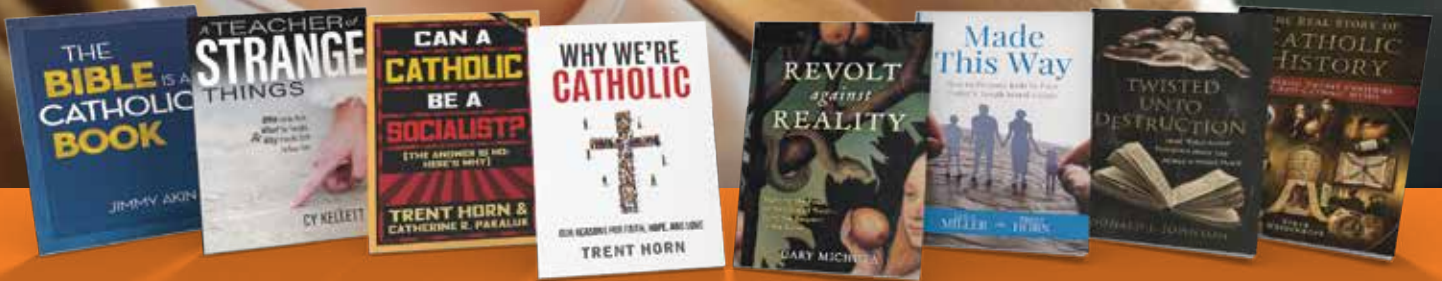
KARLO BROUSSARD (“You Can’t Change Your Soul After Death,” p. 44) is a staff apologist, author, and speaker for Catholic Answers, and a member of the chancery evangelization team at the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma. He travels the diocese and the country giving talks on apologetics, biblical studies, theology, and philosophy.

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“THE POWER OF CHRIST COMPELS US”

President’s Circle Apologist Tom Nash recently visited Georgetown University to Proclaim Christ’s Enduring Paschal Victory in the Mass. He shares his perspective.

“What an excellent day for an exorcism.”

With that memorable line from the cinematic classic *The Exorcist*, a demon-possessed girl mocks a young priest. Yet Jesus the high priest definitively drives out the devil through his paschal mystery, which he lived out in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago and has sacramentally re-presented ever since in the sacrifice of the Mass.

“Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out,” Jesus proclaims in advance of his redemptive death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven; “and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:31–32; see CCC 662).

Sharing how Jesus defeats sin, death, and the devil is especially significant for me, as I had the opportunity to speak on the topic earlier this year at Georgetown University (GU), where parts of *The Exorcist* were filmed. The movie perspicaciously prefaces Satan’s words of ridicule with those by which he is daily defeated: the words of consecration at Mass, “for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:4).

I first visited Georgetown in 1984 while doing research as a senior at the University of Michigan, and I made sure to get a good workout on the “Exorcist Steps,” the iconic staircase down which an imperfect priest tumbles while combating the devil in the film’s climactic scene. Forty years later, the GU Knights of Columbus council brought me back to help commemorate and celebrate the National Eucharistic Revival.

The word *commemorate* is crucial because, as I explained to the GU students, biblical remembrance is not a mere recollection like our celebration of Independence Day. Rather it is a liturgical action by which we divinely draw on the power of a past event and experience its impact now. This is what the Church does every day in offering the Mass: Jesus’ one sacrifice of Calvary, which

culminated in everlasting glory in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8:1–3; 9:11–14), is offered anew sacramentally, according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:7–10), that is, under the sacrificial forms of bread and wine (Luke 22:19–20; see Gen. 14:18–20).

At each and every Mass, then, not only are we present at Calvary in mystery but also brought into heaven, where our high priest (Heb. 8:1–3), the “Lamb standing, as though it been slain,” reigns in sacrificial glory! (Rev. 5:6; see CCC 1137; 1085).

“Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Nowhere are those words of the Lord’s Prayer more profoundly fulfilled than in the Mass. As I summarized for the GU students: when we have eyes to see and ears to hear, paradise/heaven—and a foretaste of heaven in the Eucharist—is as close as Georgetown’s Dahlgren Chapel or Copley Crypt, or our home parish!

Jesus appeared vanquished that first Good Friday with the devil having seemingly won, similar to what happened to Fr. Damien Karras (portrayed by Jason Miller) in *The Exorcist*. And yet young Regan MacNeil (Linda Blair) is freed from the devil’s grip because of Fr. Karras’s intercession, while the priest receives absolution from his sins before dying. Meanwhile, in real life, Jesus victoriously rose from the dead, ascended in glory to heaven, and helps us do battle daily, especially in enabling us to offer anew his one paschal sacrifice. So let us always turn to our eucharistic Lord Jesus Christ with confidence.

If you are a Catholic Answers President’s Circle member, you have direct access to Tom Nash for all of your personal apologetics needs. Reach out to us at development@catholic.com if you do not have Tom’s contact information.

Not a President’s Circle member but would like to be? Let us know, and we can tell you how!

DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE!

In June of this year, Catholic Answers apologist Karlo Broussard successfully defended his doctoral dissertation...and he is now Karlo Broussard, D.Phil.! In celebration of this huge accomplishment, we asked Karlo to share his experience:

I wanted to get a doctorate in philosophy first and foremost because I love to study and research. In my work for Catholic Answers and the Diocese of Tulsa, I was already doing a lot of research, so I figured why not get academic credit for it? My studies also provided me with the higher-level training that I need to be a better apologist.

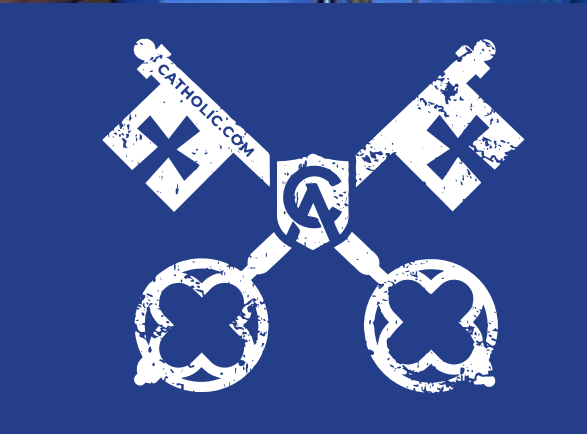
I determined my topic, "Divine Immutability and the Variability of Creation: A Thomistic Reconciliation," after reading some papers by W. Matthews Grant and discovering that I could contribute to the discussion. Dr. Grant, who is professor of philosophy at Minnesota's University of St. Thomas, ended up being my external examiner. In all, it took three years from beginning my research to the completion of my degree. The most fulfilling aspect of this endeavor was having the freedom to write like I think and really immersing myself on an academic level.

Lastly, having a D.Phil. will afford me opportunities to represent Catholic Answers in venues in which we are not currently seen, such as academic conferences and universities. Through those appearances I can bring the fullness of the Catholic faith to new audiences and spread the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ to souls searching for Truth.

Congratulations to Dr. Broussard! If you would like to send Karlo a note, please mail it to him at:

Dr. Karlo Broussard
Catholic Answers
2020 Gillespie Way
El Cajon, CA 92020

Dr. Broussard, left, and Dr. Kerr, the director for his dissertation which was defended in Ireland. Karlo was the first to enroll in the distance program and the first to complete it.



SOCIETY 315

If you are not a monthly donor yet and would like the opportunity to ask Tim your burning questions, join us at casociety315.com.

Monthly supporters in Catholic Answers' monthly giving club, SOCIETY 315, provide consistent and reliable support. We are blessed that membership in the club has risen steadily since its inception. Here is a snapshot of the growth of SOCIETY 315 since August 2022:

- August 2022: 3,438
- March 2023: 3,774
- August 2023: 4,197
- January 2024: 4,375
- May 2024: 4,554

This year, the average monthly support given by all SOCIETY 315 members totals approximately \$135,000. That's roughly 16 percent of our annual budget!

What does that mean for Catholic Answers? Every activity we undertake, from *Catholic Answers Live* to podcasts and from Catholic Answers Press to our speakers series, is supported by the generosity of this global community of donors. Please join us today at casociety315.com.

Check out this map of where SOCIETY 315 supporters live throughout the world. Are there any locations that surprise you?

We are always striving to make the experience of being a monthly donor in SOCIETY 315 as unique and fulfilling as possible. Recently my colleague Edgar Lujano (host of *Respuestas Catolicas*) proposed a new exclusive benefit for SOCIETY 315 donors: 1-on-1 with Tim Staples. This amazing opportunity allows monthly donors to sit down for an in-depth conversation with Catholic Answers senior apologist Tim Staples.

In this new series, SOCIETY 315 monthly donors have the chance to engage in long conversations (about an hour) about topics of their choosing. Any question about Catholic apologetics and our faith is fair game.



SAINTS AT SEA



This June, a group of 160 friends of Catholic Answers boarded Holland America's *Volendam* to set sail on the St. Lawrence Seaway. The voyage's path, rich with Catholic and North American history, proved to be the perfect destination for the first Catholic Answers cruise in five years. Pilgrims from thirty-two U.S. states and two Canadian provinces joined the Flannel Panel—Christopher Check, Joe Heschmeyer, and Cy Kellett—for a week of Catholic camaraderie including liturgy, talks, meals, and exploration of several port cities.

This at-sea event was more than just a vacation with a focus on North American saints and churches. A beautiful excursion unique to our group was a visit and Mass at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, thirty minutes outside of Quebec City. This 1658 basilica dedicated to St. Anne—grandmother of Jesus and protector of sailors and fisherman—is home to a first-class relic of her forearm. We crossed through the Holy Door at Notre-

Dame de Québec, prayed at the tombs of St. André Bessette, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, St. Francois Laval, and St. Marie of the Incarnation, and viewed countless more relics at each port, leading to numerous graces for all. Meanwhile, daily Mass was offered by Fr. Paul Keller, O.P., who was instantly recognizable throughout the journey in his Dominican habit.

Special guests William and Amy Fahey of Thomas More College added to the week by sharing their expertise on patriotism, history, and literature with evening talks on the region once known as “New France.” The cruise atmosphere fostered new friendships and fruits in a way that only in-person events can.

Be sure to stay tuned to catholic.com/events for details on our next cruise or pilgrimage, and don't miss our next Catholic voyage!

PARISH CONNECTIONS



“We launched “AGING with GRACE’ workshops in our diocese for seniors and families, using the *20 Answers: Bioethics* and *End of Life* booklets. These concise and on-target booklets add so much knowledge to our attendees and fly off the tables!”
-- Terri Schauf, Respect Life, Diocese of Ft. Worth, TX.

“We order these for our parish literature rack! They fly off the shelves and are making a difference.”
--Bill Conn, St. Monica's Parish, Edmond, OK.

“Every Christmas our parish gifts a book to our

parishioners as a gift, and this year was *20 Answers: The Eucharist*. This was the first year ALL were taken! Thank you so much for such an accessible, non-intimidating book!”

--Angela Hart, Adult Faith Formation, Our Lady of the Black Hills, Piedmont, SD

Our **Parish Partner Program** is making an impact! Let's help you connect your parish!

Reach out to Peggy at parishpartners@catholic.com

Donor Profile

JAMES HARMAN

My mother Sally-Anne and I were received into the Catholic Church during this year's Easter vigil.

Sally-Anne grew up in a secular home but abruptly started taking herself to an Anglican church at the age of eight. God was her rock through the many years of illness, abuse, and hardship that followed, and he gave her a son (that would be me) despite doctors' predictions that she would never bear children.

Close to God in my youth, I was not grounded in an intellectual defense of Christianity, and I wandered away in my teenage years due to bullying and worldly influences. I was restored by some Evangelicals I met at university but fell into anti-Catholic errors and prejudices along with true faith.

Forced to acknowledge traditional morality, I felt increasing friction with the authoritarian "liberalism" of my university and, later, my employers. I joined a company that specialized in helping Christian ministries, only to find one of its owners expecting me to endorse immoral sexual practices—just as the bishops of the Church of England approved those same sins. It seemed there was nowhere to turn for those committed to following Christ without compromise.

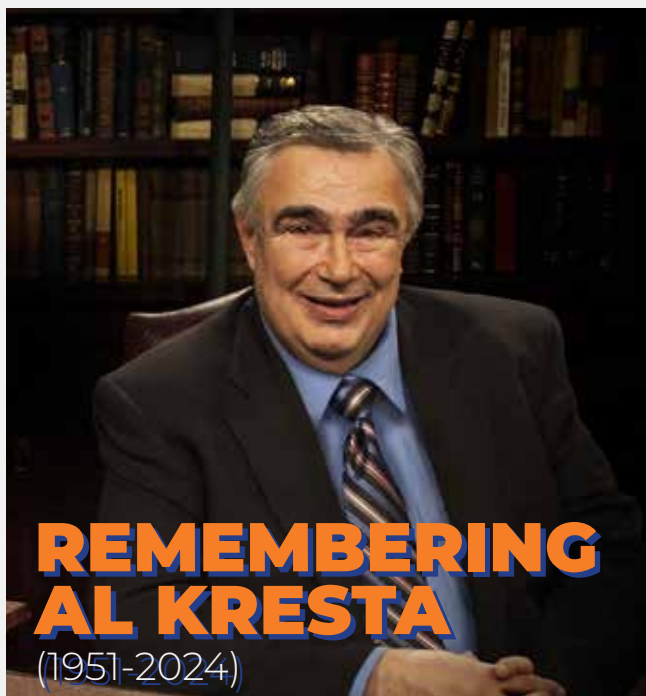
Whilst studying the popular Calvinist website GotQuestions, I began to notice that their teachings were not purely biblical but often relied on their own flimsy and questionable interpretations. They also demonstrated a profoundly vitriolic bias against Catholicism. In the interests of fairness, I wondered if there was a Catholic

website with answers to their claims—that's when I found Catholic.com!

Catholic Answers suddenly and devastatingly revealed the glaring fallacies of the Protestant worldview and its suspicious similarities to secular self-definition, which had somehow escaped me up to that point. I began to deeply desire Catholicism to be true, but the many misconceptions bred by my Evangelical background warred against it. Gritting my teeth, I made a long list of every objection to Catholicism I could think of. One by one, Catholic Answers resolved them all, without exceptions.

This began a wave of joy that included a new and better job, a vibrant and welcoming parish, a resurrected prayer life, and best of all, my mom coming to accept the Faith as well. Catholic Answers was there every step of the way, helping us both surmount the many hurdles we faced to enter the Church, up to and including an openly heretical RCIA lecturer.

It was the most natural thing in the world to become supporters of this world-class apostolate. We have received so many blessings through Catholic Answers that it would be an affront to justice not to support its work in kind. What's more, I know from my own experience of running a charity that even a little given on a regular basis can be more valuable than an extravagant donation never repeated. If you want to see more lives like ours transformed, there's no better way than to join SOCIETY 315 at whatever level you can afford today.



“With the *New York Times* in one hand and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in the other,” Al Kresta was a regular guest in the living rooms and automobiles of EWTN and Ave Maria Radio listeners for over twenty-five years via his daily interview program, *Kresta in the Afternoon*.

After a brief battle with liver cancer, Al died on June 15, surrounded by family at his Ann Arbor, MI, home.

A convert to Catholicism who founded Ave Maria Radio in 1997, Al was a Catholic radio giant in southeast Michigan and across America. Over the years, many of the Catholic Answers personalities, from Karl Keating to Jimmy Akin, were interviewed by him on his show, and Al’s loss is one that will be felt for a long time to come.

Please join us in praying for the repose of Al’s soul and God’s continued consolation upon his many family members and countless friends. *Requiescat in Pace*.

WONDERING HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT THE LIFE-CHANGING WORK OF CATHOLIC ANSWERS?

Looking for ways to help ensure more lives are changed by the work of Catholic Answers? Peeking ahead to the end of the year and considering 2024 tax implications? December will be here before we know it, and there are numerous ways to make a lasting impact with your tax-deductible donation to Catholic Answers before the year is over!

-- Consider joining our matching challenge: You have two key opportunities before December 31:

Catholic Answers Live Radio drive—November 12–14
Giving Tuesday—December 3

You can engage in the challenge in two ways:

1. Commit to a pledged donation toward our matching challenge total. Fulfill your pledge once we reach the corresponding amount.*
2. Donate on one of these days to help us meet our matching challenge.

*To participate in any of our matching challenges with a one-time gift of \$1,000 or more, please contact the

development team at (619) 387-7200 or development@catholic.com.

-- Explore other ways to contribute:

- Give stock or other securities.
- Utilize Real Estate for Life to buy or sell a home (and support Catholic Answers at no cost to you!).
- Donate cryptocurrency.
- Donate a used vehicle.
- Include Catholic Answers in your estate plan. (Don’t have a will yet? Visit mycatholicwill.com/catholicanswers to build yours for free!)

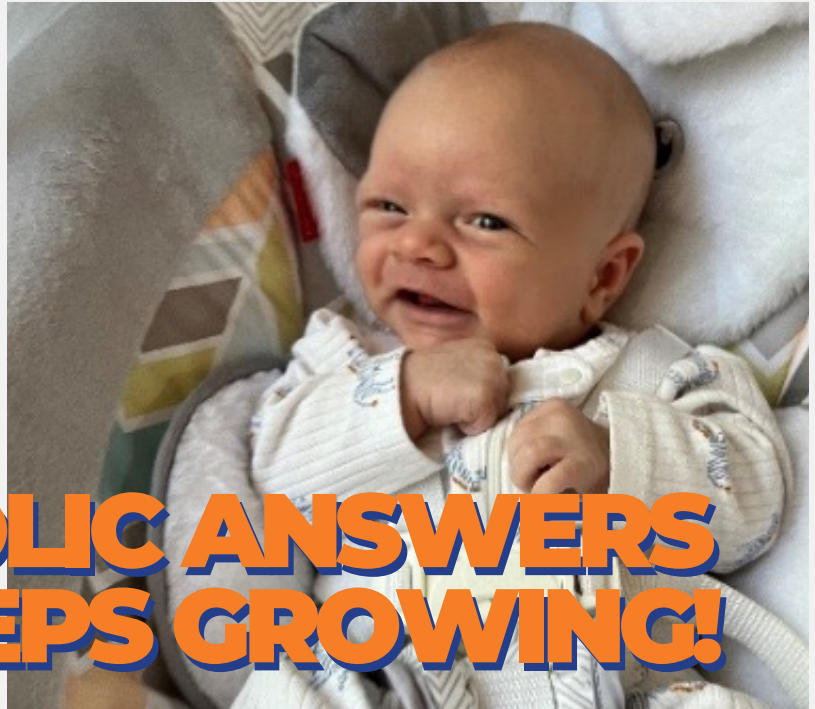
Go to Catholic.com/supportus to discover more about giving options or simply reach out to us via email at development@catholic.com.

Thank you for your incredible support and for helping us achieve another remarkable year at Catholic Answers. And don’t forget that all our donors are remembered in prayer at our office chapel during daily Mass and the Divine Mercy Chaplet!



Left: Meet Anastasia Martine, daughter of Senior Designer Shane Riter and wife Tracy. She loves watching her older siblings, and marvels at her pet cats. She is a beautiful rainbow baby, and God gave her family a little piece of Heaven through her smile.

Below: Social media manager Thomas Graf and his wife Theresa welcomed their first child in April. Weighing in at 7lbs 8oz., Ethan Michael Graf has already made a best friend—with the baby in the mirror!

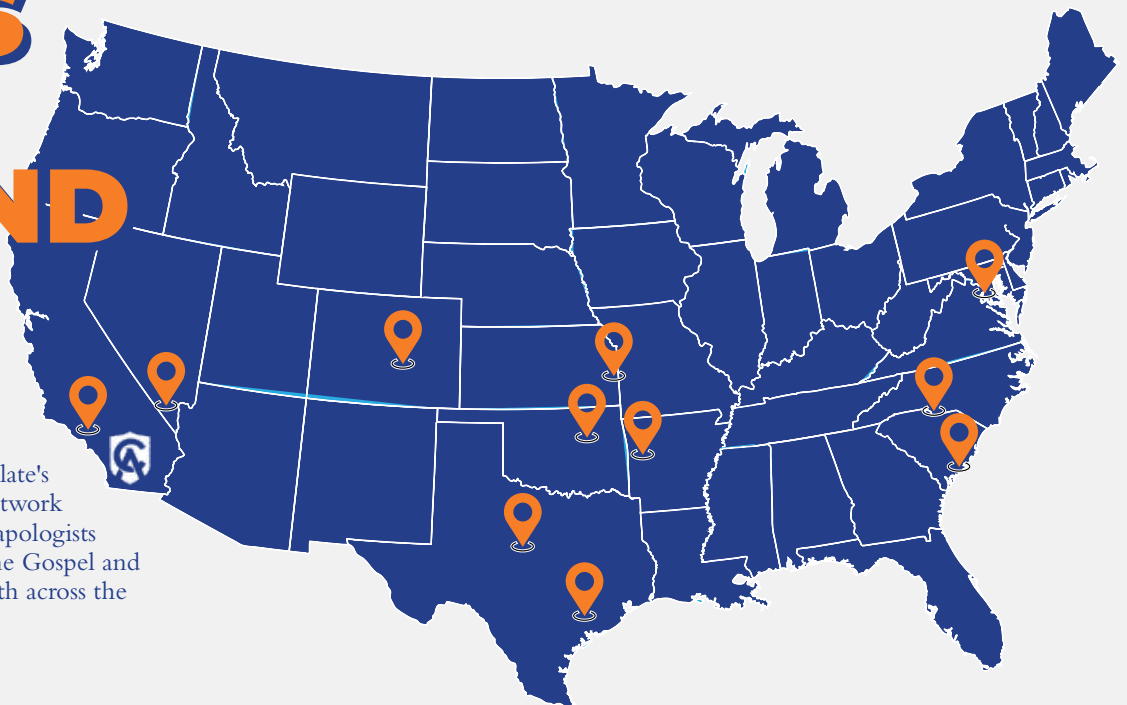


THE CATHOLIC ANSWERS FAMILY KEEPS GROWING!

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

Boots on the Ground — From San Diego to the Nation: Catholic Answers is Reaching Far and Wide!

Catholic Answers isn't just in San Diego anymore! With our apostolate's growth, we've built a dynamic network of remote staff and locally based apologists who are passionately spreading the Gospel and explaining and defending the Faith across the United States.



COOPERATION IN THE VINEYARD

Catholic Answers and Spirit Catholic Radio join forces to support the *National Eucharistic Pilgrimage*.

The Tenth National Eucharistic Congress took place in Indianapolis this July, and as part of the preparation for—and celebration of—this landmark event, one of the largest Eucharistic pilgrimages in history began making its way to Indianapolis in May from the north, south, east, and west.

The procession's 2,200-mile western "Junipero Serra Route" began in San Francisco on May 17, and from June 13-27, it passed through Nebraska and western Iowa. And Spirit Catholic Radio (KVSS-FM) and Catholic Answers were right there to provide spiritual support for the pilgrims!

Nearly 2,000 copies of the Catholic Answers booklet *20 Answers: The Eucharist* were given away for free to those participating at eleven different locations in the KVSS listening area. Five hundred alone were passed out at St. Wenceslaus Church in Omaha with another 432 handed to pilgrims at a Corpus Christi Church outdoor Mass and rally in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

A hearty thank you to our good friends Jim Carroll and the entire team at Spirit Catholic Radio for putting Catholic Answers to work during this momentous occasion. And another big thank you to supporters like you, without whom Catholic Answers would be unable to make so many resources—including our books and booklets—available free of charge.



WELCOME TO THE TEAM!



THOMAS WEST

Podcast
Editor

Why did you choose to work at Catholic Answers?

I've always felt a call to serve God using the gifts he has given me. The opportunity to work for Catholic Answers arrived in a storm of Providence. I just said yes.

Favorite saint or devotion?

Mary Magdalene and John the Baptist.

Proudest life accomplishment to date

My proudest accomplishment is marrying my wife. (I still can't believe she said yes.)

How do you spend your free time?

Free time use in order of importance: quality time with friends, watching *The Office* with my wife, solo forest adventuring. I suspect this will change when my firstborn arrives.

Dream vacation destination

My dream vacation destination would be a massive cabin on a pristine mountain lake complete with a ski boat and jet skis. Preferably surrounded by pine forest. If you Colorado vacation home owners need a house sitter, hit me up.

Favorite place you've traveled

I went on a dirt-biking trip in British Columbia when I was fifteen. It's still one of my favorite memories . . . the mountains just had an epic quality.

What is something you love learning about? I am an avid podcast listener! I love learning from anyone who is well spoken and knows what they're talking about, haha.

The best gift you've ever received

The best gift is one I have yet to receive: my firstborn. I'm so excited.

What you thought you would be when you grew up

When I was younger, I wanted to be an artist, then a filmmaker, and eventually a YouTuber. I'm still becoming all three.

Your most listened-to music genre

This would be a toss-up between indie-pop and folk. Folk for vibes, indie-pop for jamming out like a sixteen-year-old when I'm alone in my car.



VANESSA FORSBLAD

Social Media Specialist

Why did you choose to work at Catholic Answers?

When I first started researching and defending my faith, I would always refer to the catholic.com site for guidance on my answers! When I found the organization, I became a huge fan and supporter. My dream was to work for the company one day. Catholic Answers' mission aligns with my mission and has encouraged my studies on my way to my master's in Theology!

Favorite saint or devotion?

St. Christopher! I am terrified of driving, so I always ask for his intercession!

Proudest life accomplishment to date

I'm not there yet . . . but by the end of July 2024, I will have my master's degree in theological studies!

Dream vacation destination

Las Vegas (and I live here now!)

A book you recommend

Why We're Catholic by Trent Horn. I gave a copy to each of my confirmation students last year!

What is something you love learning about?

I love learning about the companies that "built America"! For example: Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Wal-Mart!

A movie you've watched many times

When Harry Met Sally

Night owl or morning bird?

Morning bird. If I haven't done all my tasks by 6:00 a.m. . . . I feel like I've wasted the day!

Your strongest asset in a zombie apocalypse

Not for me, but for others . . . I can't run fast.

What you thought you would be when you grew up

A mom!

The best gift you've ever received

Mini replicas of the California missions

Do you have a nickname?

ThatOneCatholicGirl! LOL.



BEHIND THE SCENES

Want to know what's been happening behind the scenes of *Catholic Answers Live*?

Catholic Answers Live is the best show on Catholic radio because of you. The equipment, infrastructure, and personnel required to produce CAL exist only because you desired to participate in the kingdom of God by supporting the world's #1 show that defends and explains the Catholic faith.

With your donations, the *Catholic Answers Live* studio has seen great improvements this year.

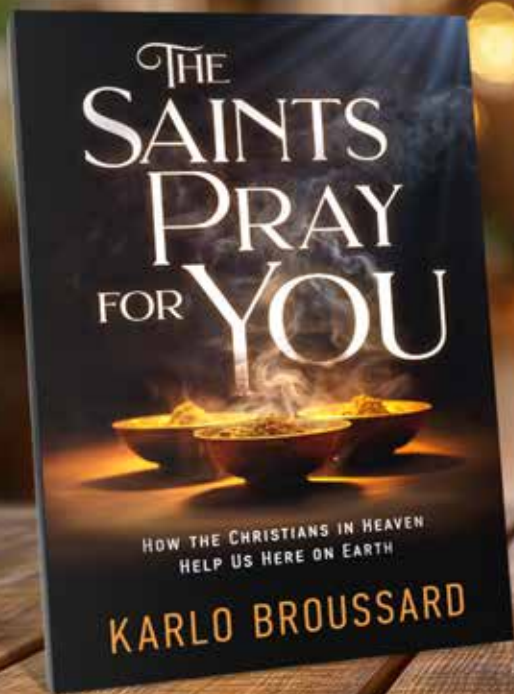
- All video infrastructure was upgraded to improve streaming stability and now allows us to add remote guests seamlessly into *Catholic Answers Live*.
- We swapped out Cy's desk for a round table to create a more welcoming atmosphere for Cy to better interact with in-studio guests and recorded interviews for the Catholic Answers YouTube channel.
- The studio was divided to create a space for recording Spanish videos for our new channel, *Respuestas Católicas*.
- But there's much more to be done. Would you help with these further improvements?
- The control room needs a new sound board, and the studio desperately needs an air conditioning unit.
- The *Respuestas Católicas* section needs to be furnished and decorated.

- Sound panels are needed to reduce echo, improve in-studio interview audio fidelity, and eliminate the possibility of exterior noise entering the studio.
- Lighting equipment and religious art is needed to create a more flattering atmosphere for guests, brighten the set background, and set the studio apart from other shows.

All told, these improvements will cost about \$19,500.

Why is this work important? The visual brand of *Catholic Answers Live* is more crucial than ever. Your support helps grow our community to reach more souls online. The studio is the physical and virtual home of *Catholic Answers Live*—your help with growing and sustaining it ensures that millions of people around the world have access to the reliable apologetics that you have come to trust.

If you would like to make a significant gift to impact the future of Catholic Answers Live, please reach out to David Matheson, director of development, at 619.387.7200, ext. 340 or dmatheson@catholic.com.



HUNDREDTH BOOK MILESTONE

Exciting news from Catholic Answers Press! We're celebrating the release of our one-hundredth book, *The Saints Pray for You: How the Christians in Heaven Help Us Here on Earth*, by Dr. Karlo Broussard. This significant milestone marks a major achievement for the Press, which has grown remarkably since its formal launch in 2013.

From Humble Beginnings to Significant Growth

Catholic Answers had been publishing books, booklets, and tracts since the 1990s, and by 2013 had built a small collection of popular works that included *Pillar of Fire*, *Pillar of Truth*, *The Fathers Know Best*, and *The Essential Catholic Survival Guide*. But that year, under the leadership of director of publishing Todd Agliandro, Catholic Answers Press was founded "to take a more ambitious, intentional, and systematic approach to the publishing mission of our apostolate." The founding of the Press catalyzed rapid growth in the quantity, quality, and variety of our books and booklets, as well as in the number of collaborations with outside authors.

From a handful of titles, we have now hit the century mark in books to go along with over seventy booklets, including the popular *20 Answers* series. We also have over thirty licensing agreements with foreign publishers and provide free translation rights to mission territories, extending our global reach. And our shop now predominantly features Catholic Answers books.

Sustaining Success with Your Support

The sustainability of Catholic Answers Press relies on the support of our generous donors. "Our sales and marketing team does an amazing job selling our products, but no one

would pick Catholic publishing as a racket for getting rich," says Agliandro. "Our supporters' faithful cooperation with our mission helps us keep the Press focused on publishing books that serve that mission—defending and explaining the Catholic faith—even when it isn't massively profitable."

Highlighting our Hundredth Book

The Saints Pray for You: How the Christians in Heaven Help Us Here on Earth, the first book by Karlo Broussard since he earned his doctor of philosophy this June, takes on the often-misunderstood topic of the communion of saints. Addressing one of the most popular subjects on Catholic.com, on *Catholic Answers Live*, and on our social media pages, this book shows how saintly intercession is an integral part of God's plan.

Says Agliandro, "The communion of saints is one of those tenets of our Faith that seems to exemplify everything that a certain kind of Protestant dislikes about Catholic theology. They think Catholics want to place all kinds of unnecessary intermediaries between us and Jesus: sacraments, or a pope, or holy water and medals—or a host of saints who they think should be too busy enjoying heaven to want to help us get there. Our hundredth book quite fittingly tackles that topic to show Catholics and Protestants alike that the communion of saints is not a superfluous addition to, or distraction from, our life in Christ but is in fact part of the rich and fittingly human plan of salvation God has ordained."

Pick up your copy of *The Saints Pray for You* and learn to defend this tenet of our faith. Celebrate this milestone with Catholic Answers Press by enriching yourself with Karlo's latest apologetics *tour de force*!



indulgences

Some Hectoring for Kids' Lectoring

Todd Aglialoro

I was at a confirmation Mass this past spring in a diocese that does not follow the “restored order” of confirmation before First Communion, so the vast majority of confirmandi were teenagers. Now, this parish has a reputation for catechesis, liturgy, music, and preaching of a specially high order. It was a surprise to me, therefore, to see the ministry of lector assigned to a couple of the young teens.

Maybe you have encountered something like this yourself at confirmations or even First Communions—the deputizing of kids for lectoring and other liturgical ministries. What do you make of that? Me, I think this is a disedifying practice, for three reasons.

1. Most children and teenagers are just no good at reading at Mass. If you're someone who doesn't think any lay person should read at Mass, go ahead and skip to point two. Okay. If you're still here: proclaiming the written word in a liturgy is an art and a skill. It requires practice and it requires maturity.

Shoot, many *adult* lectors do not perform their office particularly well. They are too theatrical or

too monotonous. They don't sufficiently work through the complex sentence structures of the epistles or the unfamiliar names and diction of the Old Testament to make the meaning of the passages ring clear to the assembled. They aren't practiced in modulating pace, volume, emphasis, and other aspects of their delivery—everything that makes up the skill set of any orator and, when combined with humble prayerfulness, of a lector.

As the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* puts it, the lector must be “truly suited” to proclaiming the readings, so that the assembled faithful “may conceive in their hearts a sweet and living affection for the Sacred Scripture” (101). If lots of adults who get regular practice at the ambo fail to do justice to this sacred task, how much less can we expect a child, on average, to do so in his first shot at it? Diminishing the proclaimed word so that young people can feel a little more special on their special day is a bad tradeoff.

2. It encourages a false sense of liturgical participation. I have been a volunteer in parishes that presented liturgical ministries like a college jobs fair. *Check out the catalogue of all the cool things*

you can do at Mass to be an “active participant”! At a confirmation, especially—already often treated as a coming-of-age ceremony, a Catholic bar mitzvah—handing out liturgical roles to the initiates similarly confirms the notion that adult Catholicism means getting out of the pews and *doing* something at Mass.

But of course, *active participation* in the liturgy really means consciously and intentionally uniting ourselves with the action of the Mass—in its prayers, postures, and songs, and especially through intentionally joining the priest in offering to the Father the saving sacrifice of Christ. Should not a confirmation or First Communion Mass be ordered first to fostering in young people that truest sense of participation?

3. It creates a hierarchy among the sacrament recipients. Instead of encouraging solidarity among first communicants or confirmandi by emphasizing their shared experience, giving ministries to a choice

few stratifies them. The boys and girls chosen to read (or sing or bring up the gifts or work the collection baskets) may not—unjustly feel that they have been allotted the greater portion. The other kids are just getting the sacrament; the selected few are getting the sacrament *and* a special part in the performance.

This has the potential to create resentment for the other kids—perhaps even discouragement at not being holy or good enough to be a *featured* Mass-goer—and also to inhibit the “chosen” kids’ reception of the sacrament with due humility and focused reflection.

So, on their First Communion or confirmation day, let the children come unto the Lord and let that be enough, say I. And let competent lay ministers do their part to serve the beauty, intelligibility, and smooth functioning of the Mass.

“God Sacrificed Himself to Himself”

Joe Heschmeyer

One slogan that has recently become en vogue with those who abandon Christianity (or as they put it, “deconstruct”) is a twisted summary of Jesus’ passion: “God sacrificed himself to himself to save you from his punishment.”

I’ve gotta say, I’m really glad they raise this, because sometimes it’s true: Christians present Christianity in a way that seems kinda arbitrary and insane. I mean, imagine somebody getting so mad that he punches himself in the face. That’s how the theology of the cross sometimes gets communicated.

Fortunately, there’s a better way of understanding the cross. But for starters, we’ve got to understand sin properly.

Sin isn’t just a violation of a random set of rules. Sin refers to certain behaviors that we do that actually

hurt us and hurt those around us. St. Paul puts it like this: “We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another” (Titus 3:3). That’s what sin looks like: it’s becoming a slave to your passions and pleasures, becoming an envious, hateful, malicious person.

And it’s in response to that—in response to real sin—that God the Son enters our world, taking on a full human nature, becoming one of us. God chases after us when we go astray—not wrathfully to punish us, but like a good shepherd who comes to gather the lost sheep and bring them home, rejoicing. That’s the actual biblical imagery, not the image of God punishing himself.

So why, then, does Jesus go to the cross? Well, St. Thomas Aquinas offers five reasons in his *Summa*

Theologiae (III.46.3):

So we can know how much God loves us and be stirred to love him in return. We can look at the cross and we know that is God pouring himself out for us.

As an example for us. If you want to know what humility, obedience, constancy, justice, and the like look like, look to the cross.

To win for us not only salvation, but also sanctifying grace. Christianity is about a lot more than just not going to hell. It's about obeying transformed in the divine nature, and the cross plays a really important part in that.

To deter us from sin.

Finally, because it gives us greater dignity. Sin entered the world through a man, Adam; and rather than abandoning humanity, God defeats sin through a man, Jesus Christ. That gives humanity a greater dignity than it had before.

So in short, then, Jesus goes to the cross not out of some twisted sense of human sacrifice, but to show us the height and the depth and the breadth of his love for us; that he loves us enough to die for us and that he's strong enough to overcome the power of death.

A Liturgical Calendar... in Outer Space

Jimmy Akin

I enjoy fielding questions on *Catholic Answers Live* about humanity's forays into outer space, such as this one: "How would the Church adapt its liturgical calendar if we colonized another planet or the moon?"

Well, it's going to depend on where the planet or moon is and how fast it rotates. Humans are biologically designed to have a wake-sleep cycle that is synced with the day-night cycle on earth. If we're in an environment where the day-night cycle is radically different from what we're programmed to work with, we just ignore it.

For instance, the International Space Station goes around the earth in about forty-five minutes, meaning the astronauts on board get twenty-two minutes of light and twenty-two minutes of dark. There's no way they want to fall asleep every twenty-two minutes and then wake up twenty-two minutes later for the duration of their mission.

Thus, astronauts on space stations ignore their environment's peculiar day-night cycle. Instead, they keep a regular Earth-based day-night cycle for their sleeping and waking periods.

The same would be true of any other planet or moon that has a radically different rotation rate. And if humans are keeping a normal terrestrial day-night cycle and ignoring the rotation of the object they're on, then they would likely keep a terrestrial calendar. They wouldn't modify the calendar because they're keeping the same day-night cycle.

Now, what about other planets like Mars, which has a rotational period close to that of Earth? Its day is almost the same length as Earth's. It's a little bit different, but humans there would probably adapt to a Martian day-night cycle, and that means their days and nights would get out of sync with the days and nights on earth.

However, I don't think that on Mars there would be a need to change the liturgical calendar, because Mars is very close to earth. It's only a few light-minutes away, and as a result it would be very easy to stay in contact with earth and continue to use the terrestrial liturgical calendar. Even if their Sunday slides a few hours from Sunday on earth (because of the difference in the day lengths), you can still approximate that. So, they would still have the same kind of Sunday cycle, they could still celebrate Christmas and Easter at the same times, and so on.

But what if you go further afield—like out of our solar system? In that case, there's no easy way to communicate with earth because of the light-speed limit. If you were on a planet with a similar rotation period to earth, I could see the local church in this other solar system developing its own liturgical calendar based on the local planetary rotation period. However, I suspect that even then—even if they came up with new holidays and new liturgical seasons—they would still keep Christmas and Easter at the same time that they're being celebrated back

on earth, because that's something you could always calculate.

So, I think that there could, in another solar system, be a different liturgical calendar with some similarities to ours; but here in our solar system, we're so close that I don't think we would practically develop different liturgical calendars for other planets—at least not any time in the foreseeable future.

When Was Abraham Justified?

Emily Torres

One question I often ask Reformed Protestants is: When was Abraham justified? Even though their theology maintains that “justification is a once-for-all, nonrepeatable act of God,” Abraham is said to be justified three distinct times throughout the Bible.

According to Hebrews 11, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go” (Heb. 11:8). This refers to Genesis 12, when God tells Abraham to leave his home country and Abraham obeys. Without being justified first, Abraham could not have had faith that allowed him to obey God; thus, he must have been justified then.

But St. Paul claims Abraham was justified later, in Genesis 15:

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (Rom. 4:2-3).

Lastly, St. James says Abraham was justified once more in Genesis 22, when he offered Isaac on the altar:

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? (James 2:21).

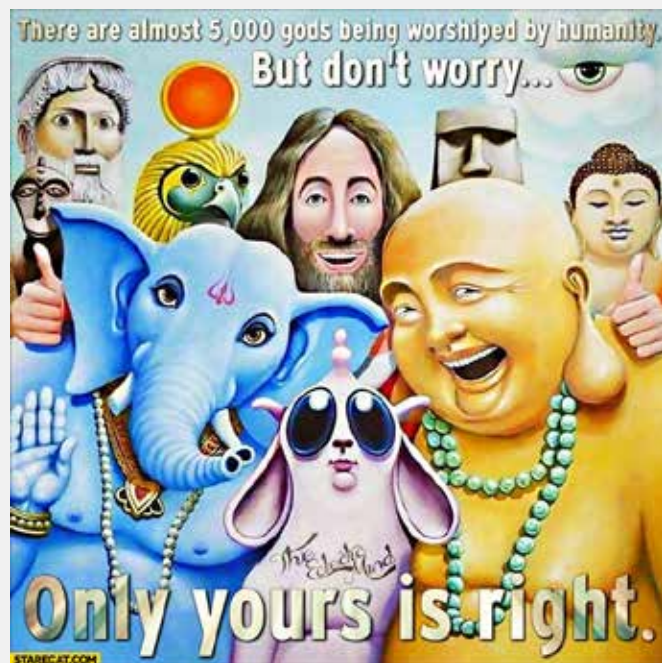
So when was Abraham truly justified? Although Reformed Protestants may struggle to answer this question, Catholics do not; Abraham was justified all three times. This is because justification is not a one-time event in someone's life, but a continual process wherein one turns away from being a son of the Old Adam to being a child of the New Adam, Jesus Christ.

Abraham is a perfect example of this transformation. Originally, he distrusts that God will give him a son in his old age, taking a second wife for himself; but he gradually transforms into a man willing to sacrifice his only son to God, believing “that God was able to raise men even from the dead” (Heb. 11:19). Abraham's increase in faith corresponds with an increase in grace and righteousness. This is why we can truly say he was justified multiple times throughout his life.

“But Which God?”

Trent Horn

There’s a popular atheist meme that goes like this:



I would agree that if I randomly believed in a god among 5,000 similar gods there would be little chance I was worshipping the true God. But that’s not what Christians do when they worship God.

“God” is not just some super-powered being people happen to *call* a god. The true God is the infinite act of being itself, unlimited in power, knowledge and goodness. God isn’t *a being* in the universe, God is *the ground of being* and so is infinite in all respects.

If God were just some limited, finite being, then atheists could rightfully ask, “Who created God?” But if God is the infinite foundation of all reality, then that explains why reality exists at all and shows God isn’t just one being among many. Asking, “Who created God?” would be like asking what is pulling the locomotive on the train. The locomotive isn’t a train car and God isn’t one being among many.

The reason I don’t believe in Thor, Zeus, or Buddha (who isn’t a god in Buddhism, by the way), is that these are finite beings. I believe in “God” and these beings simply are not *God* no matter what anyone calls them. In

their respective mythologies, these beings often come into existence, they change, they’re ignorant, they’re thwarted, and sometimes they do evil. Their existence in time shows they aren’t God because God made time. Finally, their potential to change (or be actualized) shows they are not God who is pure actuality itself.

I agree with ancient Greek and medieval Christian, Jewish, and Muslim philosophers that there is one infinite God. We may disagree about how God revealed himself to humanity, but we can agree that one infinite God who is pure actuality exists.

Moreover, atheists can’t say I must reject the God of the Bible because he sounds just like the gods of mythology. I interpret the Bible in accord with what reason tells me about God. So, if I know from reason that God can’t have a physical body as part of his divine nature (since God created all matter from nothing), then that means the Bible’s descriptions of the Father having a body must be non-literal, or examples of God using earthly images to communicate to humans (which is called a *theophany*).

Finally, this meme backfires on atheists.

Imagine you’re at a party and ninety-five out of one hundred people there say they heard a loud sound outside, but they disagree on the nature of the sound, like whether it was low- or high-pitched. Would you agree there was at least a sound of some kind, or would you think the ninety-five people are deluded and the five people who didn’t hear any noise are on to something? Now, large groups of people can be wrong about things, but they are usually correct, which counts in favor of the view, shared by most of humanity, that (at the bare minimum) rejects a strictly material, atheistic view of the universe.

So which “god” do I believe in? I agree with ninety-five percent (give or take) of all people, past and present, that the universe is not a purely material and easily explicable reality. There is instead an “ultimate explanation” that cannot be a lower-case “god” since those raise just as many questions as they allegedly answer. Instead, I follow reason to believe in the one, true infinite God who became man and dwelt among us. ■

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REMEMBER
YOUR
DEATH!

**JOSEPH
SHAW**

November—not far away!—is the Church’s month of the dead. We remember those who have died, and this should stimulate us to keep our own deaths in mind. As we look ahead to All Souls’ Day approaching, I wish to focus on the latter activity: the remembrance of death, associated with the artistic theme of the *memento mori*, a visual reminder of death.

Memento mori literally means “remember” (a command) “to die” (an infinitive)—that is, “Remember that you, the onlooker, will die.” It is a pithy restatement of the words of the priest who places ashes on the foreheads of the people on Ash Wednesday: “Memento homo quia pulvis est et pulverem reverteris.” (“Remember, man, that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”)

Memento mori images are found not only on tombs and gravestones, but also in association with the memorial plaques found in Catholic (and Episcopalian) churches: a human skull or skeleton, mournful angels with inverted torches, hourglasses, and the like. These even found their way onto liturgical vestments, until the Church forbade this, since only images and symbols of holy things should decorate vestments. Death is important—worthy of respect, indeed—but it is not a holy thing. It is, indeed, our enemy: “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26)—the only quotation from Scripture found, interestingly enough, in the Harry Potter books.

The Four Last Things—death, judgment, hell, and heaven—used to be a regular subject for preaching and pious meditation. This preaching stopped abruptly in modern times. In a recent book review of *How Our World Stopped Being Christian*, by the French sociologist Guillaume Cuchet, John Pepino writes:

The sudden silence in the pulpits (as tracked in parish bulletins giving the topic of the homily) regarding the Four Last Things . . . gave the impression that the clergy had either ceased to believe in them or no longer knew how to discuss them, even though these had been frequent sermon topics right up until the [Second Vatican] Council.

The discontinuity in the preaching is one problem—Pepino notes “changes in official teaching” that turned “humble folk into skeptics”—but there is also the question of the intrinsic value of the new approach. The Council did not, in fact, tell priests not to preach about mindfulness of death. Even if we think pre-conciliar preaching was too gloomy (an academic question for me and most readers, too young to have experienced it), it has become evident that always looking on the bright side does not in itself ward off all our problems—and certainly not the problem of death.

It is no coincidence that an era that ignores or mocks the idea of spiritual preparation for death, marking death, and mourning it is an era in which death is difficult to discuss.

Death today is an embarrassment. Instead of visiting the dying, comforting them, and praying with them, they are commonly sedated: I understand from priests involved in hospital-visiting that it is now rare to be able to give the last rites to a conscious patient. Instead of entrusting the bodies of dead loved ones to the earth and visiting and tending their graves, it is now more common to make them disappear altogether, by burning them and scattering the ashes.

As Shakespeare wrote, “all that lives must die, passing through nature to eternity” (*Hamlet*, act 1, scene 2). Even those alive at the Second Coming will pass through death: it is the doorway to eternal life. It is also the final moment of decision, the final moment in which we can influence our eternal fate.

This might seem unfair, and many modern speculations about the afterlife try to do away with the possibility of damnation (by saving or annihilating the damned), or indefinitely extend the time in which we can make morally significant choices (by reincarnation). Such theories rob life of its significance. *This* is the time of action: it is what we do *now* that matters, and it matters a great deal: “night comes, when no one can work” (John 9:4). If it doesn’t matter very much, or at all, we might as well not bother.

If death is important, we need to prepare ourselves for it, and we can do that only if we allow ourselves to think about it. A long artistic tradition seeks to remind us of death through painting and sculpture. Some of it may seem a bit gruesome for modern tastes, but the grim reality of death can’t be brushed aside forever. The meditation on death to which this invites us is not an invitation to despair and passivity; rather, it should be a stimulus to renewed effort, to make the most of the life that God has granted us.

Indeed, to make the most of life, bearing in mind the reality of death, is not to close our eyes to death and have as much fun as possible—often at the expense of other people. It is rather to follow the advice of St. Paul: “Let us not grow weary in well-doing” (Gal. 6:9).

It is in this spirit that paintings of the saints sometimes include a skull sitting on a desk: they are depicted as having a *memento mori*, as many pious persons did. It is a custom we would do well to revive, at a time when people behave as if they were immortal, and then find it difficult to face their own death, or to accompany another through the final stage of life. An even better way of remembering death, though, is to remember the dead, observing a period of mourning for deceased loved ones—not of gloom, but of remembrance and prayer. As Hamlet bitterly remarks of his mother’s truncated remembrance of her husband, “there’s hope a great man’s memory may outlive his life half a year.”

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WHAT IS
HEAVEN
REALLY LIKE?

JIMMY AKIN



Silly images can seep into our consciousness and affect the way we think of heaven. The truth is much better.

Wings and halos. Robes and harps. Sitting on clouds. Being greeted by St. Peter at the pearly gates: These are the images of heaven we get from movies, TV, and newspaper cartoons. Silly as they are, the ideas behind these images can seep into our consciousness and affect the way we think of heaven.

For example, it's commonly believed that we will have no bodies in heaven. That's only partly true. People in heaven do not have bodies (with rare exceptions, such as Jesus and Mary), but that's a temporary state of affairs. At the end of time, we will be raised from the dead and reunited with our bodies (see 1 Cor. 15:16-18).

The idea that we will spend eternity as disembodied ghosts is one of the most widespread myths about the afterlife. God created men to be embodied spirits, and although death may temporarily interrupt that, death is not the final word. Our ultimate destiny is to be the embodied spirits that God always intended us to be.

Of course, ordinary bodies are not able to survive for all eternity. Paul explains that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:50).

Our bodies will be modified somehow when we are reunited with them after the resurrection. What these modifications will be, even Paul did not claim to understand, though he compared the difference between our bodies now and our bodies then to the difference between a seed and the plant that is grown from the seed (1 Cor. 15:35-44).

Elsewhere he states that Jesus “will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (Phil. 3:21), raising the possibility that in our resurrected bodies, we will be able to do many of the things that Christ was able to do in his resurrected form, such as appear or disappear from places at will, without locked doors or other barriers obstructing us.

Winging It

The other images our culture gives us of heaven are also problematic. The idea that we will have wings has absolutely no basis in Scripture or Tradition.

Neither does the idea that we will become angels. Angels are created beings that are pure spirit and have no bodies (see CCC 328-330). They are a different order of being from what we are, and humans and angels don't turn into each other.

Halos are simply an artistic way of representing holiness, and although we will be holy in heaven, we have no reason to think that this will manifest itself in halos as we see in illustrations.

Robes are something people wore in biblical days, so it is common to picture people in heaven wearing robes, but we have no idea what clothes (if any) we may wear.

The image of harps in heaven is drawn from Scripture (Rev. 5:8), though not everyone in heaven is depicted as playing a harp.

Scripture does not picture those in heaven sitting around on clouds, but it does picture heaven as being "up" from an earth-bound perspective, so clouds are a natural image for artists to supply.

The image of St. Peter in charge of "the pearly gates" is not taken directly from Scripture but is based on two things that Scripture does say. The first is that Peter was given the "keys of the kingdom" and the power to "bind" and "loose" by Christ (Matt. 16:18-19). Indeed, one cannot knowingly and deliberately cut off communion with Peter and his successors without committing schism and denying himself heaven, so Peter has been portrayed as admitting or barring people from heaven. In reality, Peter does not (so far as we know) personally approve each person's admission to heaven.

The image of the pearly gates is taken from Scripture as well. We typically see this pictured as a set of golden gates framed by two large white (pearly?) structures, but the image in Scripture is somewhat different. There, the heavenly city is described as having twelve gates, "and the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl" (Rev. 21:21).

Paved in Gold

Scripture employs far more images of heaven in addition to the handful our culture has latched on to. One of the

most common New Testament depictions of heaven is a feast (Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:29; 14:15-24), in particular a wedding feast (Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Rev. 19:7-9)—understood as a first-century Jewish wedding feast, not a modern wedding reception.

Another notable image is heaven as a temple. Heaven was understood as the dwelling place of God. Earthly temples were in some sense modeled on heaven. Much of the book of Revelation takes place in heaven, so it's not surprising that it describes God's temple in heaven (Rev. 11:19) and heavenly worshipers with censers (8:3), incense (8:4), trumpets (8:7), bowls (16:2), harps (5:8), and other trappings of the kind of worship given to God in the Jerusalem temple.

Heaven also is depicted as a city of the righteous named New Jerusalem. It is mentioned in various New Testament passages (e.g., Gal. 4:25-26; Heb. 11:22), but it receives its fullest description in Revelation 21, where the image of the streets being paved with gold comes from (21:21), though what the text says is that "the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass."

These images are meant to convey a sense of wonder at what God has in store, but we must be careful of how literally we take them. Paul warns us that "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9; see also CCC 1027). In a weekly catechesis, Pope John Paul II wrote,

In the context of Revelation, we know that the "heaven" or "happiness" in which we will find ourselves is neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds but a living, personal relationship with the Holy Trinity. It is our meeting with the Father that takes place in the risen Christ through the communion of the Holy Spirit. It is always necessary to maintain a certain restraint in describing these "ultimate realities" since their depiction is always unsatisfactory (July 21, 1999).

The images Scripture gives us of heaven point to the realities that God has in store for his people. When we experience the realities that these symbols point to, we will find them more amazing, not less, than what human language could express.

Deepest Longings

The fundamental essence of heaven is union with God. The *Catechism* explains that “perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity . . . is called ‘heaven.’ Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness” (1024). It also states that “heaven is the blessed community of all who are perfectly incorporated into Christ” (1026).

Traditionally, theology has explained the chief blessing or “beatitude” of heaven as “the beatific vision”—an insight into the wonder of God’s inner, invisible essence. “Because of his transcendence, God cannot be seen as he is, unless he himself opens up his mystery to man’s immediate contemplation and gives him the capacity for it. The Church calls this contemplation of God in his heavenly glory ‘the beatific vision’” (CCC 1028).

Because humans are made for having a conscious relationship with God, the beatific vision corresponds to the greatest human happiness possible.

Many people wonder how our relationships with others will work in heaven. Some have even wondered whether we will retain our own identities. The answer is that we will. The Christian faith assures us that those in heaven “retain, or rather find, their true identity” (CCC 1025). We do not become anonymous, interchangeable entities in heaven. Rather, we each receive our own reward (see 1 Cor. 3:11-15).

This does not mean that there will be no changes in our relationships. Jesus was clear in teaching that we will not be married in the next life (Matt. 22:30). But because we retain our identities, we will continue to know and love those we were close to in earthly life. Indeed, in heaven, our love for them and our spiritual intimacy with them will be truer, purer, and stronger than it was in this life.

Pain in Heaven?

A special problem that has been raised by some is the question of pain in heaven. Some have wondered how it would be possible for individuals to enjoy the beatitude of heaven if they knew that some people—perhaps some they were close to in earthly life—are in hell. Others have wondered about apparitions of Mary and other saints in which they are crying over what is happening or may happen on earth. These problems have made people question whether there is pain in heaven.

The answer is that there is not. Scripture assures us that for those in heaven, God in the end “will wipe away every tear

from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

How we will be able to know of the existence of the damned without being pained by it is a mystery, but we can only conclude that the glorified human mind will be configured in such a way that it is able—without pain—to recognize both God’s justice and the free choices of men that led to damnation. God’s own beatitude is not damaged by the existence of hell, and he will not allow our ultimate beatitude to be damaged, either.

As for weeping apparitions, the tears in these cases perhaps are best understood as an expression of the gravity of man’s sins and of what one in a non-glorified state would be justified in feeling rather than what literally is being felt in heaven.

Is It a Place?

Disembodied spirits are not extended in space. They don’t have shape or take up space. As a result, some have wondered whether heaven is a “place.” This is a difficult question. Heaven is not a location in the physical universe. One could never travel far enough in any direction in space to arrive in heaven.

But it does seem that heaven has something corresponding to space. It may not be anything remotely like space as we experience it, but heaven does seem to have the ability to receive bodies into it. Christ took his body with him to heaven when he ascended. Mary took her body when she was assumed. A few others—such as Enoch, Elijah, and perhaps Moses—also seem to have their bodies with them in heaven.

We cannot say what the present state of these bodies is. They may not be extended in space at the moment—or they may. We don’t know.

What Time Is It?

Related to the problem of space in heaven is the problem of time. We often hear of heaven being described as “eternal” or “timeless.” God himself, in his divine essence, is completely outside of time. For him, all of history exists in an “eternal now” without past or future. But it is not clear that created beings in union with God are completely drawn outside of time.

Medieval thinkers proposed that departed souls, such as those being purified in Purgatory, exist in a state that shares some properties in common with time and some with

eternity. They called this state *aeviternity*. Whether this speculation is correct, or what properties such a middle state might have, is open to question. We ultimately don't know how time—or whatever might replace time—works in the afterlife.

It does seem, though, that just as heaven can receive bodies into it, it also has some kind of sequentiality. Thus, there can be a point before a soul is in heaven, a point during which it is disembodied in heaven, a point after this when it is reunited with its body at the resurrection, and a point at which it exists in the eternal order in body and soul.

Will It Be Boring?

A question many have is: “Won't we get bored in heaven?” Some descriptions make it sound as if heaven will be like being in church all the time, and we get bored in church down here. Worship is central to heaven, and the worship that takes place there is far deeper and richer than anything we experience on earth, for there we have the beatific vision that corresponds to the greatest human happiness. The fact that time may not work the same way there may also play a role. We can be certain, though, that we will not be bored, for boredom is a form of suffering, and we have seen already that heaven excludes suffering.

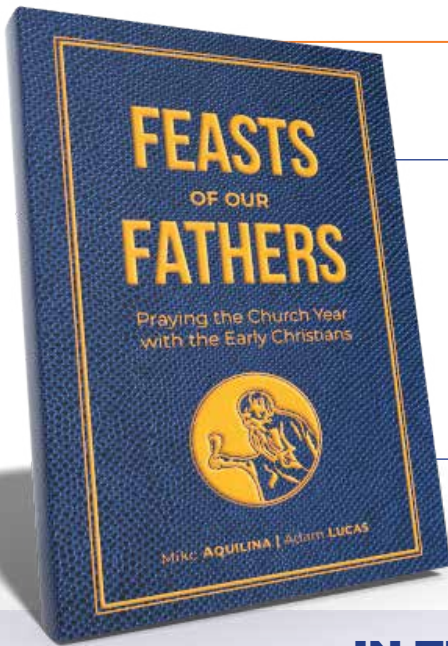
It is also not clear that we will do nothing besides exclusively praising God every moment. Scripture and the *Catechism* both speak of us “reigning” with Christ (Rev. 22:5; CCC 1029). This suggests that we will have authority over and responsibility for things.

Where we may undertake those tasks may come as a surprise for some. Many have the idea that after the resurrection, we will return to a celestial realm, leaving the physical world deserted.

But Scripture speaks of a new heaven and a new earth and seems to locate the dwelling place of man on the new earth. In Revelation, John sees “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming *down* out of heaven from God” (21:2, emphasis added) and then hears this: “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them” (21:3).

This suggests that heaven and earth may not be separated in the way they presently are. The *Catechism* thus states that “the visible universe, then, is itself destined to be

transformed, ‘so that the world itself, restored to its original state, facing no further obstacles, should be at the service of the just’” (1047).



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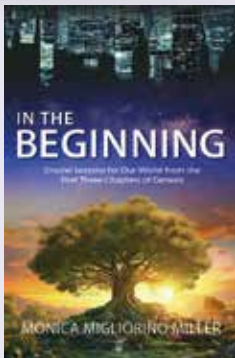
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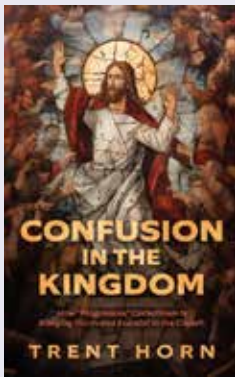
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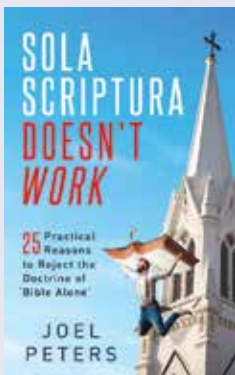
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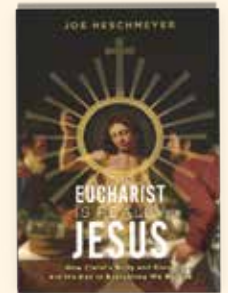
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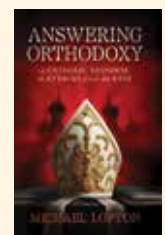
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**YES,
WE'RE IN THE
END
TIMES**

FR. SAMUEL KEYES

Not unlike our attitude toward death, we tend to avoid the topic of the end of the world by trivializing it. We don't mind it in the plot of an action movie, or from someone standing on a bucket on some urban street corner, or from a politician reminding us that every election is set to be the end of democracy. (The American two-party system, at least, seems to thrive on the idea of ever-impending apocalypse.)

In our age of near-constant and universal anxiety, the trivialization and Hollywoodification of the end of the world is our way of avoiding the fact that the *world really will end*.

Whenever some big catastrophe happens, you can be sure that someone will start talking about the “end times.” Both Catholics and Protestants do this. The difference mainly seems to be that Protestants start trying to chart out the apocalypse according to Daniel and Revelation, whereas Catholics try to chart it out based on various private revelations. But what Christians today often forget is that the Church has been talking about the “end times” since A.D. 33, when humanity crucified the Son of God. Jesus's death and resurrection was the beginning of the end, the sudden unveiling of God's final purpose for his Creation.

Things got serious again in A.D. 70, when the temple at Jerusalem was destroyed, just as Jesus said it would be. The temple was, for the Jews, the center of the universe: the place where God could reliably be found. Then it was all gone. And even the fact that Jewish Christians were able to make sense of this in light of Jesus—to see that *he* was forever after the true temple—did not relieve the trauma of the event.

From a biblical point of view, then, we have been living in the end times for the last 2,000 years. In that light, there are two things to share concerning these end times in which we live.

First, the drama is real. The Last Things are real: death, judgment, heaven, hell. Sin and evil are real. There are worse problems in the world, deeper and more substantial problems, than the fact that your brother looked at you the wrong way, or that your job is boring, or that traffic is robbing you of valuable hours that you'll never get back. Most people in history have understood this, because most people in history have had to face sin and evil every day in the form of suffering, of poverty, of hunger, of violence, of simple lack of meaning.

Years ago, when I was spending a lot of time with kids in a certain east-coast inner-city neighborhood, none of them had any problems accepting Christian teaching about sin and evil: they saw it every day in their mothers who did drugs, their brothers who went to prison, their fathers who might or might not be around, their friends who got killed. And this is just scratching the surface. Evil is real, and it is much more incoherent and villainous and monstrous than we could possibly imagine.

And it's not the sort of thing that could be solved if everybody just worked a little harder—much less if everybody votes the way the party wants you to vote. It's not the sort of thing that can be solved by ever-increasing scientific knowledge. It's not the sort of thing that can be safely relegated to something *over there*, in far parts of the world, because this evil runs right through the middle of every single one of us.

We live in the end times. There is nothing new about this. We killed our God. Anything can happen. We should never be surprised.

So yes, the drama is real . . . but so is the salvation.

Evil is real, but so is good. In fact, the good is *more real* because evil is always destructive, always negative, always corrupting—whereas the good creates, builds, grows, nurtures, comforts, enhances, heals.

The good news of Jesus Christ is that evil does not triumph, cannot triumph, and so we do not have to fear. We can look in the face of evil—as so many Christian martyrs have done and do even today—and persevere in loving the good.

This is an incredibly hard thing to say and do. When parents look at the horrible things happening in the world, they wonder what kind of future their children will have. They don't want their children to face violence or persecution; they don't want them to be hurt. But the parent's role is not to save his children from all harm; it is to teach them how to live courageously in a world full of evil, to teach them how to be good even when it hurts.

If we go all our lives thinking that being good is easy, that truth and beauty are just things we can take for granted, we will crumple in the face of the world's evil. Remember: the old world has *already* ended. History has already reached its decisive low point, its point of no return, in the cross of Jesus Christ.

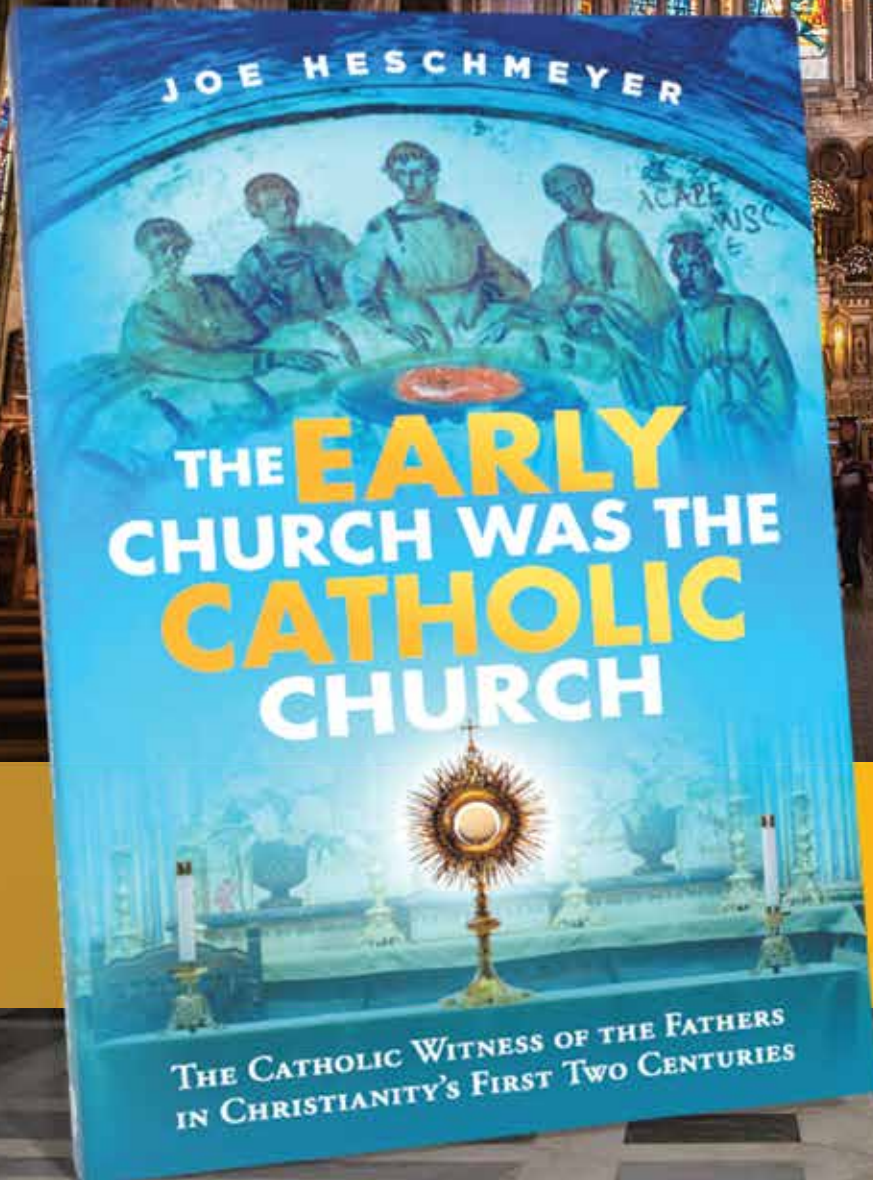
This is exactly why even St. Paul can be so unconcerned with the coming apocalypse. Yes, death is coming, judgment is coming, heaven and hell are coming, all temporal things will have their end, but *we already know* what that ending looks like: the triumph of life over death, the restoration of all things in Christ.

In God's economy, you see, nothing is wasted. Not even death. He uses death to *defeat itself*, to take the sting away from sin and sickness and evil, to heal the element of tragedy infusing all human work. And if even death is not wasted, surely we can think, along with Paul, that our work on this earth is always necessary and valuable—not because God *needs* it to bring about his eternal kingdom, but because he has given us the privilege of being coworkers in that kingdom. He promises us that our labors will never be in vain.

This means not just the ordinary work of living, but the spiritual work of *repentance*, in which even our sins become fuel for the fire of the Lord's forge, where he molds us and shapes us anew.

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TRENT HORN

“Is he in hell? Is Davy in hell?”

That’s the question Edward Fudge asked when he was a child after the death of one of his rebellious friends. Years later he confided to his wife, “What’s a kid doing burning forever in hell? Would a loving God really do that?”

Or at least that’s how it’s portrayed in the 2012 biopic *Hell and Mr. Fudge*.

It describes the true story of how small-town Bible preacher Edward Fudge became one of the world’s most prominent defenders of *annihilationism*, the view that God destroys the damned in hell instead of allowing them to experience eternal torment. Fellow annihilationist Greg Boyd neatly sums up his view of hell: “The wicked are ‘destroyed forever’ (Ps. 92:7), but they are not forever being destroyed.”

In 2019, Fr. Arturo Sosa, Jesuit Superior General, claimed that the devil exists “only as a symbolic reality, not a personal reality.” But in fact the devil is quite personally real, but hell as eternal punishment for the condemned is real, too. Both of these claims are unequivocally upheld in Catholic doctrine, and sophistic denials of the reality of the devil and hell put souls at risk.

The *Catechism* affirms the unending nature of hell:

The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, “eternal fire.” The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God” (1035).

Although some Catholic theologians have argued for annihilationism (also called “conditional immortality” or “terminal punishment”), it is a minority position in Church history. One Catholic anthology in defense of annihilationism is even dedicated to “those in the Protestant tradition who suffered loss of reputations and positions for reintroducing this teaching into the Christian world.” Indeed, Fudge was one of those ministers who was criticized and dismissed from a pastoral position for holding to the annihilationist view.

Another defender of annihilationism, John Stackhouse, Jr., admits that when it comes to the nature of hell, “There is no doubt where the weight of the tradition lies, and it doesn’t lie here,” that is, in favor of annihilationism. It’s no wonder the traditional reading of Scripture favors this view, given that Jesus said in Mark 9:48 that hell is a place “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.” He also declared that after the Last Judgment, the wicked “will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46).

But annihilationists say we are hastily assuming that Jesus is talking about the traditional concept of hell. They contend that the word “eternal” (Greek *aionion*) in Matthew 25:46 refers to “the age to come.” It can refer to unending duration of life, like in John 10:28, when Jesus says, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.” But it can also refer to actions that have eternal effects even though the actions no longer continue, as in Hebrews 9:11-12, in which Paul says we will have “eternal redemption” even though Christ redeeming death on the cross is complete. According to Basil Atkinson, “the lost will not be passing through a process of punishment forever but will be punished once and for all with eternal results.”

To say something’s destruction has “eternal results,” however, stretches the meaning of *eternal* and *results* beyond their breaking point. What people fear from punishment is not its results, but the punishment itself. This interpretation also doesn’t make sense of the parallelism that Jesus is clearly employing to contrast the rewards for the sheep with the punishments for the goats. St. Augustine addressed this alternative interpretation in *The City of God*:

If both destinies are eternal, then we must either understand both as long-continued but at last terminating, or both as endless. For they are correlative — on the one hand, punishment eternal, on the other hand, life eternal. And to say in one and the same sense, life eternal shall be endless, punishment eternal shall come to an end, is the height of absurdity. Wherefore, as the eternal life of the saints shall be endless, so too the eternal punishment of those who are doomed to it shall have no end.

Moreover, if the ultimate fate of the wicked is their destruction, then why did Jesus say they will be cast into *unquenchable* fire or be consumed by worms that *never die*? It would be sufficient to say the damned will be consumed and devoured if hell involved only annihilation. But if annihilationism is true, then this means hell will exist forever even though no one will be there, which seems to be a gratuitous addition to God's plan for a new heaven and new earth.

In response to this argument, Stackhouse claims, "The agents of destruction, the worms and the fire, symbolize God's hatred and judgment of evil to death." But how can God's hatred or judgment of evil exist when there is no evil to judge or sin to hate since the sinner was annihilated? God's perpetual opposition to evil makes more sense under the view that evildoers will eternally oppose God in hell.

This also comports with Revelation's account of those condemned to hell, in which "the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night" (14:11), and the lake of fire, where the devil, the beast, and the false prophet "will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10).

Stackhouse tries to avoid the commonsense interpretation that the damned endure unending suffering by claiming that the "rest" denied to the condemned in this passage refers to "positive connotations of Sabbath," because Revelation draws heavily from the Old Testament: "Thus the condemned are doomed never to enjoy rest, they will never escape their doom—for they suffer and die outside God's rest" (Heb. 4:9).

But in the Old and New Testament the Sabbath rest is almost always described as "my rest" (when God is speaking), "his rest," or "Sabbath rest." Revelation 14:11 simply says the damned "have no rest" and underscores that this condition is perpetual (day or night) and not something related to weekly Sabbath observance.

Finally, when it comes to Revelation 20:10, Stackhouse concedes that if the devil and his cohorts are actual persons, "perhaps they do" experience eternal torment. But even if this is granted, he alleges, "Revelation teaches only that they do, and we are focusing in these essays on the destiny of human beings." But this neglects what Jesus said to the wicked human beings, whom he judges on the last day: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire *prepared for the devil and his angels*" (Matt. 25:41, emphasis added).

If the devil will be cast into a condition where he experiences eternal torment, and Jesus says damned human beings will be cast into that same condition, then we can reasonably conclude that human beings who reject God's offer of salvation will experience that same eternal torment. That's why it's so important to preach the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, as St. Peter tells us that God "is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).



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A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and striped tie is lying in a casket. His eyes are closed, and he has a neutral expression. The casket is lined with white fabric, and the lid is partially open, showing the man's head and shoulders. The lighting is dramatic, with shadows on the man's face and the fabric of the casket.

**DON'T
SAY A
EULOGY
AT MY
FUNERAL**

SARAH CAIN

Modern Catholic funerals can look a lot like Protestant variants. At first glance, that might not seem like a problem, but upon scrutiny, the profound disservice that is being done to the dead becomes clear.

Imagine attending a Catholic funeral. The pews are full, attesting to how the deceased had clearly reached a great number of people. Now, why are those people there, at a funeral Mass? They should be there for two primary reasons.

1. To join in solemn acknowledgment of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, which is what provides the pathway for us to enjoy eternal life.
2. To pray for the deceased's soul

We should grieve at the knowledge that it rarely happens that way. With increasing frequency, Catholic funerals take a different approach. "Progressive" priests give homilies that tell of the life that the deceased lived, the decedent's love of various sports teams, and his family. They eulogize and label it a homily. After Communion, members of the man's family are called to the pulpit to offer eulogies of their own. They postulate about what they believe their loved one is doing in heaven.

When I die, please don't offer a eulogy at my funeral. It's not because I'm inherently opposed to being remembered, and certainly not because I don't want my loved ones to gain comfort from sharing stories that they may have. It's because that's not the place for those activities and because doing so undermines the purpose of having a funeral Mass at all. The funeral liturgy is an act of worship, in which the Church gathers to commend the deceased to God's mercy. It's not merely an expression of grief.

We pray for the dead in part because we acknowledge that people, no matter how much we love them, might not be in heaven. Thus, we pray for them, sacrifice for them, and offer Masses for them. Proclamations about what our loved one is doing in heaven undermine this. Recalling from the pulpit fond memories about the deceased distracts us from what is most important and from what our obligations are to the dead now.

Perhaps it seems harsh, as though this stipulation takes something from the grieving family members. But there is a helpful way to think of it differently. Imagine that you are in the casket. You are the deceased. How sure are you that you'll go straight to heaven? Are you pure enough to stand in the presence of God, without hesitation, without shame or regret? Do you want your loved ones to presume that you are in heaven, or should they pray for your soul, so that if you are in purgatory, you might be helped? Only you and God know the tally of your sins; that is the case for each one

of us. If it were my funeral Mass, I would want people to be reminded of the need to pray for the souls of those who have passed on—mine especially.

Catholic funerals are increasingly mirroring Protestant services, with differences between them barely discernible. One of those differences between our faiths—one of the chief ones—is our understanding of what happens after death. We pray for the dead because we know that they might be in purgatory.

In living memory, pastoral care tends to shy away from any discussion of purgatory. The doctrine of purgatory isn't very "feel-good." It requires candid acknowledgment of sin, judgment, and justice. But we can't pretend truth away just because it's uncomfortable sometimes, and when we pass on, we probably won't want our family members and loved ones to try to do so. At that time, we'll want and need the living to intercede for us. That's why it's egregious to insert into the funeral Mass what is more suitable for the wake. The departed is denied what he needs from us. He can no longer tell us of his needs, but we ought to know, and it's our duty to help him in that need.

We are Catholics; therefore, we know, or should, that the dead are not done. They still need us. They are still in communion with us. Let us not shirk our duty to them by living as practical atheists in their absence, such that our departed loved ones have no more advantage than if they were surrounded by people who denied Christ.

If we don't believe that they need this help, why even have a funeral Mass at all? Shouldn't we merely clink glasses and say a toast to our departed comrade? If there is no liturgical response needed, then yes. We still have the vestiges of a time when we recognized the need, but the laity's understanding of it is parched, so that even when priests seek to offer a reverent funeral Mass, they risk offending a grieving family that does not understand what should be taking place.

By all means, people can have gatherings in which speakers reminisce about the life of the dead, usually at the vigil (wake) or a funeral reception. This isn't an attempt to deny family members their rightful grieving process; rather, it is to prevent the departed from being denied what he needs. It is tragic to witness a funeral Mass in which hundreds of people gather and likely none will pray for the departed's soul, because they didn't see the need and weren't told of it.

The decision to remain silent on this topic is to forsake the dead in order to oblige those who might complain. Surely, we have exhausted the simplification of the liturgy to compensate for poor catechesis. It is not without its victims, even if they can no longer speak for themselves. ■

Karlo Broussard

You Can't Change Your SOUL After Death

When we die, it's heaven or hell. It's locked on . . . and it's locked on forever.

Critics of the doctrine of hell often argue that it's unjust, because *eternal* punishment exceeds the *temporal* nature of a mortal sin. Why should any sin we commit on earth, in time, require everlasting punishment in hell? It's not proportional.

St. Thomas Aquinas responded to this objection by saying that the measure of a punishment is not determined by the *duration* of the fault, but rather by its *gravity*. And since for Aquinas a mortal sin “in a certain respect is infinite,” being committed against God, he concludes that “a punishment that is infinite in duration is rightly inflicted for mortal sin.”

There is another conundrum, though: the infinite duration of punishment can be just only if the sinner *no longer has the ability to repent* and will the good. Aquinas writes:

There would be no everlasting punishment of the souls of the damned if they were able to change their will for a better will; it would be unjust, indeed, if from the moment of their having a good will their punishment would be everlasting (*Summa Contra Gentiles* 4:93).

In other words, the infinite duration of punishment due for a mortal sin is just only if a person is no longer able to change his will for the better.

So the question before us is: Is a soul able to redirect its will and choose God as its ultimate end after death?

The Catholic Church says no. For example, the *Catechism* teaches, “There is no repentance for men after death” and bases this teaching on the irrevocable character that man’s choice takes on after the soul separates from the body—similar to that of the angels (393). This is why the *Catechism* defines hell as the “*definitive* self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed” (1033).

But why does our choice become irrevocable after death? To answer this question, we must first consider why our choices are mutable in this life.

As human beings, we're hardwired to choose things insofar as we perceive some good in them that will make us happy. We can't help it. Even to ask the question, “Why should I choose what's good?” presupposes a desire for the good; otherwise, why would we ask whether we should choose what's good or not?

However, we're all too familiar with the change in our desires for what we *think* will make us happy. As Aquinas goes on to add in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (4:95), sometimes this is due to a fleeting passion in the body.

For example, a young engaged couple may set out to find happiness by living consistent with God's plan for human sexuality and abstain from intercourse before marriage. Yet in the heat of the moment, they can be distracted by their desire for sexual pleasure and begin to pursue *it* as a source for their happiness instead. Through the exercise of reason and virtue, they may overcome that distraction, and the passion for sexual pleasure wanes. The passion was fleeting.

Aquinas also explains that sometimes, though, rather than a fleeting passion, "we are disposed to the desire of a good end or a bad one by a *habit*, and that disposition is not easily taken away."

Take the couple from above, for example. Rather than having a fleeting passion in the heat of the moment, they may be *habitually* committing fornication. In this case, the appetite for sexual pleasure dominates, thus disposing the couple *habitually* to pursue their happiness in sexual pleasure outside marriage.

But suppose they discover the truth of their human sexuality and become convicted of the immoral nature of fornication, and they choose to pursue the virtue of chastity instead. They may seek to counteract the overindulgence of the appetite for sexual pleasure by abstaining, and they may even employ fasting and physical mortification. Such efforts eventually free them from the domination of the sensitive appetite for sexual pleasure. They're able to change even their habits, and thus where they habitually seek happiness.

There is another reason why we're able to change our choices in this life: intellectual error. As human beings, we know things in a *discursive* manner: we gather evidence, we consider and weigh it, and we reason from premises to conclusions. Then we direct our actions based on that knowledge. This is why the will is called the "*rational appetite*" (*Summa Theologiae* I-II:8:1).

But we know that we often make mistakes in this process and are led into error. And when we become aware of this, we change the course of our actions.

Now, all of these causes for change in our choices (fleeting passions, a change of habit, and correction of intellectual error) involve the *body*.

It's obvious that fleeting passions and dominating sensitive appetites do. Yet even our cognitive processes involve the body. We use our sensory experience to gather information about something, we use mental images as aids when we're trying to reason with certain concepts, and so forth. This is our mode of knowledge as a rational *animal*. This being the case, certain passions and the habitual indulgence of sensitive appetites can

lead us into intellectual error. Aquinas's teaching on "blindness of mind" as a daughter of lust is an example of this (ST II-II:15:3).

We're now in a position to see why our choice becomes irrevocable after death.

If those things that motivate us to change our course of action are rooted in the body, then it follows that when the body is gone the disembodied soul will no longer be able to change its choice. The soul will be forever fixed on whatever it chose as its ultimate end.

There is no longer any fleeting passion that can distract the soul. There is no dominating sensitive appetite to pull the will away from what it sets its sight on. The will, therefore, becomes habitually aimed at that which it chose as its ultimate end upon death.

Also, there is no intellectual error to be made, since the preconditions for erroneous judgments (discursive reasoning with the use of sensation and imagination) are no longer present. The soul's mode of knowledge upon death is very much like that of the angels: what is known is known all-at-once (ST I:68:3).

Rather than hell undermining God's justice, it's actually a manifestation of it. God allows the soul to function in accord with its nature, which includes the irrevocability of choices without the body. So, if a person dies choosing something other than God as his final end, that choice is irrevocable. It's "locked on," so to speak, to something other than God. And it's locked on forever.

Quick QUESTIONS

Ihear Catholics talk about venial and mortal sin, but the Bible just says that if you break any part of the Law, then you are guilty of breaking the whole Law (James 2:10). So why does it make sense to say some sins are only venial and others are mortal and can lead to a loss of salvation?

James 2:10 says, “Whoever keeps the whole Law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.” However, James is not saying all sins are equally wrong. In the previous nine verses he scolded Christians who show favoritism and choose which men to love (the rich) and which men to not love (the poor). James says, “If you really fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well. But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors” (James 2:8–9).

Christians are still under a moral law. This is what James calls the “royal law” and Paul calls the law of Christ in Galatians 6:2. Christians don’t get to pick and choose whom they are called to love and which moral laws they are bound to follow. James continues, “For whoever keeps the whole Law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. For he who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ said also, ‘Do not kill.’ If you do not commit



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adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the Law” (James 2:10–11).

In other words, a Christian can’t tell God, “So what if I hated my neighbor, at least I loved a bunch of other people.” Just as he can’t say, “So what if I murdered a guy? At least I didn’t sleep with his wife!” The fact that a person keeps some major parts of the Law (like “not committing adultery”) doesn’t excuse his failure to keep other major parts of the Law (like “not murdering”). Jesus even recognized that some people who break minor parts of the Law will still go to heaven, because he said, “Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19).

–Trent Horn

What should I make of saints who say that “Mary saves us”? That sure sounds like Catholics don’t believe in Christ alone for their salvation.

The saints who speak of salvation coming from Mary, or of her being an advocate for us, point out that Christ has the power to damn sinners but Mary, because she is not omnipotent and just a creature, only has the power to intercede for us and lead us to her Son. They don’t literally mean that Mary has the power to stop Christ from imposing a just sentence at the Final Judgment. St. Alphonsus Liguori says it is “not as if Mary was more powerful than her Son to save us, for we know that Jesus Christ is our only Savior, and that he alone by his merits has obtained and obtains salvation for us” (*The Glories of Mary*, 112).

God has given us the dignity of being able to work with him to bless other people, which includes blessing others with the perseverance that leads to eternal life.

St. Paul even speaks about husbands and wives saving one another (1 Cor. 7:16). We must also remember the endearing exaggeration in these devotions, or as the Catholic convert Cardinal John Henry Newman put it,

What mother, what husband or wife, what youth or maiden in love, but says a thousand foolish things, in the way of endearment, which the speaker would be sorry for strangers to hear; yet they are not on that account unwelcome to the parties to whom they are addressed (*Letter to Pusey*).

Jesus talked about cutting off your hand if it causes you to sin (Matt. 5:30) and Paul wished his enemies would castrate themselves (Gal. 5:12), but only critical atheists dead set on refuting the Bible take these statements literally. The rest of us recognize the use of hyperbole to drive a point home. And the same is true of veneration of Mary and the saints, even calling Mary “our life, our sweetness, and our hope.”

Catholicism teaches that when Christ died on the cross, Jesus’ words, “Woman, behold, your son!” (John 19:26), apply to more than the apostle John. Mary became a mother of all Christians who prays for their salvation (see Rev. 12:17). The second-century Church Father St. Irenaeus compared Mary to Eve, because both were given the opportunity to say yes to God with results that would affect the whole human race.

As we know, Eve said no and brought sin and death into the world for human beings. Mary said, “Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38), and brought the author of life himself into the world. That’s why Irenaeus said of the Blessed Mother, “The knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience,” and, “Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.”

–Trent Horn

Was Jesus omniscient?

Theologians throughout the centuries have distinguished between two kinds of omniscience—*absolute* omniscience and *relative* omniscience. *Absolute* omniscience is knowledge of not only all that was, is, and will be but also all *possible* things. Such knowledge also involves an exhaustive knowledge of the divine essence. This is omniscience *proper*, and Jesus had it in virtue of his divine intellect.

Relative omniscience is what Jesus had in his *human* intellect. Such omniscience is knowledge of all that was, is, and will be but *not* all possible things. However, it's important to note that Jesus didn't have such knowledge *in virtue of* his human intellect, although he had the knowledge *in* his human intellect. In other words, he didn't acquire such knowledge in a human way but by way of infusion by the divine power.

So, in sum, Jesus had *absolute* omniscience in virtue of his divine intellect; and *relative* omniscience in his human intellect but in virtue of infusion by the divine power.

-Karlo Broussard

My Catholic friend claimed that when Jesus gave St. Peter the “keys of the kingdom” in Matthew 16:19, he gave Peter and the Church the power to declare anything sinful or not. Thus, if the Church wishes, it could declare so-called gay marriage, sexual promiscuity—whether “gay” or straight—and other sinful behavior morally licit based on the power of the keys. What should I say in response?

If by “declare anything sinful or not” your friend means the Church can determine acts to be morally good and bad, then your friend is mistaken. Perhaps instead he was *trying* to say that the Church has the authority to infallibly *identify* what is sin and what is not a sin. There is a difference.

The Church cannot make up its own morality. It is merely the guardian of the truth concerning upright human behavior (1 Tim. 6:20). However, the Church does have the promise of Christ to infallibly identify those things that are morally harmful to the human person and those things which are morally good for the human person.

So, when the Church definitively denounces a particular action as intrinsically evil, we can know with certainty that such a declaration is true, and the specific action denounced is gravely wrong.

Furthermore, because of the gift of infallibility, the Church can never definitively declare that which is objectively sinful as good, nor can it change a definitively taught moral doctrine later down the road.

Rest assured, the Church cannot definitively declare morally licit the human behaviors you mentioned above.

-Karlo Broussard

Hebrews 10:14 states, “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.” If we’ve already been perfected, how can we *now* be sanctified?

The word *perfected* should be understood equivocally in Hebrews 10:14.

In short, Jesus' once-for-all-sacrifice *objectively* achieved our redemption and related perfection, and yet that perfection is *subjectively* appropriated by us over time, beginning in baptism and, especially in an ongoing way, through our participation in Mass and worthy reception of the Eucharist; and *ultimately* in heaven through the glorious resurrection of the dead (see CCC 1023–1029, 1042). Indeed, our being sanctified, as noted in Hebrews 10:14, affirms that the subjective appropriation of our perfection is a gradual process.

In *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible New Testament*, Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch comment further on Hebrews 10:14:

perfected: Christ accomplishes what the Mosaic ceremonies could not—the inward transformation of the worshiper (Heb. 9:9–10; 10:1). This involves the cleansing of the conscience from guilt (Heb. 9:14; 10:22) and the engraving of the Law on the heart (8:10; 10:16).

For further reading on this profound subject, see “Why the Mass When There’s No Need for Sin Offering?” and “Illustrating How Special the Mass Is” on Catholic.com.

-Tom Nash

Do you receive the Holy Spirit at baptism and at confirmation? Or simply at baptism, and everything is confirmed at confirmation?

It's clear from Scripture that we receive the Holy Spirit at baptism. As St. Peter tells the crowds on Pentecost, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). And when St. Paul finds a group of disciples who *haven't* received the Holy Spirit, he asks them, “Into what then

were you baptized?” (Acts 19:3). As the *Catechism* says, “The two principal effects [of baptism] are purification from sins and new birth in the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1262), and it’s through baptism that you become “an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1279).

But it’s also clear from Scripture that there’s *another* sacrament given after baptism that’s tied to the Holy Spirit. We see this most clearly from Acts 8, with the mission in Samaria of St. Philip, one of the first deacons. When the Samaritans “believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). But then we’re told that “when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them” (vv. 14–16a).

Notice that the Samaritans are already baptized believers. Despite this, they haven’t “received the Holy Spirit” in the sense referred to here. They need something else, something that the deacon Philip can’t provide, even though he’s a capable preacher, and equipped to baptize. So what is that “something”? In Acts, the sacrament isn’t named. We’re just told that the apostles go down to Samaria, and that “they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:17). Eventually, this sacrament (distinct from the “laying on of hands” that happens at ordination) will be given the name *confirmation* in the West, and *chrismation* in the East (CCC 1289).

As a sacrament, confirmation “brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace,” giving us “a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the Faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the cross” (CCC 1303). In baptism, we are filled with the Spirit, becoming his temples. But in confirmation, we’re filled to *overflowing*, “in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds” (CCC 1316).

– Joe Heschmeyer

How do we understand what Paul says, that there is no one who is without sin in view of the Immaculate Conception? Protestants quote this line to argue against Mary being sinless.

In Romans 3:10–11, St. Paul says that “as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no

one seeks for God.’” And in verses 22–23, he says, “For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

These passages are sometimes used to “disprove” Mary’s Immaculate Conception by arguing that this literally means everyone is a sinner. But is Paul really trying to say that there are *no* righteous individuals who have ever lived? This reading does not work.

First, we know Jesus Christ is both fully man and sinless. It’s tempting to say, “Well, obviously, Paul doesn’t mean to include Jesus,” but if your argument is that “no one” literally means *no one*, you can’t make one exception.

Second, we know that there were righteous men and women in the Old Testament. Paul spends time in Romans talking about Abraham (Rom. 4:1–12; see Gen. 15:6), but there are plenty of others. For instance, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation” (Gen. 6:9).

Third, we know that there were men and women who sought God in the Old and New Testaments alike. 2 Chronicles 15:3–4, for instance, talks about how the Israelites went astray from God, but then sought him again.

So, if Paul isn’t trying to say that literally no people have ever been without sin, or have ever been righteous, or have ever sought God, what *is* going on here? There are two clues. The first clue is that Paul says, “as it is written.” In other words, if you want to understand what Paul is talking about, you need to understand the reference.

The reference is to Psalm 14, which uses poetic and hyperbolic language. In verses 2–3, the Psalmist says “the Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any that act wisely, that seek after God. They have all gone astray, they are all alike corrupt; there is none that does good, no, not one.” But two verses later, he says that the godless “shall be in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous.” If the righteous are persecuted by the unrighteous, they must exist.

The second clue is the phrase “for there is no distinction.” Naturally, we should be asking, distinction between *whom*? In context, it’s perfectly clear: Paul is saying that “all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin” (Rom. 3:9).

In other words, he’s not saying anything for or against the sinlessness of Mary (or of Jesus). He’s instead showing that both Jews and Gentiles need the gospel, which “is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). So the “no one” in question in Romans 3:11 refers to no tribe or group or class of people.

–Joe Heschmeyer



Duc in Altum

Christopher Check

One of the chief afflictions of the modern age is making our way through life far flung from those for whom our hearts long.

Jackie and I feel this disorder ever below the surface of our daily lives. Of our four sons, only one lives in Southern California, and he is two hours away. What is more, his work—for the Church, no less—has him on more airplanes than does mine. My own brothers are in Wisconsin and Texas. My closest friends, the men with whom I most enjoy conversation well into the night over something fermented or distilled, live in Kansas, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Colorado, Ohio, Virginia, and South Carolina. Seeing them is always a rush of joy, bidding farewell a profound ache.

Worst of all, I am feeling acutely the separation from my parents—they live in Texas—as my father, Paul, makes his way through his ninetieth year. His mortal coil is unwinding, and my brothers and I are presented with the opportunity to return a small measure of the care he gave us, with the challenge of not being present with him every day. Airplanes help, sort of, but they more remind me of how a technology can “fix” a problem that did not exist until the technology created it. There is no denying that planes, trains, and automobiles have exacerbated the restlessness that was in the American DNA from the first. We are a people whose ancestors moved far away from home. Our Lord, by contrast, worked, taught, lived, died, and rose from the dead within about a hundred-mile radius of his home. *A pied*, as the French say.

Don't ask me for chapter and verse, but somewhere Blaise Pascal mused that most of the world's problems are caused by people who cannot stay home. I share the blame. My own deracination hit escape velocity when I accepted a commission in the Marine Corps.

I also understand that Pascal's is not a universal principle. I'm happy that Junípero Serra decided to come to California. He was not building an empire, increasing the balance of his bank account, looking for a change of pace, or even just seeking adventure. He brought the means of salvation to the lost.

Some of us are called to evangelize distant lands, but for most of us, our neighbors suffice. I am impressed by the work of my friends Jacob Imam and Marc Barnes at the New Polity Institute in Steubenville, Ohio: not merely publishing a thoughtful magazine about the post-liberal political order, but also applying their ideas to the restoration of their struggling hometown. In reaction to rootlessness, God is inspiring men to set down roots.

What a comfort to have a God who works this way. He takes messes and draws out of them something better and greater than had the mess never been made. In the case of my father's final months, a platoon of my parents' dearest

friends has rallied. At the helm is my father's friend, also Paul. He and his wife Carol are retired now, but they devoted their professional years to running a home for single elderly ladies who had nowhere else to go to die with dignity. As a practical matter, I could not ask for more experienced care for my father—all freely given—yet the great grace is the common love of God and of his Catholic Church that binds the friendship.

A veritable Catholic works-of-mercy community has encircled my father and mother with love. I am deeply grateful to them all. All the way from Connecticut, Jeanne the physician provides regular medical counsel on the phone. Prairie Troubadours fan Christy gets them to daily Mass and helps with meals and grocery shopping. David, Lisa, and their ever-joyful son George make regular social calls, always with fresh lobster bisque, elaborate flower arrangements, and the world's best bone broth. Sam, a retired Army nurse, sees to my mother's care and gets her to doctor's appointments. Marine Corps veteran Matthew makes weekly maintenance checks on the house. Fr. Harkins, pastor of Fort Worth's Latin Mass parish, sees to sacramental visits and no small amount of conversation as well. And father and son carpenters Rob and R.L., from the same parish, fashioned by hand a beautiful coffin—at once graceful and virile.

Am I being a little selfish in using my column to thank these great and generous Catholic souls who have made my father's end of life such a grace? Perhaps. But I can think of no better way to say thank you than to tell tens of thousands of readers how grateful my brothers and I are.

In the midst of my father's final time, and the unhappy distance that separates my parents from their sons, God has invited a joyful band—a joyful Catholic band—to unite and share in his grace. May all of our deaths inspire such generosity, conviviality, and hope. And if this column inspires you to consider how you might live closer to your extended family—well, all to the good, too.



Kerry Beck

last things

Marketing Manager, Purchasing Agent,
Inventory Control Manager, Publicist,
Lord of the Locks...

Sits in the hot seat for his “last things”

THE LAST BOOK I READ

I just finished reading the manuscript for Sola Scriptura Doesn't Work: 25 Practical Reasons to Reject the Doctrine of “Bible Alone”, - it's a great read and a valuable resource. Joel Peters has really knocked it out of the park. As far as reading for pleasure, I just finished Harlan Coben's Think Twice and I'm currently reading David Baldacci's A Calamity of Souls and Steve Berry's Red Star Falling.

THE LAST TIME I BELLY LAUGHED

Do you remember the line from the movie Arthur? “Sometimes I just think funny things” (with a giggle?) I probably laugh out loud at my own thoughts and ideas at least 2 or 3 times a day.

These days the world is so absurd, it's easy to find humor in pretty much anything. Belly laughs come at home. My wife and I make each other laugh to the point of crying on a regular basis. Her laugh is that one thing which I value the most.

THE LAST PERFECT DAY OFF

LOL. What's a day off? Can't say I really remember. Probably the day Lamont Butler hit the buzzer beater against FAU to send the San Diego State Aztecs to the NCAA Finals against UCONN. That was a great day. That was a great couple of weeks. Exhilarating.

THE LAST CONCERT YOU ATTENDED, ALBUM YOU BOUGHT

Well, I just saw Daryl Hall and Elvis Costello. When this issue comes out, I more than likely will be going to see Eric Clapton. As far as albums are concerned, my 2 recent buys are Gravity Stairs by Crowded House (#fanboy) and One Deep River by Mark Knopfler. Knopfler always takes me to a good place. Always.

LAST TIME YOU PLAYED A TEAM SPORT

Probably been 8 months since I played basketball, and I played 3-4 days a week into my 60's. But age, you know. I could still jump in for a game or two, but I'd pay for it. I live vicariously through the teams I follow.



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