

## General Questions

- **Why don't animals have souls?**

We must be clear, first and foremost, in our correct understanding of the word "soul" that ancient and medieval writers, both pagan and Christian, often used terms that we translate as "soul" (Greek psyche, Latin anima) to refer in general to that part of an animate (living) creature which sets it apart from inanimate (nonliving) creatures. If this merely "life principle" is what one means by soul, then the answer is yes. All living things, including animals, have a soul (anima - a force that animates them or life). Now, when any living thing dies, its soul is separated from its body. In the case of plants and animals the soul ceases to exist. But in the case of humanity, the soul remains in existence; it is eternal by means of its supernatural character. Theological Speakeasy Questions Compilation

Animals do not have immortal souls because they are not made in the image and likeness of God. Man is unique in being a creation in this regard (see Genesis 1:26), and "soul" signifies this spiritual and eternal aspect of mankind. In having life, St Thomas Aquinas will write that animals are of a higher order than inanimate objects or plants, however, they have no eternal or spiritual nature. Animals may both bless and glorify God in their existence as does all of creation and they serve to enhance the life of mankind who is unique, made "very good". In any case, we can be assured that God loves every creature he makes. God loves them even more than we do.

CCC 363 In Sacred Scripture the term "soul" often refers to human life or the entire human person. But "soul" also refers to the innermost aspect of man, that which is of greatest value in him, that by which he is most especially in God's image: "soul" signifies the spiritual principle in man.

CCC 364 The human body shares in the dignity of "the image of God": it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit. (1004; 2289)

CCC 2416 Animals are God's creatures. He surrounds them with his providential care. By their mere existence they bless him and give him glory. Thus men owe them kindness. We should recall the gentleness with which saints like St. Francis of Assisi or St. Philip Neri treated animals. (344)

- **Where are the Holy Days of Obligation in the Bible?**

The basic answer to this question is contained in the Commandments, specifically in the Third Commandment, to keep the Lord's Day holy. Every Lord's Day (Sunday) is a holy day of obligation. Additionally, a few defining key

events and saints in the Church have the weight of a holy day of obligation. This is a specific feast day when the Catholic faithful are obliged to gather together as a whole and worship at Holy Mass. They are not listed in the Bible overtly but are contained in the commands of God and made explicit by His Church in time. The obligation flows from precepts (rules) of the Church. The Precepts of the Catholic Church are a description of the absolute minimum actions required of Catholics regarding the Church. The Church uses these precepts to remind us that our life requires a commitment to prayer and active participation in the liturgy and sacraments. If we fall below this bare-minimum level, we cannot rightly consider ourselves to be in full communion with the Catholic Church. Together with the Ten Commandments, they represent the minimum level of moral living. Intentional violation of the precepts or the Commandments is a grave matter, meaning a mortal sin.

#### The Precepts of the Church:

CCC 2041: The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the indispensable minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor:

CCC 2042: The first precept ("You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.") requires the faithful to participate in the Eucharistic celebration when the Christian community gathers together on the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord.

The second precept ("You shall confess your sins at least once a year.") ensures preparation for the Eucharist by the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, which continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness.

The third precept ("You shall humbly receive your Creator in Holy Communion at least during the Easter season.") guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy.

CCC 2043: The fourth precept ("You shall keep holy the holy days of obligation.") completes the Sunday observance by participation in the principal liturgical feasts which honor the mysteries of the Lord, the Virgin Mary, and the saints.

The fifth precept ("You shall observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence.") ensures the times of asceticism (self-denial) and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts; they help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart.

The faithful also have the duty of providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his abilities

- **The problem of human knowledge being enough for life - Is man's knowledge and understanding of life adequate or must we rely on faith?**

Mere human knowledge is extremely limited when seen in the eternal light and Truth who is God. Man cannot save himself. Humanity is meant for more than an earthly life and earthly knowledge because of the God from whom we are created and sent forth. Earthly knowledge certainly has no capacity to redeem or save the human race.

We can come to know God by virtue of our reason alone. He provides constant revelation of Himself in created realities. However, God fully reveals Himself in an ultimate way through the Sacred Scriptures and in particular through the Gospels by the incarnation of Christ and His Body the Church so that we may be reconciled to Him and be with him for eternity in heaven. Through divine revelation, God chose to show forth and communicate Himself and the eternal decisions of His will regarding the salvation of men. That is to say, He chose to share with them those divine treasures which totally transcend the understanding of the human mind. (Dei Verbum 6)

CCC 50 - By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation. Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. This he does by revealing the mystery, his plan of loving goodness, formed from all eternity in Christ, for the benefit of all men. God has fully revealed this plan by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

CCC 54 "God, who creates and conserves all things by his Word, provides men with constant evidence of himself in created realities. And furthermore, wishing to open up the way to heavenly salvation, he manifested himself to our first parents from the very beginning."<sup>6</sup> He invited them to intimate communion with himself and clothed them with resplendent grace and justice.

- **At our parish why do we use a cross with the Risen Christ on it for Mass processions while we have a large crucifix in the sanctuary. This is confusing mix of symbols. Why not just stick with a crucifix?"**

We should just stick with the crucifix for the processional cross. The crucifix is the ultimate symbol; of God's love for all the world. The Ven Archbishop Fulton Sheen writes:

"How could Love be Love if it costs not the Lover? If Christ had come down, there would have been the Cross, but not the crucifix. The Cross is contradiction; the Crucifixion is the solution of the contradiction of life

and death by showing that death is the condition of a higher life” (Sheen, Life of Christ).

The USCCB writes that “The cross with the image of Christ crucified is a reminder of Christ's paschal mystery. It draws us into the mystery of suffering and makes tangible our belief that our suffering when united with the passion and death of Christ leads to redemption” (USCCB, Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship). This is why the General Instructions of the Roman Missal (GIRM) specifies that a cross with Christ crucified should be carried in the procession (GIRM 122).

Given all this, we should be careful not to diminish the meaning of the Resurrection. Many altar frescos depict the Resurrection in Catholic Churches across the world. The depiction of the Christ as the risen King on the cross should not disturb us. We should be thinking of both his death and his triumph over death. As you hear in the Easter liturgy, this is our Easter Paschal joy! Christ's death on the cross was completed in the resurrection, and the resurrection makes no sense without the cross.

- **What is the relationship between suffering and spirituality?**

Suffering is united to spirituality when we give our suffering to Christ in prayerful action as a means for the uplifting of others. It is precisely because we “suffer with him” that we come to share in Christ’s glory. Suffering is what causes us to enter more deeply, intimately, and profoundly into Christ. Suffering embraced by a believer is redemptive. Suffering without Christ is a tragedy.

Suffering is a tool:

Colossians 1:24-26 “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church, of which I am a minister in accordance with God’s stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the word of God, the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past.

Suffering as our joy”

(1 Peter 4:12-14) “Beloved, do not be surprised that a trial by fire is occurring among you, as if something strange were happening to you. But rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”

- **Does fasting from meat on Fridays apply only to the Lenten season? (I've recently caught wind of some debate over this one)**

“Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. In addition, Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence.

For members of the Latin Catholic Church, the norms on fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal. The norms concerning abstinence from meat are binding upon members of the Latin Catholic Church from age 14 onwards.”

CCC #1438 *“The seasons and days of penance in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church's penitential practice. These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary works).”*

Can. 1249 “The divine law binds all the Christian faithful to do penance each in his or her own way. In order for all to be united among themselves by some common observance of penance, however, penitential days are prescribed on which the Christian faithful devote themselves in a special way to prayer, perform works of piety and charity, and deny themselves by fulfilling their own obligations more faithfully and especially by observing fast and abstinence, according to the norm of the following canons.”

*Can. 1250 “The penitential days and times in the universal Church are every Friday of the whole year and the season of Lent.”*

Can. 1251 “Abstinence from meat, or from some other food as determined by the Episcopal Conference, is to be observed on all Fridays unless a solemnity should fall on a Friday. Abstinence and fasting are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.”

Can. 1252 “The law of abstinence binds those who have completed their fourteenth year. The law of fasting binds those who have attained their majority, until the beginning of their sixtieth year. Pastors of souls and parents are to ensure that even those who by reason of their age are not bound by the law of fasting and abstinence, are taught the true meaning of penance.”

*Can. 1253 “The conference of bishops can determine more precisely the observance of fast and abstinence as well as substitute other forms of penance, especially works of charity and exercises of piety, in whole or in part, for abstinence and fast.”*

*USCCB 1966 Pastoral Statement on Penance and Abstinence*

18. Gratefully remembering this, Catholic peoples from time immemorial have set apart Friday for special penitential observance by which they gladly suffer with Christ that they may one day be glorified with Him. This is the heart of the

tradition of abstinence from meat on Friday where that tradition has been observed in the holy Catholic Church.

19. Changing circumstances, including economic, dietary, and social elements, have made some of our people feel that the renunciation of the eating of meat is not always and for everyone the most effective means of practicing penance. Meat was once an exceptional form of food; now it is commonplace.

20. Accordingly, since the spirit of penance primarily suggests that we discipline ourselves in that which we enjoy most; to many in our day abstinence from meat no longer implies penance, while renunciation of other things would be more penitential.

21. For these and related reasons, the Catholic bishops of the United States, far from downgrading the traditional penitential observance of Friday, and motivated precisely by the desire to give the spirit of penance greater vitality, especially on Fridays, the day that Jesus died, urge our Catholic people henceforth to be guided by the following norms.

22. Friday itself remains a special day of penitential observance throughout the year, a time when those who seek perfection will be mindful of their personal sins and the sins of mankind which they are called upon to help expiate in union with Christ Crucified.

23. Friday should be in each week something of what Lent is in the entire year. For this reason we urge all to prepare for that weekly Easter that comes with each Sunday by freely making of every Friday a day of self-denial and mortification in prayerful remembrance of the passion of Jesus Christ.

24. Among the works of voluntary self-denial and personal penance which we especially commend to our people for the future observance of Friday, even though we hereby terminate the traditional law of abstinence binding under pain of sin, as the sole prescribed means of observing Friday, we give first place to abstinence from flesh meat. We do so in the hope that the Catholic community will ordinarily continue to abstain from meat by free choice as formerly we did in obedience to Church law. Our expectation is based on the following considerations:

Exodus 34:28 "So Moses was there with the LORD for forty days and forty nights without eating any food or drinking any water, and he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten words."

Daniel 10:3 "I ate no savory food, took no meat or wine, and did not anoint myself at all until the end of the three weeks."

Luke 4: 2-4 "For forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If

you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

- **Does it do any good to pray?**

Yes! Jesus tells us to pray and then teaches us how. He also models prayer throughout the Gospels. If it does no good to pray, why would he tell us to do so?

*1 John 5:14-15* - And we have this confidence in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, we know that what we have asked him for is ours.

1 Timothy 2:8 It is my wish, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands, without anger or argument.

The way Christ taught us to pray (look to the italics) (Matthew 6:9-13)  
*Our Father, Who art in heaven Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Catechism: "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God." But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or "out of the depths" of a humble and contrite heart? He who humbles himself will be exalted; *humility* is the foundation of prayer, Only when we humbly acknowledge that "we do not know how to pray as we ought," are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. "Man is a beggar before God." (CCC 2559)

In the first place, we ought to be astonished by this fact: when we praise God or give him thanks for his benefits in general, we are not particularly concerned whether or not our prayer is acceptable to him. On the other hand, we demand to see the results of our petitions. What is the image of God that motivates our prayer: an instrument to be used? or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? (CCC 2735)

Are we convinced that "we do not know how to pray as we ought"? Are we asking God for "what is good for us"? Our Father knows what we need before we ask him, but he awaits our petition because the dignity of his children lies in their freedom. We must pray, then, with his Spirit of freedom, to be able truly to know what he wants.<sup>25</sup> (CCC .2736)

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." If we ask with a divided heart, we are "adulterers"; God cannot answer us, for he desires our well-being, our life. (CCC 2737)

- **Why do we not have female priests? I've heard one explanation for this but would like to hear more.**

The Church sees herself as bound by the fact that Jesus chose men exclusively to be present at the Last Supper for the institution of the priesthood and in the conferral of authority at His ascension (Matt 28:16-20). Pope John Paul II declared in 1994 “that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church’s faithful”.

The ordained priesthood (and consequently pastoral ministry) has always been conferred on men. In male priests the Christian community was supposed to see a representation of Jesus Christ. Being a priest is a special service that also makes demands on a man in his gender-specific role as male and father. It is, however, not some form of masculine superiority over women. As we see in Mary, women play a role in the Church that is no less central than the masculine role, but it is feminine. Eve became the mother of all the living (Gen 3:20). As “mothers of all the living”, women have special gifts and abilities. Without their sort of teaching, preaching, charity, spirituality, and guidance, the Church would be “paralyzed on one side”.

Matthew 28:16-20 - “The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Leviticus 8: 2-13 - “The LORD said to Moses, Take Aaron along with his sons, the vestments, the anointing oil, the bull for a purification offering, the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread, then assemble the whole community at the entrance of the tent of meeting. Moses did as the LORD had commanded. When the community had assembled at the entrance of the tent of meeting, Moses told them: “This is what the LORD has ordered to be done.” Bringing forward Aaron and his sons, Moses first washed them with water. Then he put the tunic on Aaron, girded him with the sash, clothed him with the robe, placed the ephod on him, and girded him with the ephod’s embroidered belt, fastening the ephod on him with it. He then set the breastpiece on him, putting the Urim and Thummim in it. He put the turban on his head, attaching the gold medallion, the sacred headband, on the front of the turban, as the LORD had commanded Moses to do. Taking the anointing oil, Moses anointed and consecrated the tabernacle and all that was in it. Then he sprinkled some of the oil seven times on the altar, and anointed the altar, with all its utensils, and the laver, with its base, to consecrate them. He also poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him, to consecrate him. Moses likewise brought forward Aaron’s sons, clothed them with tunics, girded them



with sashes, and put skullcaps on them, as the LORD had commanded him to do."

Catechism: "Only a baptized man (vir) validly receives sacred ordination." The Lord Jesus chose men (viri) to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry. The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ's return. The Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible. (CCC 1577)

#### Pope John Paul II

"Although the teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal Tradition of the Church and firmly taught by the Magisterium in its more recent documents, at the present time in some places it is nonetheless considered still open to debate, or the Church's judgment that women are not to be admitted to ordination is considered to have a merely disciplinary force. Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Luke 22:32), I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful" (*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* 4).

- **Is it okay that I call myself a Catholic but in my heart but do not believe in all the things were told to be is the correct way to be?**

No. We are **obliged** to accept with faith what the Church teaches. The Church is the bulwark of truth. When we remain in Jesus we recognize the truth and to whom else can we turn to for truth except for the Church - the body of Christ - faithfully guards the faith.

CCC 171 The Church, "the pillar and bulwark of the truth," faithfully guards "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." She guards the memory of Christ's words; it is she who from generation to generation hands on the apostles' confession of faith. (1 Tim 3:15; Jude 3) As a mother who teaches her children to speak and so to understand and communicate, the Church our Mother teaches us the language of faith in order to introduce us to the understanding and the life of faith.

1 Tim 3: 15-16 "But if I should be delayed, you should know how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth. Undeniably great is the mystery of devotion ... "

Jude 3 Beloved, although I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I now feel a need to write to encourage you to contend for the faith that was once for all handed down to the holy ones.

John 8: 31-32: Jesus then said to those Jews who believed in him, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

John 6: 67-69: Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

CCC 88: The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.

CCC 89: There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure. Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith.( Cf. Jn 8:31-32)

CCC 166: Faith is a personal act—the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbor impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith.

- **Why are we asked to believe that animals do not have a soul, therefore "pets", don't go to heaven?**

Jack Wintz OFM writes that it would be foolish to think of heaven as devoid of animals and plant life. Visions of heaven in the Old Testament in particular abound with life. Ezekiel 47 describes a stream teeming with creatures and trees with fruit etc. Therefore there are animals.

Wintz writes; "True nonhuman creatures do not have human souls, but obviously have some kind of principle of life in order to do the things that they do. An animal that shows affection and loyalty, for example, surely has some kind of "soul" or inner light that allows it to enjoy life and give great joy to its caretakers. ... There are a lot of things we just don't know about life with God,

and one of these is how nonhumans participate in that life.” (Wintz OFM, Will I See My Dog in Heaven, 16)

CCC 366 The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God—it is not “produced” by the parents—and also that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection.( Cf. Pius XII, Humani Generis: DS 3896; Paul VI, CPG § 8; Lateran Council V (1513): DS 1440.

CCC 1703 Endowed with “a spiritual and immortal” soul, the human person is “the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake.”( GS 24 § 3) From his conception, he is destined for eternal beatitude.

CCC 33 The human person: With his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness, man questions himself about God’s existence. In all this he discerns signs of his spiritual soul. The soul, the “seed of eternity we bear in ourselves, irreducible to the merely material,”(GS 18 § 1; cf. 14 § 2) can have its origin only in God.

- **Why doesn't our Father bless those in financial need with the lottery for example, but let's others be blessed instead?**

We receive the blessings that we need ... these blessings can come in the form of earthy comfort as well as earthy trial...

Romans 8:28 We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

James 1: 2-4 - Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. And let perseverance be perfect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- **It is understood that men and women are of equal dignity, but by and large culturally it is men who either occupy higher levels of authority or have such authority deferred to them by virtue of their sex. The role and perception of women in society has drastically changed in the past several decades, in both favorable ways and other ways not quite so. We now have the buzz phrase “war on women” and large followings of feminists. On the other end, there are those that insist upon the notion of a strict, uncompromising patriarchal family model with wives submissive to the wills of their husbands. In this light what is the appropriate way to regard women?**

We should not fall into the trap of parsing out how you should treat this one or that one, as if their life has some sort of unequal dignity. In the end, you treat all with dignity and love.

CCC 1930 Respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from his dignity as a creature. These rights are prior to society and must be recognized by it. They are the basis of the moral legitimacy of every authority: by flouting them, or refusing to recognize them in its positive legislation, a society undermines its own moral legitimacy. If it does not respect them, authority can rely only on force or violence to obtain obedience from its subjects. It is the Church's role to remind men of good will of these rights and to distinguish them from unwarranted or false claims.

- **Why do the priests wear vestments? What is the history behind this?**

The wearing of vestments goes all the way back to the time of Exodus and God's designation of Aaron and his sons as Priests:

Exodus 40:12-15 - Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and there wash them with water. Clothe Aaron with the sacred vestments and anoint him, thus consecrating him as my priest. 14 Bring forward his sons also, and clothe them with the tunics. 15 As you have anointed their father, anoint them also as my priests. Thus, by being anointed, shall they receive a perpetual priesthood throughout all future generations.

Thomas à Kempis writes that "a priest clad in the sacred vestments acts in Christ's place that he may pray to God both for himself and for all people in a suppliant and humble manner. He has before and behind him the sign of the Lord's cross that he may always remember the Passion of Christ. It is before him, on the chasuble that he may look closely upon the footsteps of Christ and try to follow them fervently. It is behind him—he is signed with it—that he may gladly suffer for God any adversities inflicted by others. (Thomas à Kempis. The Imitation of Christ).

- **What does the church teach about ghosts?**

St. Thomas Aquinas in his supplement to Summa Theologiae ". . . according to the disposition of Divine providence, separated souls sometimes come forth from their abode and appear to men . . . It is also credible that this may occur sometimes to the damned, and that for man's instruction and intimidation they be permitted to appear to the living; or again in order to seek our suffrages, as to those who are detained in purgatory." (ST Sppl., 69, 3)

In his letter to Evodius, St. Augustine flatly rejects the idea that the dead can return for the simple reason that the soul carries with it no material body that can “return” and be perceived by the living.

CCC 1021 Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ. The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith. The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul -- a destiny which can be different for some and for others.

CCC 1022 Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven--through a purification or immediately, -- or immediate and everlasting damnation. At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love.

CCC 2116 All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to “unveil” the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone.

- **Prove to me God’s love!**

The proof is Christ upon the cross. “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.” (John 15:13-14)

God doesn’t just love; He is love. His nature and essence are love; not a sappy, sentimental, romantic feeling but an agape love, a love of self-sacrifice. He demonstrated His sacrificial love by sending His Son to the cross to pay for our sin (1 Jn 4:10), by drawing us to Himself (Jn 6:44), by forgiving us of our rebellion against Him, and by sending His Holy Spirit to dwell within us. He did this in spite of the fact that we did not deserve it.

The greatest expression of His love is communicated to us in Jn. 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.”

God's love is personal. He knows each of us individually and loves us personally. His is a mighty love that has no beginning and no end. He loves us

not because we deserve to be loved or because of any excellence we possess, but because it is His nature to love and He must be true to His nature.

Many Biblical verses speak of God as love itself and of God's expression of Himself as love. A few are listed below:

"With age-old love I have loved you; so I have kept my mercy toward you. (Jer. 31: 3b)

"Because you are precious in my eyes and honored, and I love you" (Is. 43:4a)

"As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love." (Jn. 15:9)

"In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him." (1 Jn. 4:9)

CCC 221 But St. John goes even further when he affirms that "God is love": God's very being is love. By sending his only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange. (733; 851; 257)

- **Why does the priest kiss the altar?**

By the fourth century Christian worship appropriated this sign of honor since the altar was the "table of the Lord." As the altar came to be constructed of stone, it was looked upon as the symbol of Christ, the cornerstone and spiritual rock of the Church. With the growth of the cult of martyrs, relics were placed beneath, and the kiss was seen as greeting the saints and through them the whole Church triumphant. Until the thirteenth century the altar was kissed three times during the Mass: the beginning, during the Eucharistic prayer, and before the dismissal. Today the altar is venerated with a kiss only at the beginning and end of Mass.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal states; "When the priest and ministers come to the sanctuary, they greet the altar. As a sign of veneration, the priest and ordained ministers kiss the altar; the priest may also incense it. (27)

- **What is an annulment, what is the process, and how much time does it take to take effect?**

Some marriages fail. Separations often harden into divorces. The differences between the spouses become irreconcilable, and there is no hope of a return to conjugal living. In such a case, either of the parties to the marriage may seek from the church a clarification of their marital status. They ask whether

their failed marriage was canonically valid at its outset. They do so by petitioning, in the church's court, for an annulment of the marriage. They ask the judges to declare their marriage invalid according to canon law. They request a declaration ration of nullity, usually in order for them to remarry.

There are three possible causes of the invalidity of a marriage: (1) the presence of a diriment impediment (a disability that voids the marriage), (2) a defect of consent, or (3) lack of canonical form. If there is sufficient proof that the marriage was invalid from the beginning, a tribunal declares its nullity. (Some decisions are subject to a confirmatory review by the next level of tribunal.) The canonical annulment usually means that both parties are then free to remarry. (James A. Coriden. An Introduction to Canon Law)

- **Why is it a sin not to go to Sunday Mass?**

If someone else or something else has managed to become more important to us than the ONE UNCHANGEABLE SOURCE OF MY LIFE AND SALVATION, then there is only dust. The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason, the faithful are obliged to fully participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation for our own sake. We arrive to give God all the glory and thanks and praise with our whole being. This opens the door to receive the Mercy, Strength, and Unity which is God/Love. Of course, given our frail lives, one may be excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin. (CCC 2181)

Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (CCC 2182)

If we fail to keep the Lord's Day with faithful worship at Sunday Mass for selfish reasons, then not only are we breaking the third commandment to keep the Sabbath Holy, but may even be breaking the first commandment by placing something or someone before God and serving a false idol.

Holy Mass is the Source and Summit of our faith life because of what lies at its heart: the Eucharist, the source of all life. It is not just a symbol of Christ, but is God made Truly Present to us in the Real Presence that we don't experience through prayer alone.

"The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows. For the goal of apostolic endeavor is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his church, to take part in the Sacrifice and to eat the Lord's Supper" (Vatican II Sacrosanctum Concilium 10).

CCC 2177: The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. "Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church.

CCC 2180: The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass." "The precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass which is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day."

- **What constitutes true meaning and happiness, according to the Church, in a modern culture that appears set on attaining it, yet frequently failing to do so? Think especially of concrete practices and examples.**

St John Paul II - "For me, the mass constitutes the center of my life and my every day. **Nothing means more to me, or gives me greater joy...**"

Psalm 37:4 "Find your delight in the LORD who will give you your heart's desire."

Isaiah 35:10 "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and enter Zion singing, crowned with everlasting joy; They meet with joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning flee away."

Luke 2:10 "The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

CCC #27 The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for.

CCC #1035 The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

CCC #1718 The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it: "We all want to live happily; in the whole human race there is no one who does not assent to this proposition, even before it is fully articulated."

CCC #1818 The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire



men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

CCC #2548 Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God. "The promise [of seeing God] surpasses all beatitude. . . . In Scripture, to see is to possess. . . . Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive."

St. Augustine "How is it, then, that I seek you Lord? Since in seeking you, my God, I seek a happy life, let me seek you so that my soul may live, for my body draws life from my soul and my soul draws life from you."

St. Thomas Aquinas: "God alone Satisfies"

- **Catholic doctrine upholds our right of self defense. Yet I've heard priests should imitate Christ and be willing to waive the right of self defense. Many martyrs were crowned this way. What is the right answer? Can clergy and religious use violence to defend themselves?**

Yes. Clergy and religious have no special exception. Life is to be defended! All life must be protected as well, even the life of the aggressor. Someone can use violence but it must be used in moderation to protect life, not to cause greater harm to the aggressor than is necessary to get them to stop. In all cases though, moral actions must be driven by Conscience. Whether to defend life, even your own, must be driven by use of a well-formed conscience.

CCC 2263 The legitimate defense of persons and societies is not an exception to the prohibition against the murder of the innocent that constitutes intentional killing. "The act of self-defense can have a double effect: the preservation of one's own life; and the killing of the aggressor.... The one is intended, the other is not." (1737)

CCC 2264 Love toward oneself remains a fundamental principle of morality. Therefore it is legitimate to insist on respect for one's own right to life. Someone who defends his life is not guilty of murder even if he is forced to deal his aggressor a lethal blow: (2196)

If a man in self-defense uses more than necessary violence, it will be unlawful: whereas if he repels force with moderation, his defense will be lawful.... Nor is it necessary for salvation that a man omit the act of moderate self-defense to

avoid killing the other man, since one is bound to take more care of one's own life than of another's.

CCC 1777 Moral conscience, present at the heart of the person, enjoins him at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil. It bears witness to the authority of truth in reference to the supreme Good to which the human person is drawn, and it welcomes the commandments. **When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking.**

CCC 1778 Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. **In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law:** (1749)

Conscience is a law of the mind; yet [Christians] would not grant that it is nothing more; I mean that it was not a dictate, nor conveyed the notion of responsibility, of duty, of a threat and a promise.... [Conscience] is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ. (John Henry Cardinal Newman, "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk," V, in *Certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching II* (London: Longmans Green, 1885), 248)

1779 It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience. This requirement of interiority is all the more necessary as life often distracts us from any reflection, self-examination or introspection:  
Return to your conscience, question it.... Turn inward, brethren, and in everything you do, see God as your witness. (St. Augustine, In ep Jo. 8, 9: PL 35, 2041.)

- **Near the opposite end of the concept of free will lie the philosophies of determinism and similar notions. What is the Church's position or counter argument on such philosophies?**

#### MAN'S FREEDOM

1730 God created man a rational being, conferring on him the dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions. "God willed that man should be 'left in the hand of his own counsel,' so that he might of his own accord seek his Creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him."<sup>26</sup> Man is rational and therefore like God; he is created with free will and is master over his acts.<sup>27</sup>

## I. FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

1731 Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. By free will one shapes one's own life. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God, our beatitude.

1732 As long as freedom has not bound itself definitively to its ultimate good which is God, there is the possibility of *choosing between good and evil*, and thus of growing in perfection or of failing and sinning. This freedom characterizes properly human acts. It is the basis of praise or blame, merit or reproach.

1733 The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to "the slavery of sin."<sup>28</sup>

1734 Freedom makes man *responsible* for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary. Progress in virtue, knowledge of the good, and asceticism enhance the mastery of the will over its acts.

1735 *Imputability* and responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological or social factors.

1736 Every act directly willed is imputable to its author: Thus the Lord asked Eve after the sin in the garden: "What is this that you have done?"<sup>29</sup> He asked Cain the same question.<sup>30</sup> The prophet Nathan questioned David in the same way after he committed adultery with the wife of Uriah and had him murdered.<sup>31</sup> An action can be indirectly voluntary when it results from negligence regarding something one should have known or done: for example, an accident arising from ignorance of traffic laws.

1737 An effect can be tolerated without being willed by its agent; for instance, a mother's exhaustion from tending her sick child. A bad effect is not imputable if it was not willed either as an end or as a means of an action, e.g., a death a person incurs in aiding someone in danger. For a bad effect to be imputable it must be foreseeable and the agent must have the possibility of avoiding it, as in the case of manslaughter caused by a drunken driver.

1738 Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The *right to the exercise of freedom*, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person. This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order.<sup>32</sup>

## IN BRIEF

1743 "God willed that man should be left in the hand of his own counsel (cf. *Sir* 15:14), so that he might of his own accord seek his creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him" (*GS* 17 § 1).

1744 Freedom is the power to act or not to act, and so to perform deliberate acts of one's own. Freedom attains perfection in its acts when directed toward God, the sovereign Good.

1745 Freedom characterizes properly human acts. It makes the human being responsible for acts of which he is the voluntary agent. His deliberate acts properly belong to him.

1746 The imputability or responsibility for an action can be diminished or nullified by ignorance, duress, fear, and other psychological or social factors.

1747 The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in religious and moral matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of man. But the exercise of freedom does not entail the putative right to say or do anything.

1748 "For freedom Christ has set us free" (*Gal* 5:1).

- **Why are we meant to fight so hard for a good life while we are down here?**

Our struggle is a result of our divided nature. As a result, the whole life of men, both individual and social, shows itself to be a struggle, and a dramatic one, between good and evil, between light and darkness.

"The whole of man's history has been the story of our combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield man has to struggle to do what is right, and it is at great cost to himself, and aided by God's grace, that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity. (*GS* 37 § 2.)

James 1: 2-4 - Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. And let perseverance be perfect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

1 Peter 1:3-7 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time. In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more

precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- **Why can the Catholic Church have so much value in its churches? Such as the gold and expensive art?**

“Very rightly the fine arts are considered to rank among the noblest activities of man’s genius, and this applies especially to religious art and to its highest achievement, which is sacred art. These arts, by their very nature, are oriented toward the infinite beauty of God which they attempt in some way to portray by the work of human hands; they achieve their purpose of redounding to God’s praise and glory in proportion as they are directed the more exclusively to the single aim of turning men’s minds devoutly toward God. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium 122)

- **I want to help my atheist son-in-law to come back to God. How?**

First, there must be some desire or openness to receiving the Truth on anyone’s part. Then there are several ways that we can logically and clearly demonstrate how God absolutely exists by simply observing our world and then using natural reason to discern that there must be a God. Notice, this approach does not depend on the faith of an individual, but merely our God given reason and logic.

St Thomas Aquinas provides five very logical proofs for the existence of God:

**Proof 1:** Argument from Motion - Something set everything in motion. There had to be a first push. That push had to come from God. (This push could be the “big bang” which was the theory of a Catholic Priest and Scientist (Georges Lemaître) for the initial divine motion that got the universe moving). It is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.

**Proof 2:** Argument from Efficient Causes - Matter had to come from somewhere. Nothing exists prior to itself except the eternal divine being (the great “to be” that stands outside of all creation). The series of efficient causes cannot extend ad infinitum into the past, for then there would be no things existing now. Therefore, it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God

**Proof 3:** Argument from Possibility and Necessity -There had to be a first being / creator who is not contingent on anything (uncreated) who creates. Therefore, some being exists of its own necessity, and does not receive its existence from another being, but rather causes them. This is God.

**Proof 4:** Argument from Gradation of Being – Each creation is distinct in terms of what it produces. An acorn always produces an Oak. A kernel of corn always produces corn. Humans give birth to humans, not trees. There must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God

**Proof 5:** Argument from Design – There is a complexity to creation that is both grand and microscopic in design. For example, the heart beats due to a complex series of cellular and bio chemical reactions. The ecosystem is designed to sustain life in a way which is delicate in balance and massive in scale. The design is so grand that it could not have simply happened. Therefore, some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

But, the best proof for God is you! Begin the discussion with how you met Christ; relay the effects of having the Living God at the center of your life; share what it means to you to be a Christian; relate how Christ makes your life fulfilling, exciting, full of meaning, and joy filled. And then, live that life you profess!

- **Why do we have Jesus on the cross in our churches and non-Catholics do not?**

Baltimore Catechism Question 292: “If we knelt down before a plain white wall we could not pray with the devotion we would have kneeling before a crucifix. We see the representation of the nails in the hands and feet, the blood on the side, the thorns on the head; and all these must make us think of Our Lord's terrible sufferings. The picture of a friend hanging before us will often make us think of him when we would otherwise forget him. So also will the pictures of Our Lord and of the saints keep them often in our minds.

1. The Crucifix reminds us of Jesus as the Lamb of God. The type of the blood on the lintels for the Passover are a sign help us to understand that Christ's blood shed on the cross is the means through which we are also redeemed.

CCC 793 Christ unites us with his Passover: all his members must strive to resemble him, “until Christ be formed” in them. “For this reason we ... are taken up into the mysteries of his life, ... associated with his sufferings as the body with its head, suffering with him, that with him we may be glorified.”

2. The crucifix reminds us of the sacrificial nature of God's love:

Matthew 20: 26 But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; 27 whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. 28 Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom\* for many.”

John 15: 12-14 - This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

3. The crucifix reminds us that in the imitation of Christ we must die to self before we can rise again.

John 12:24-26 - Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me.

- **Why does the Church teach that there is no salvation outside of Christ? Not everyone is a Christian, but not everyone is maliciously bad, either.**

Yes, the Church is necessary for Salvation. It is through Christ and His Church that grace flows into the world. The path to Salvation is to and through Christ. Jesus said; "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father," (John 14:6-7). Jesus also said; "Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father" (Matthew 10:29). Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it (Lumen Gentium 14). However, "those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation"(Lumen Gentium 16). For those who are Baptized outside of the Church ... CCC 838 "The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized who are honored by the name of Christian, but do not profess the Catholic faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter."(LG 15) Those "who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church."(Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis redintegratio, 3)

- **Why do Catholics stop the Our Father at "deliver us from evil" while Protestants add "for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever"?**

Catholics believe that we should pray as Jesus taught us in Matthew 6:19-13. All that follows "deliver us from evil", is not in most versions of the Bible and therefore not part of the formal prayer as the Lord taught us. The prayer that

follows (For the kingdom and the power ... etc.) is called the Doxology or short hymn of praise.

Although the Doxology remains popular in use today as an extension of the Lord's Prayer, it is not included in any Catholic Bible, and most contemporary Protestant Bibles do not include it either: the ASV, CEV, ESV, GWT, GNT, NET, NIV, NIRV, NLT, and TNIV drop the phrase entirely, and others like the HCSB, NASB, and NCV bracket the phrase to set it off from the original text. It does remain in the KJ and NKJ translations.

The "final Doxology" was added to the prayer as a doxology in liturgy as early as the second century as mentioned in the Didache written in the late first or early second century (see CCC 2750) and is a summary of the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer (see 2855). The doxology is included in Chapter 8 of the Didache with the admonition to pray the prayer three times a day. The first liturgical use of the doxology (outside of the Didache) was as a part of the Lord's Prayer in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer in 1549. It was not seen in Scripture until the King James translation came about in 1601. In this case Liturgy influenced Scripture.

Most Protestant Theologians do not refute the point that the doxology is not part of the Lord's Prayer but a later addition. This is because the earliest preserved biblical texts which are the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus both from the 4th century do not include the doxology as part of the Lord's prayer. It was included in a later text (6th Century) but most theologians believe that this was likely a marginal notation by the scribe who copied the text and was never intended to be "added" to the Scripture.

This is the prayer as the Lord taught us and as Catholics recite it in order to pray it:

"This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one.

In the Mass, the separation between the Lord's Prayer, as He taught it, is clearly delineated from the doxology to preserve the distinction between what the Lord taught and what the liturgy of the Church later added.

- **If one worships very faithfully in another church, will they go to heaven?**

There is a big difference between people blessed with the amazing fullness of the Catholic Church who then choose to depart from this fullness for whatever reason, and the people who have grace available to them in partial ways outside of the Catholic Church. "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded," (Luke 12:48).



The only answer to this question is to say; “ask God”. Salvation comes from God alone (CCC 169). What we are assured of is that the fullness of faith subsists in the Catholic Church and we should earnestly seek to bring all to that fullness, Christ.

“Christ, present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism as through a door man enter the Church. Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved,” (Vatican II, Lumen Gentium 14)

However, we believe that those who are Baptized and faithfully worship and follow Christ that they too may be saved. “The [Catholic] Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter,” (Vatican II, Lumen Gentium, 15) “We can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them too He gives His gifts and graces whereby He is operative among them with His sanctifying power,” (Lumen Gentium 15).

Non-Catholics can be received into heaven. Individuals who are unaware that the Catholic Church is the one, true Church may still achieve salvation through the merits of the Church, despite their lack of knowledge. “This affirmation is not aimed at those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ and his Church: Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience - those too may achieve eternal salvation.” (CCC 847)

- **Why people don't think Catholics are Christians?**

First of all, for any non-Catholic Christian to assert such a claim upon all validly baptized Catholics is an extremely uncharitable and a misinformed judgment of the worst kind. In fact, Catholics are the most fulfilled and complete Christians. This is not because of man's willing or doing it, but it is by the design of Christ Himself who needed to impart all that He is to those who would love and preserve Him, in spite of all human frailty. Protestants, “our separated brethren, whether considered as individuals or as Communities and Churches, are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those who through Him were born again into one body, and with Him quickened to newness of life-that unity which the Holy Scriptures and the ancient Tradition of the Church proclaim. For it is only through Christ's Catholic

Church, which is “the all-embracing means of salvation,” that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation,” (Vatican II, Unitatis Redintegratio 4).

The suggestion that Catholics are not Christians but are devotees of a strange and dangerous cult is spread by many Evangelical Protestants. They incorrectly state that the Catholic Church abandoned the Bible for Man-Made Traditions and that Catholicism violates the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone (sola gratia) or justification through faith (sola fide). An interesting note here is that only the past 30 years have produced the marketing language that “There are REAL Christians, and then there are Catholics. The extreme Protestant stand is that Catholics are the “infidels” or the “Whore of Babylon”, a title in the Book of Revelation to identify the pagan empire.

The Apostles didn’t write down absolutely every single thing they taught. In fact, St. John tells us “There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written.” (Jn. 21:25). These “many other things” were accepted by early Christians as being from God and were treated as Divine Revelation and as such, worthy to be taught. These are the Traditions that Catholics hold sacred today.

Many who think that Catholics are not Christian also may be surprised to learn that they accept the authority of several Catholic councils every time they pick up their Bible. The Bible didn’t fall out of the sky, spiral bound with an NIV or KJ sticker on it. It was compiled by the Catholic Church.

Protestants usually claim that it is our hearts (and the faith they contain) that will be judged rather than our words or actions. They often cite John 5:24, “Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life.’ to support their position. What is really important is that all Christians are open to the entire of God’s Word, and not what merely serves their position. For example, one may not ignore John 5:28-29, “Do not be amazed at this, because the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation.” Jesus does not render a judgment based solely on our hearts but also on our works.

- **We have family members who are faith filled now in another faith and others who only attend Mass on occasions. Suggestions on how to bring them back? We often are viewed as judgmental. Are we?**

On judging.... An encounter with Jesus is an encounter with eternal (unchanging) truth (John 14:6). Truth does not have to be judgmental, but it does need to convey the need for conversion. This conversion is “a radical

reorientation of the whole life away from sin and evil, and toward God” (CCC Glossary).

The individual who hears truth may feel they are being judged because the truth, Jesus, asks them to convert, to change the direction of every aspect of their life and reorient it to God. The person may feel judged because we live in a Society in which truth is not objective (in other words, fixed) but is subjective to the beliefs of whoever hears the truth. In other words, we replace Jesus, eternal truth, with ourselves, truth as we want to view it. We make of our self, God.

The first recorded words of Jesus after his baptism are, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” (Matt 4:17). The Greek word used for repent is, “Metonoya”. This word means “means a change of heart (conversion) either generally or in respect of a specific sin”. Truth may not always be comfortable but changing a heart means that we must move the heart in another direction, and this is often painful. Remember, truth is not just some word, but it is the person of Christ. Therefore, in any discussion, start with the beauty of our Lord, our faith.

How to bring them back .... three ideas right from the start from Bishop Robert Barron:

1 - Lead with the Beautiful. It is less threatening. We are a beautiful religion. Truth/Goodness make people defensive. You can come to learn to love from beauty. Go there first, in the way you live, in the way the Church celebrates. Look at the beauty of the Saints in the life of the Church. Look at the beauty of worship then they will begin to see the goodness of the faith, then they are led naturally to the truth. Give them an understanding of the beauty of a holy life, then lead them to the good and the truth.

2 - Don't Dumb Down the Message! It doesn't help when we keep the faith the one thing that is dumbed down in our society. Evangelize by being clear, articulate, and smart - with the full arsenal of our tradition. A dumbed-down Catholicism will not convince anyone of anything.

3 - We Have to Preach with Ardor! We need some fire! People only listen to a really excited speaker. Muster up some excitement for the Gospel! “I don't think the purpose of Vatican II was to modernize the Church. The purpose of Vatican II was to Christify the world. It was to send us out as light-bearers to the end of the world.” The risen Jesus is the Good News! People don't die for myths, legends, and literary devices - they do it for a resurrected Jesus! We need to be clear about that.