

## Virtual Theological Speakeasy Questions

### 1. What is hell and if God is all forgiving, why have hell? What is the purpose of Hell?

Hell is the state of definitive **self-exclusion** from communion with God and the blessed, (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1033). So, God sends no one to Hell. In rejecting God, we **choose** Hell. Why is there a Hell? The answer is that it that Hell exists because love and justice exist. When we reject God, love, we are now solely subject to justice. Why? Because love demands that we freely accept it. This means that we must also have the capacity to reject love and in doing so reject God. When we love ourselves or some other creature we are now dependent on this to save us and it can't. Only the creator can save us and he desires us.

So, what is Justice? God is justice; HE cannot be unjust. Whenever we sin mortally sin (deadly), the sin is grave matter (violates the 10 Commandments), we know it's wrong, and we do it anyway. In this choice to sin, we deserve punishment and God cannot fail to punish us because He is "just". God the Father being love itself, empties himself into our flesh so that through His death justice is satisfied. He can do this because He is without sin. He alone does not deserve death. Jesus, God in the flesh (incarnate), dies on the cross. His death satisfies justice and redeems us. He takes the punishment (death) that we deserve for our Sin. So, the Lord through the cross offers us forgiveness and mercy. The Lord in His offer of mercy is waiting, thirsting" for our free acceptance of His forgiveness and mercy. "The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard "delay," but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

If we deny the Lord, live as if God does not matter, then we reject that forgiveness and mercy. We reject reconciliation with God and so choose to reject heaven and by default choose Hell. Therefore; "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few."( Mt 7:13-14)

**Catechism of the Catholic Church 1033:** We cannot be united with God **unless we freely choose to love him**. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: "He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."(*1 Jn 3:14-15*) Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren.( *Mt 25:31-46*) To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."

**Catechism of the Catholic Church 1037:** God predestines no one to go to hell; for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and

persistence in it until the end. In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, who does not want “any to perish, but all to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

## **2. Why does God get jealous?**

First we must differentiate between the jealousy of God and our own sinful jealousy. God is jealous for us because He made created us and He guards us against everything that separates us from Him. Our jealousy is sinful because we are jealous for what was never ours in the first place. Our sinful jealousy results in our coveting what was never ours to have, in controlling that which we have no right to control. God is jealous for us because we are His and that jealousy drives His love and His constant offer of Grace and Salvation.

That our God is “jealous” for us is the sign of how true his love is for us. Jealousy is a feeling of intense possessiveness. “Know that the LORD is God, he made us, we belong to him, we are his people, the flock he shepherds.” (Psalm 100:3) God is jealous in his love and possession of his Chosen People and will defend them against all enemies. Equally, God is jealous in demanding from his Chosen People the exclusive allegiance due; thus making peace and friendship with those who repent and turn to Him. The “jealous” love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is revealed most clearly in the Paschal Mystery, the life, death, and Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

## **3. Do angels have free will?**

Yes the Angels have free will. We know this because we know about the fall of the Angels. Our Lord tells us “I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky.” (Luke 10:18), That fall indicates a turning from serving God to then willfully rejecting God. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the Devil when he writes: Long ago you broke your yoke, you tore off your bonds. You said, “I will not serve.” On every high hill, under every green tree, you sprawled and served as a prostitute. (Jeremiah 2:20). Satan, an Angel exercised his free will, then went on to convince other Angels to fight against God. In the Book of Revelation, we hear that “war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. The dragon and its angels fought back, but they did not prevail and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. (Rev 12:7-8). The Angels sinned as we do in willfully turning away from God; “God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but condemned them to the chains of Tartarus and handed them over to be kept for judgment,” (2 Peter 2:4).

But the Angels were not created to rebel but instead to choose to love and serve the Lord. Nehemiah writes: “You are the LORD, you alone; You made the heavens, the highest heavens and all their host, The earth and all that is upon it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, the heavenly hosts bow down before you.” (Nehemiah 9:6). They serve us whom the Lord loves, “For he commands his angels with regard to you, to guard you wherever you go. With their hands they shall support you, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You can tread upon the asp and the viper, trample the lion and the dragon. (Psalm 91:11-13)”

#### **4. What happens to isolated tribal people who have never been exposed to Christianity after death?**

First and foremost, it is not our job to decide who is and who is not saved. We have been given two instructions: (1) To “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12), and (2) Go ... 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. (Matt 28:19-20).

For those who have never heard the Gospel; “Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. (Vatican II Lumen Gentium 16)

A very deep and active awareness of God exists in every human soul. We cannot deny where we are from and what we are called to be. That is why in every culture there is an awareness of divinity. We have to work very hard to deny our embedded understanding of God within our soul. This “natural law” is written and engraved in the soul of each and every man, because it is human reason ordaining him to do good and forbidding him to sin (Leo XIII, *Libertas præstantissimum*, 597).

#### **5. We all know this Corona virus is not going away until the vaccine is released, how do we keep faith that God will walk this walk with us and keep us safe when we see so many dying?**

God is always with us and knows our suffering better than we do. God “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” (Phil 2:6-8)

God is no stranger to our suffering and came to us and suffered so that He can raise us above any worldly suffering. There is always another virus, terrorist attack, war or other misfortune. The word became flesh to bring us heaven. The protection is not merely physical but spiritual. We have been so conditioned to believe that all there is is the physical which we can't see beyond. Look to the Saints and martyrs. They considered suffering as just a passing phase and kept their eyes on heaven. St Paul writes: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God (Romans 8:18-19). We must rely on the Lord to be with us. St Peter writes; “The God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory through Christ [Jesus] will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you after you have suffered a little.” (1 Pet 5:10). The Lord died on the cross to save us, to keep us safe. Most important! Remember our Lord's promise - “I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Matt 28:20)

## **6. Is my confirmation Saint also my patron Saint?**

It can be but does not have to be. Patron saints are given as a name at Baptism or picked at Confirmation. Over time, however, any Christian may find that they have an affinity for a Canonized Saint with whom they find a sense of kinship through vocation or personality and establish a relationship with that Saint as a Patron. As a Patron, they uniquely care for us and are those we count on to provide a sense of accompaniment on our earthly journey, primarily through example and prayers. The Patron Saint Intercedes for us, becomes a conduit of wisdom and always guides us to Christ. The Patron Saints stands with Christ and share Him with us in uninterrupted ways. In turn, we honor them, often by praying through them or studying and promoting their life stories and writings.

All of the Saints stand ready to help us: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith.” (Heb 12:1-2)

## **7. I see so many Catholics who disrespect Pope Francis, what fealty do we as Catholics owe our Popes and to our Bishops?**

No one should speak in a disrespectful manner of our Bishops or the Holy Father. This does not mean that we should question them. The questioning should be focused on gaining understanding or to gain clarity. Here is why:

We owe to the Pope religious submission of mind and will to the authentic Magisterium (teaching office) of the Church. “This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking ex cathedra; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking.” (Vatican II, Lumen Gentium 25)

It is important to note that the Catechism of the Catholic Church also tells us that “It is this Magisterium’s task to preserve God’s people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. Thus, the pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God abides in the truth that liberates.” (CCC 890)

Therefore even the Pope is bound first in obedience to Christ and should not teach outside of declared truth as found either in Sacred Scripture or Sacred Tradition.

For Bishops: “For bishops are preachers of the faith, who lead new disciples to Christ, and they are authentic teachers, that is, teachers endowed with the authority of Christ, who preach to the people committed to them the faith they must believe and put into practice, and by the light of the Holy Spirit illustrate that faith.” (Vatican II Lumen Gentium 25)

It is important to note though that Bishops are bound to also teach consistent with Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Their teaching must also be in union with the Pope and the body of Bishops. “The college or body of bishops has no

authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter as its head. The pope's power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact. In virtue of his office, that is as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he is always free to exercise this power." (Vatican II Lumen Gentium 22)

## **8. What is the church's teaching about end times?**

The Church affirms through Sacred Scripture and Sacred tradition its belief in the "End of Time".

"At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. After the universal judgment, the righteous will reign forever with Christ, glorified in body and soul. The universe itself will be renewed: The Church ... will receive her perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things. At that time, together with the human race, the universe itself, which is so closely related to man and which attains its destiny through him, will be perfectly re-established in Christ." (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1042)

So yes, Catholics believe as we say in the Creed that; "Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end." Knowing this gives us an understanding of our destiny. We should not worry about when the ends times will come. Jesus simply tells us to be ready; "But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come". (Mark 13:32-33)

Why? At the moment of death, we will stand before the Lord for what is called the Particular Judgement. "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 (Cf. Lk 16:22; 23:43; Mt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Heb 9:27; 12:23).

### **The Catholic perspective on the end times is: Be Ready!**

## **9. What is the importance of the rosary, adoration, and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy?**

You are asking what is the importance of physical exercise, military or professional training, or even practicing a sport. It is very important! St Thérèse tells us that "prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.(St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Manuscrits autobiographiques, C 25r). The Rosary, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament are all spiritual exercises that dig down to the core of our being and bring us unto the inner life of God. In fact, "the most appropriate places for prayer are personal or family oratories, monasteries, places

of pilgrimage, and above all the church, which is the proper place for liturgical prayer for the parish community and the privileged place for Eucharistic adoration,” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2696). Pope St John Paul II calls the Rosary a “ladder to Heaven,” (Homily *29 April 1979*).

**10. At this time, we still can't receive communion but pray only, does the Church still consider this a venial sin?**

Canon Law 920 states that “after being initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, each of the faithful is obliged to receive holy communion at least once a year. This precept must be fulfilled during the Easter season unless it is fulfilled for a just cause at another time during the year.”

However, there is no sin in this case as there is an impossibility of receiving Communion. It would be sinful if you refuse receive Communion through free choice. Where there is no free will there is no sin.

The Code of Canon Law 87 states that a “diocesan bishop, whenever he judges that it contributes to their spiritual good, is able to dispense the faithful from universal and particular disciplinary laws issued for his territory or his subjects by the supreme authority of the Church.” The Bishop, on 16 March 2020, due to the COVID19, has dispensed the faithful of the Diocese from their obligation to attend Sunday Mass and restricted the celebration of public Masses. Therefore, the reception of Holy Communion except under extraordinary circumstances is not possible.

The Code of Canon Law 1248 §2 also states that; “If participation in the eucharistic celebration becomes impossible because of the absence of a sacred minister or for another grave cause, it is strongly recommended that the faithful take part in a liturgy of the word if such a liturgy is celebrated in a parish church or other sacred place according to the prescripts of the diocesan bishop or that they devote themselves to prayer for a suitable time alone, as a family, or, as the occasion permits, in groups of families.

**11. How do churches get to name their churches? For instance, who picked St Joan of Arc?**

The process of choosing a name for a Parish Church or Parish rests with the Bishop. Canon Law 1215 provides that “no church is to be built without the express written consent of the diocesan bishop.” Canon 515§2. Also states that it is only for the diocesan bishop to erect, suppress, or alter parishes. After construction has been completed properly, a new church is to be dedicated or at least blessed as soon as possible; and the Bishop will choose the name of the Parish / Church (Code of Canon Law 1217). They are then dedicated through Solemn Rites. Once that Rite has been performed, the name cannot be changed (Code of Canon Law 1218). The name of the Church must be in accordance with certain norms or rules a liturgical book called the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar (1989). The name must be:

- a. the name of the Trinity, or

- b. a name for Christ, invoked in the liturgy, or a mystery of his life, or
- c. the name of the Holy Spirit, or
- d. a name for Mary, invoked under a title for her used in the liturgy, or
- e. the name of a holy angel, or
- f. the name of a canonized saint, as it appears in the Roman martyrology (or appendix), or
- g. the name of a blessed provided the Apostolic See has given its permission.

The Parish began as a Carmelite Parish in 1954. The name St Joan for Arc was submitted for the approval of the Bishop of the Diocese of Richmond based on three factors. The Parish community is comprised of many who are serving or have served in the military or in the Department of Defense. St Joan of Arc is very much affiliated with the military and service to God and Country. St Joan of Arc led the Army of France fighting more than just battles for France but also fighting for Spiritual battle as well. In her martyrdom, she stood solidly for truth, God. Though martyred by a corrupt English and Burgundian Church officials, she was almost immediately declared a Martyr by the Church in Rome. Finally, St Joan of Arc is placed geographically in the midst of the Yorktown Battlefield where the last great battle of the American Revolution was fought leading to American Independence.

**12. Explain why, during the Consecration, the priest puts a small piece of the consecrated host into the consecrated wine.**

This action during the Mass has a Sacramental, Theological, and Ecclesial (Church) meaning. Each meaning is focused on the **unifying force** of the Eucharist; the unity of the Real Presence of Christ in Either Species (Body and Blood); the unity of the Body of Christ through the Eucharist within the Community present in the Mass, and the unity of the Mass in the Parish with the Mass celebrated throughout the World.

**Sacramental:** “The Priest breaks the Bread and puts a piece of the host into the chalice to signify the unity of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the work of salvation, namely, of the Body of Jesus Christ, living and glorious.” (The Roman Missal Third Edition). What we receive in either the Body or Blood under the species of bread and wine is the fullness of Christ’s Being; His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. There is no division.

**Theological:** The commingling represents the Body of Christ returned to life in the Resurrection that life then unifying the Body of Christ which is the Church. St Paul writes to the Corinthians about this understanding when he writes; “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” (1 Cor 10:16-17)

**Ecclesial:** In the earliest celebrations of the Mass, the bishop would send a particle of the Eucharist to the priests of the outlying Parishes as an expression of unity the one Mass. “This particle was called the fermentum. The priests dropped it into the chalice at this part of the Mass. ... It answered to that awareness, so keen in the ancient Church, that the Eucharist was the sacramentum unitatis, that this Sacrament held the Church together, and that all the people of God subject to

a bishop should, if it were possible, be gathered around that bishop's altar and receive the Sacrament from his table of sacrifice." (Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*).

**13. Some people would like to see women as Deacons and Priests. Explain why this cannot happen now or might never happen?**

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church and other official documents of the Church, the central argument against the ordination of women to the priesthood is the practice of Jesus himself and the Apostles. Jesus chose only men to be priests, and the Apostles did the same when they chose their collaborators and successors in the priestly and apostolic ministries (Mark 3:14-19; Luke 6:12-16; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 2 Tim 1:6; Titus 1:5-9).

Though many would like to redefine Jesus to fit into their conception of who is. Jesus is God and therefore not defined by society. In fact, in the Lord's Prayer we ask just the opposite, "that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

Pope St John Paul II has been particularly emphatic about the exclusion of women from the ordained priesthood. In an apostolic letter, dated May 30, 1994, the pope declared 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 Church's exclusion of women from the priesthood, he wrote, is not merely a matter of a changeable pastoral discipline. It is rooted in the practice of Christ himself, who did not ordain women to the priesthood, not even his Blessed Mother. The question, therefore, is not to be considered "still open to debate."

The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a "sacred power" which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all. "The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him."

**14. Why are Catholic politicians who legislate against the teachings of the Church still allowed reception of the Eucharist?**

Canon Law is not meant to be pejorative but pastoral. The intent is to bring the person back into the Church and limit devastation of the soul.

"I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance." (Luke 15:7)

The person should not be allowed the reception of the Eucharist if the Catholic Politician's position is:

1. Publicly known: A manifest sin is one that is sin is one that is officially known by a large part of the community or Parish. In other words, he or she expresses through words or public vote.
2. The offending party has been formally warned (orally or in writing) not to persist in the sin and they have persisted.



3. The Common Good of the Church is harmed due to grave scandal. For example, other faithful now feel it is “OK” to also sin in like manner or the faithful depart due to the scandal.

The Code of Canon Law 915 states that “those who have been excommunicated or interdicted after the imposition or declaration of the penalty and others obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to holy communion.”

“This canon should be applied to cases of obstinate perseverance in manifest grave sin only when the common good of the Church is truly being harmed due to grave scandal”. ... Canon 915 “may not be applied by the diocesan bishop or other competent authority in order to prevent a person from receiving communion from all ministers. This may only be done through a penal process since the deprivation of the sacraments is a penalty.” (Canon Law Society of America, New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law)

If the person in question understands the gravity of their sin (especially if they have been formally warned) and they persist in their sin and receive Holy Communion primacy of their conscience takes precedence and they receive Holy Communion unworthily and to their own detriment.

“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are ill and infirm, and a considerable number are dying.” (1 Corinthians 11:27-30)

**15. Most catholic schools and universities allow attendance of students of different faith or atheist to show respect for every person's belief. Is it acceptable to be personally against abortion but vote pro-choice politically, for the same reason, not to impose by law one's belief on everybody?**

Some imagine that being personally opposed to abortion, while believing others have the right to choose it, is some kind of compromise between the pro-abortion and pro-life positions. It isn't. Pro-choice people vote the same as pro-abortion people. To the baby who dies it makes no difference whether those who refused to protect him or her were pro-abortion or “merely” pro-choice about abortion.

Being personally against abortion but favoring another's right to abortion is self-contradictory. It's exactly like saying, “I'm personally against child abuse, but I defend my neighbor's right to abuse his child if that is his choice.” Or “I'm personally against murder, but if others feel they have reason to murder that's none of my business.” Or, “I'm not personally in favor of Spouse abuse, but I don't want to impose my morality on others, so I'm pro-choice about spouse abuse.”

One of the stark differences between the “pro-choice” and “pro-life” positions is that the issue of abortion is almost always described by the pro-choice people as a “difficult” and “complex” issue, while those words are almost never used by the

pro-life side. Mother Teresa was exactly on target (as usual) when she said, "If abortion isn't wrong, then nothing is wrong."

The inalienable right to life of every innocent human individual is a constitutive element of a civil society and its legislation:

"The inalienable rights of the person must be recognized and respected by civil society and the political authority. These human rights depend neither on single individuals nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the state; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin. Among such fundamental rights one should mention in this regard every human being's right to life and physical integrity from the moment of conception until death."

(Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *Donum vitae* III)

## **16. Why is St Joan of Arc a Saint?**

There has surely been no more dramatic or horrible trial in history than that of St Joan of Arc. Sixty of the ablest politicians and academicians of the time, endowed with authority which was largely usurped from the hierarchy of the Church, were summoned by their military masters to try, under the elaborate forms of law, a nineteen years old girl who was extraordinary. Her force of faith and ability to inspire a nation and an Army made her a wonder of Europe, a King-maker, and the nemesis of her enemies, both the Burgundians and the English.

In the trial, the judges were very aware that the King of Heaven spoke through His saints. They knew that Joan had prophesied that she would raise the siege of Orléans and had done so. They knew that she had prophesied that God would have the Dauphin crowned at Reims. She led the Dauphin and his court through English-conquered territory to Reims, subduing Meung, Beaugency, Jargeau and Patay, and had seen him crowned Charles VII, King of France. She had captured the greatest English generals of the time. She did all of this at the prompting of God. She remained steadfast to follow God's will despite every social and class norm of the day.

St Joan told her captors:

- "But since God had commanded me to go [and lead the Army of France], I must do it. And since God had commanded it, had I had a hundred fathers and a hundred mothers, and had I been a king's daughter, I would have gone." (Joan of Arc: In Her Own Words 11-12)
- I come, sent by God. I have no business here. I pray you, send me back to God from whom I am come. (Joan of Arc: In Her Own Words 95).
- You say that you are my judge. Take thought over what you are doing. For, truly, I am sent from God, and you are putting yourself in great danger. (Joan of Arc: In Her Own Words 95-96).

At St Joan's execution: "I pray you, go to the nearest church, and bring me the cross, and hold it up level with my eyes until I am dead. I would have the cross on which God hung be ever before my eyes while life lasts in me. Jesus, Jesus! (Joan of Arc: In Her Own Words 144-145)

The Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church defines a Saint as: "The "holy one" who leads a life in union with God through the grace of Christ and receives the reward of eternal life. The Church is called the communion of saints, of the holy ones. Certainly, St Joan who accepted death rather than deny her God given mission lived a life in complete union with God and His will.

## **17. Why do Popes change their names when they become Pope?**

In many cultures, a change of name indicates a change in status or stage of life. From a Christian perspective it is an indicator of conversion or change in mission or role. For example, Abram and Sarai became Abraham and Sarah when God established his covenant (Gen 17) with Abraham. Simon's name changes to Peter after his declaration that Jesus is the Christ (Matt 16:18). Saul is first called "Paul", which is a Greek derivation of the Semitic name Saul, in Acts 13 as he begins his mission to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles.

For my part, here is my covenant with you: you are to become the father of a multitude of nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I am making you the father of a multitude of nations. ... God further said to Abraham: As for Sarai your wife, do not call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her, and I will give you a son by her. Her also will I bless; she will give rise to nations, and rulers of peoples will issue from her.

(Gen 17:4-5,15-16)

Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 16:16-19)

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, completing their fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them off. ... But Elymas the magician (for that is what his name means) opposed them in an attempt to turn the proconsul away from the faith. But Saul, also known as Paul, filled with the holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all that is right, full of every sort of deceit and fraud. Will you not stop twisting the straight paths of [the] Lord? (Acts 13: 2-3, 8-11)

The papal tradition of taking a new name fits into this kind of ritual, but it is not directly related to it. The historical truth is far less simple. When a man named Mercury was elected pope in 533, he didn't think it was a good idea for the bishop of Rome to share a name with a pagan Roman god, so he became John II (533-35). Most, though not all, of the following popes continued the tradition of taking a new name to symbolize the new office so that within a few centuries it was common to do so.

The last man to keep his own name was Marcello Cervini, who became Marcellus II (1555).

## **18. Why doesn't God stop COVID 19?**

If God's only purpose were to make us happy—free of pain, full of pleasure—then the suffering in the world might indeed seem pointless. But God's true purpose is not that creatures be merely happy but that they come to know him and become truly like him: courageous, just, fair, compassionate, merciful, and loving. In the midst of our own suffering, we see the most beautiful examples of faith, especially in the lives of the Saints.

It is always important to remember that natural evil, the evil that results from disease and natural disasters, and moral evil, the evil that results from the evil (sin) that men do, are the result of the fallen nature of the world. God never intended this, but in love gives us free will to choose to love, or to hate. Without this choice, we cannot truly love. Even in the midst of this pestilence and death we have a choice; to place our soul and hope in heaven or to live in the misery and death of a fallen world.

“God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living.... It was through the devil's envy that death entered the world” (Wis 1:13; 2:24).

Consider the following points:

- a. To deal with evil, God sent his own Son Jesus into the middle of the worst evil in the world, crucifixion. Suffering comes with being a Christian—it's normal for the Christian (Heb 11:32-12:11; 1 Pet 4:12-16). Like a training exercise that makes our bodies strong, suffering helps to make our faith and character strong.
- b. Suffering is temporary, even if it lasts a lifetime on earth. Sometimes you see a light at the end of the tunnel only to find out that it is part of a fast-approaching freight train. But do not worry. You will eventually get to the end of the tunnel. (Read Rom 8:18-23, 35-39; 1 Pet 5:8-11.)
- c. God can produce good things out of bad situations (Rom 5:3-5; James 1:2-4). He has an amazing ability to transform the results of a bad situation, because although he allows evil, he also rules over it.

Finally, whether the evil of COVID19 is a natural or moral evil, we cannot despair. For,

"[o]ur citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself." (Phil 3:20-21)

**19. How does one deal with the lonely feelings when coming home to empty house?**

There is a difference between an emotional, physical, psychological and a spiritual loneliness. In Christ is a deep union from which can only be separated through looking away. The Lord tells us:

"And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matt 28:20) of which Pope Leo I writes: "For by ascending into heaven He does not desert His adopted; but from above strengthens to endurance, those whom He invites upwards to glory."

Assuming that this question is written by someone who is separated from a loved one, Know that to the very core of your soul you are never alone. The love which binds you to the one you love and their love in return cannot be separated.

**20. Why did Jesus have to descend into hell after His death?**

Jesus "descended into the lower parts of the earth" (Eph. 4:9) to "preach to the spirits in prison" (1 Pet. 3:19) about the salvation he had won for them. Jesus' redeeming death literally opened the gates of heaven.

"What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended into the lower [regions] of the earth? The one who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things." (Eph 4:9-10)

"For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit. In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison..." (1 Peter 3:18-19)

Here, the word "hell" does not signify the place of eternal damnation, but rather it is from Sheol in Hebrew or Hades in Greek—meaning those who are there are deprived of the vision of God or "place of the dead."

There are two important reasons that our Lord descended to the dead:

First, Christ's descent to the dead means that Jesus suffered death in the same way we all suffer death. Jesus died a truly human death so that He might destroy death forever. Had He not truly died, He would not have been able to redeem us from death. He suffered physical death, that is, the destruction of His body and the separation of His body and soul.

Second, Christ's descent into hell is also the first fruits of the redemption in Christ. He descends to the place of the dead where the just souls of those who died before the redemption are awaiting the coming of Christ. He frees them from death and takes them into paradise. Jesus' descent to the dead is the culmination of His messianic ministry and shows the immediate power of the redemption for all

humanity, past, present, and future. The mercy and love of Christ are available to all.

**21. I have been always concerned about biogenetic engineering and the manipulation of the human DNA and recently, I learned that vaccines are created using fetal tissue from abortion. What is the position of the church about this human genetic manipulation?**

The Church affirms that “the use of human embryos or fetuses as an object of experimentation constitutes a crime against their dignity as human beings who have a right to the same respect owed to a child once born, just as to every person”. These forms of experimentation always constitute a grave moral disorder.” (Dignitas Personae 34)

However, vaccines that have been produced which have links to the cells gained illicitly from the cells of aborted children which can save a life may be used. The act of using the vaccine is morally independent from the act of obtaining the cells. Catholics should, however, avoid these vaccines whenever possible and insist that the medical community make other vaccines available.

In 2008, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith published the Instruction Dignitas Personae on Certain Bioethical Questions. In the instruction about the use of vaccines that use cells gained illicitly from aborted fetuses states;

“Grave reasons may be morally proportionate to justify the use of such “biological material”. Thus, for example, danger to the health of children could permit parents to use a vaccine which was developed using cell lines of illicit origin, while keeping in mind that everyone has the duty to make known their disagreement and to ask that their healthcare system make other types of vaccines available. Moreover, in organizations where cell lines of illicit origin are being utilized, the responsibility of those who make the decision to use them is not the same as that of those who have no voice in such a decision.” (Dignitas Personae 35)

Catholic teaching is that “[t]he human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception; and therefore from that same moment his rights as a person must be recognized, among which in the first place is the inviolable right of every innocent human being to life”. (Dignitas Personae 4)

“Since it must be treated from conception as a person, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed, as far as possible, like any other human being.” (CCC 2274) Further, “[i]t is immoral to produce human embryos intended for exploitation as disposable biological material.” (CDF, Donum vitae I, 5)

“Science and technology by their very nature require unconditional respect for fundamental moral criteria. They must be at the service of the human person, of

his inalienable rights, of his true and integral good, in conformity with the plan and the will of God.” (CCC 2294)

**22. Recently I had a discussion with my husband about what is “praying together”. He says that attending mass together is a form of “praying together” but to me it is not. I consider mass as a personal encounter with God so to me it will be a personal prayer. Could you please help us to clarify this disagreement?**

As a first thought. You are both right. Prayer is a personal encounter with God and Mass is a very beautiful way of praying together. The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes St Augustine when it states; “Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him” (CCC 2560). Mass is this Holy and prayerful encounter. The Mass and especially the liturgy of the Eucharist, “contains and expresses all forms of prayer: it is “the pure offering” of the whole Body of Christ to the glory of God’s name (*Mal* 1:11) and, according to the traditions of East and West, it is the “sacrifice of praise.” (CCC 2643)

There is a distinction between personal and communal prayer. Personal prayer builds up the individual. Communal prayer binds the community to God in one body, with one voice. Personal and Communal Prayer occurs first in the home. Communal prayer in the home is particularly important. It is the first school of prayer.

“The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer. Based on the sacrament of marriage, the family is the “domestic church” where God’s children learn to pray “as the Church” and to persevere in prayer. For young children, daily family prayer is the first witness of the Church’s living memory as awakened patiently by the Holy Spirit. (CCC 2685)

“The church, the house of God, is the proper place for the liturgical prayer of the parish community. It is also the privileged place for adoration of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. The choice of a favorable place is not a matter of indifference for true prayer. — For personal prayer, this can be a “prayer corner” with the Sacred Scriptures and icons, in order to be there, in secret, before our Father.<sup>48</sup> In a Christian family, this kind of little oratory fosters prayer in common.” (CCC 2691)

All prayer is important. Jesus tells us that; “whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you,” (John 15:16). Wheat is ground up in one loaf. Consider the cross. The vertical beam of Cross is personal prayer. The horizontal beam is the union of communal prayer. At the center of the vertical and horizontal beams is the Body of Christ. It is the Lord who unites both.

**23. Why do we place our basket of money at the altar in Mass? Outside of just a practical support for the Church, does our tithe represent a greater part of our worship?**

We place our offering given at Mass not at the altar but before the altar because it represents our sacrifice, our lives, laid on the altar. The Roman Missal states;

“Even money or other gifts for the poor or for the Church, brought by the faithful or collected in the church, are acceptable; given their purpose, they are to be put in a suitable place away from the Eucharistic table.,” (The Roman Missal Third Typical Edition). That is why we place the basket of offerings before the Baptismal font, not at the altar, but beautifully present.

The money we present is sacrificial, it is a part of our worship, as we are giving it up or really giving back to and for God. It is a sacrifice and it should be sacrificial. St Paul asks the Romans to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice to God—that is, everything they do is to be worthy of being offered to God (Rom 12:1). Even the support provided to St Paul was not for him but rather a sacrifice to God. St Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians;

“I have received full payment and I abound. I am very well supplied because of what I received from you through Epaphroditus, “a fragrant aroma,” an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God, (Phil 4:18).

“At least since the fourth century an offering (in some form or other) of gifts directed towards the Eucharist in the offertory procession included all that was being offered,” (Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*). The hand washing rite after the preparation of the gifts stems from the need for the priest, having received a variety of offerings, to wash his hands before beginning the Eucharistic prayer. “In Africa it was possible to bring one’s offerings to the altar day after day, as Monica [the mother of St Augustine] was wont to do. The priest himself received what was offered by the people, and in turn he offered these things to God. Thus, the offering and the oblation of the gifts was built into the very structure of the Mass.” (Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*)

From the eleventh century on, the offering of money began to come to the fore. Peter Damian tells, as something still out of the ordinary, that two prominent ladies offered gold pieces at his Mass. Believe it or not, in the early Church, penitents out of a true understanding of the gift as something holy, were deprived of the right to offer anything at Mass (Council of Nicaea, can. 11) and it was not restored to them until their reconciliation (XI Synod of Toledo (675) can. 4). Similarly, the gifts of those Christians who lived at enmity were refused. (Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*).

#### **24. As Catholics, how to deal with the LGBT folks, especially Trans-Gender?**

First and foremost, our actions towards everyone must be guided by love. Jesus tells us the greatest commandments are; “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these,” (Mark 12:30-31). We cannot say we love God and dismiss those whom He loves as less than worthy of our love. Therefore, we are called to love LGBT human being as we love ourselves. We should love them the way Jesus loves all sinners, all the way to the cross. He tells us; “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," (John 15:12-13). St Thomas Aquinas defines love as willing the good of the other (St. Thomas Aquinas, STh I-II, 26, 4, corp. art).

It is from this view that the authors of the Catechism write; "The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided," (CCC 2358).

At the same time, we must deal with others by "speaking the truth in love." (Eph 4:15). With Transgender people we do need to love them but also challenge them to live a chaste life, living a life of complete continence. We must remind them that anyone's identity is found in Christ and that Jesus loves them amidst their struggles. In calling upon homosexuals to embrace a life of chastity, the Church is not merely denying homosexuals a chance for sex; it is pleading with homosexuals to fully embrace love and to be embraced by God, who is Love. To be willing to sacrifice oneself includes sacrifice of one's own desires and interests, especially when those desires and interests would prevent the beloved from attaining ultimate happiness. Ultimate happiness, the ultimate good in life for which we strive, is union with God.

Finally, transgenering surgeries are intrinsically immoral and are not permitted. The Church recognizes that every human person is created in the image and likeness of God, male or female (Gen. 1:26-27). And so we should help people discover their true identities as children of God, not support them in the disordered attempt to reject their undeniable biological identity.

**25. Apostle's Creed or Nicene Creed, when and why is one said instead of the other?**

The Apostles' Creed has traditionally been associated with baptism it is used in a question and answer format at the Rite of Baptism and in the renewal of baptismal promises at Confirmation. The Nicene Creed has traditionally been associated with the Eucharist. The Apostles' Creed is the older of the two as it was drawn up and adopted by the early church before the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The Nicene Creed was created in 325 by the Council of Nicaea to counter the Arian controversy. Arius thought the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were materially separate from each other, and that the Father created the Son as a separate entity. Thus the birth of the phrase "Consubstantial with the Father. Under today's rules, whenever a profession of faith is prescribed by the rubrics either may be used. (RM - Order of Mass #19)

**26. How do we know when God is speaking to us versus the devil trying to fool us? How do we discern when it is our own perspective and not letting go and still trying to "control" a situation?**

We must view everything: every thought, every message, every spirit through the lens of the Word of God. When we hear a voice, consider the following:

- a. God gives clear-cut directions, but Satan speaks through confusion, urgency and uncertainty. God's message will be ordered and clear. (1 Cor. 14:33)
- b. If we are approached with a message that in any way contradicts the Word of God, then that message is not from God. (2 Cor. 13-15)
- c. If what we are considering would lead you to sin, then the message is not from God. (Gal. 5:16)

**27. Confession as we know it today did not come into existence until after the Protestant Reformation. Therefore, not doing face to face confession should also be acceptable. Why not?**

Face to face confession existed much earlier than The Protestant Reformation (16th century). Private confession, as we know it today, originated in the Eastern monastic tradition and became universal by the 7th century. Prior to that, confession was public. Serious sin was admitted publicly, in the church and included very serious penance which could take years -- or even a lifetime -- to fulfill.

"Confess your sins in church, and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life. . . . On the Lord's Day gather together, break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure" (Didache 4:14, 14:1 [A.D. 70]).

Confession of sins to a priest has a biblical foundation: "Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." [Matt 18:18].

"Let each confess his sin while he is still in this world, while his confession can be received, while satisfaction and the forgiveness granted by the priests is acceptable to God". "De lapsis", St. Cyprian (A.D. 251)

"Whatever priests do here on earth, God will confirm in heaven, just as the master ratifies the decision of his servants. Did He not give them all the powers of heaven?" St. John Chrysostom (c. 344 - 407 AD)

**28. A couple is married in the Catholic Church, yet they get civilly divorced for many good reasons and they live apart. They have not gotten an annulment. They have not had any outside romantic relationships (so no adultery) and have remained "committed" to each other in order to co-parent and raise their child together. They are still married in the eyes of church and are living accordingly. If they reconcile and resume marital relations, is that a sin because they still live apart and are civilly divorced?**

The Church believes that God, the author of marriage, established it as a permanent union. When two people marry, they form an unbreakable bond. Jesus himself taught that marriage is permanent (Matthew 19:3-6), and St. Paul reinforced this teaching (see 1 Cor 7:10-11 and Eph 5:31-32). The Church does not recognize a civil divorce because the State cannot dissolve what is indissoluble. (CCC, #2382-2386) Since, in the eyes of God, the couple are married no sin would be committed if they resume marital relations as long as procreation is not impeded. Civil authorities may consider relations outside of marriage to be illegal.

**29. When my husband and I got married, we were told we could not get married during Lent. How come some do and we were not allowed?**

The liturgical year is made up of six seasons: Advent, Christmas, Lent, the Sacred Paschal Triduum, Easter, and Ordinary Time. (USCCB) Sacramental celebrations are best celebrated outside of penitential season like Advent and Lent. *We celebrate life giving Sacraments during Christmas and Easter. Ordinary time also aligns the life-giving Sacraments to the season of the Church.*

There may be reasons that create an urgency such as medical conditions and deployment. Limiting factors sometimes come to bare. However, we should reach for the beautiful.

In the past, a Catholic wedding ceremony was forbidden during Lent; however, times have changed and weddings are now permitted during a penitential season. A couple may schedule their wedding for any date other than Good Friday and Holy Saturday; however, their local parish may limit times and days for weddings during Lent. (The Order of Celebrating Matrimony, §32, 2016).

**30. Did the church stop having mass during any other pandemic?**

Yes, during the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918 and like today, the suspension of Holy Mass was regionally directed. For example, on Oct. 5, 1918, Charlottesville VA. Mayor E.G. Haden ordered all schools, churches and public places closed. On Monday, Oct. 7, 1918, Alabama Gov. Charles Henderson ordered the closing of schools, churches and theaters to avoid the spread of the Spanish influenza. And on Oct. 8, 1918, St. Louis MO. Health Commissioner, Dr. Max C. Starkloff, after consulting with the mayor, ordered all churches closed; also in response to the Spanish Flu pandemic. In Seattle WA., Bishop Edward J. O’Dea announced that no services, indoor or outdoor, would be held at any Catholic churches of Seattle “until further notice.”

**31. Isn't all we need to be concerned about is living and doing the Will of God in our lives?**

Yes, as long as it is God’s will. However, sometimes our own modern comfort, earth bound focus cause us to replace God with our ego. We have a propensity to pretend like we are in control and use the name of the Lord in vain to superimpose

our will, not the Lord's. We need to take the Lord's prayer seriously; "Thy will be done", not "my" will be done.

This also begs the question, how do we know the Will of God. Trying to discover our life purpose can be stressful and overwhelming thing. It can seem like such a big, confusing, frustrating subject. We want to move forward, but we're not sure how. We want to find our purpose, but we feel like you're aimlessly wandering. But God's not hiding in the dark, trying to keep His will hidden from us. He wants to guide us. God has given us very specific gifts and strengths. Maybe we're a math whiz or a wise counselor. Maybe we have a mind for electronics or business. Maybe we're great at organizing people and getting things done. God's purpose for us probably involves the things you're already good at. Also, determining our passions often helps us figure out what God has called us to do. Where do our gifts meet our passions? That may be God's purpose for us lies.

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. (Rom 12:2)

### **32. Can or should a relative baptize a baby in the family where the parents have strayed from the faith?**

Concerned relatives—usually grandparents, uncles, and aunts with children or siblings who have ceased to practice the Faith—often argue that the Church is being hard hearted by not baptizing the infant even if the parents refuse consent or there is no hope of the child being raised as a Catholic. They argue that it is unfair that the Child be deprived of eternal salvation for the lack of Baptism.

The Church meets this objection halfway: the Child may indeed be baptized if there is a realistic danger that he will die before attaining the use of reason and requesting Baptism on his own.

But the Church does not force Baptism on those who don't desire it, or on their children who most reasonably can be expected to grow up with attitudes similar to the parents who will rear them. Even where the Church wields great political power, it does not go around capturing the unbaptized and forcing them or their children to receive the Sacrament. Such Baptisms would certainly be invalid in the case of the adults, and if valid for the children would do little more than convert them into non-practicing Catholics.

Canon 881

§1 For an infant to be baptized lawfully it is required:

1° That the parents, or at least one of them, or the person who lawfully holds their place, give their consent;

2° That there be a well founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic religion. If such a hope is truly lacking, the baptism is, in accordance with the provisions of particular law, to be deferred and the parents advised of the reason for this.

§2. An infant of Catholic parents, and indeed even of non-Catholic parents, may in danger of death be baptized even if the parents are opposed to it.