



RCIA

Rite of Catholic Initiation of Adults
Death & Afterlife



Opening Prayer



Our Life On Earth In Perspective

- Our life on earth is a mean to an end. It is not an end in itself:
- “Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” – John 12:24
- “Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” – John 12:25
 - “Love” in Hebrew = Total Attachment
 - “Hate” in Hebrew = Total Detachment



Our Life On Earth In Perspective

- Compared to life in eternity, our life on earth is but a fleeting moment
- The pleasures of this life are not the final reward
- The sufferings of this life are not the final penalty

Reflection:

Matthew 25:1-13 (Parable of the Ten Maidens)

1 'Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a shout, "Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." 7 Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." 9 But the wise replied, "No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." 10 And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. 11 Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, "Lord, lord, open to us." 12 But he replied, "Truly I tell you, I do not know you." 13 Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.'



Reflection

- Read the Parable of the Ten Maidens (Matthew 25:1-13).
- What does the following represents?
 - The maidens
 - The bridegroom
 - The door
- What is the central theme of this parable?



Parable of the Ten Maidens

- Jewish wedding custom
- What does the following represents?
 - The maidens – God's people
 - The bridegroom – Jesus
 - The door – The gate of Heaven
 - The lit-up lamp?
 - Good work
 - The oil?
 - Faith



Parable of the Ten Maidens

- Key observations
 - The lit-up lamp (good works) is a sign for the presence of oil (faith).
 - Only maidens with lit-up lamps are allowed through the door (gate of Heaven).
 - All the maidens were asleep when the groom arrived.
 - The wise maidens refuse to give some oil to the foolish ones.



Last or General Judgement

- Judgement at the End of Age
- Coincides with
 - The Second Coming of Christ
 - Resurrection of the body
- Preceded by a period of great tribulation and trial
- Unmistakable:

“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”
(Matthew 24:27)

Matthew 13: 40-43 (Last Judgment)

40 Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, 42 and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Mark 13:32-33 (Last Judgement)

32 ‘But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.’

See also Matthew 25:31-46.




When will Last Judgement be?

- “I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.)”
(Revelation 20:4-5)
 - A thousand years means a very long time
 - The whole history of the Church, from Pentecost to Last Judgement
- No one knows when, be prepared at all time!



Resurrection Of The Body

- 1 Corinthians 15:13-20 

1 Corinthians 15:13-20 (Resurrection And Our Faith)

13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. 17 If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. 19 If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.



Resurrection Of The Body

- Written in response to some Corinthians who did not believe in the resurrection of the body.
 - No resurrection of the body
 - → Christ has not resurrected
 - → Christ is not God
 - → His suffering and death serve no purpose
 - → Our faith is a lie
- Indeed, Christ has resurrected, and we in turn will be resurrected with him.

1 Corinthians 15:21-26 (Conquering death with Christ)


21 For since death came through a human being, **the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being**; 22 for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end,* when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 **The last enemy to be destroyed is death.**

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 (Rising Again)

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 **For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died.** 15 For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and **the dead in Christ will rise first.** 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever.



Individual or Particular Judgement

- Luke 16:19-26
(Lazarus and the Rich Man) 
- Takes place at the end of our life on earth
 - For all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.
(2 Corinthians 5:10)
- Leads to eternal union with God or eternal separation from God

Luke 16:19-26

(Individual Judgement: Lazarus and the Rich Man)

19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. 24 He called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames." 25 But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us."



Hell

- Story: "It's hot like hell !"
- The Bible describes Hell is a "furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:50)
- Hell is *not* a place
- Hell is a *state*
 - Eternal punishment
 - Eternal separation from God
 - Eternal despair, frustration, loneliness



Heaven

- Eternal union with God
 - Seeing God and being perfectly transformed into His image
- Heaven is a state of eternal peace and happiness
- Eternal life : "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3:16)
 - We are not made for this earthly life.
 - We are made for a glorious life, life eternal with God.



Purgatory

- Latin *purgare*, meaning "to cleanse".
- God completes the purification of a soul after the person's death
- Nothing defiled can enter Heaven. Sin cannot exist in the presence of the all-holy God.

Isaiah 6:1,5-7 (Isaiah's sin is purified before God)

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. 5 And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!' 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a **live coal** that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7 The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: '**Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.**'



Purgatory

- A temporary state where souls are purified from venial sins before entering Heaven.
- A sign of God's mercy
- It is the very reason we pray for the dead – for prayers do not benefit those in Heaven nor those in Hell.

2 Maccabees 12:44-45 (Delivering the dead from their sins)

44 For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. 45 But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, **so that they might be delivered from their sin.**

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 (Purification by Fire)

12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. 14 If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If the work is burned, the builder will suffer loss; **the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.**



Purgatory

- The Council of Trent (1545–1563) declared:
“The Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with Sacred Scripture and the ancient traditions of the Fathers, has taught .. that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls detained there are helped by the acts of intercession of the faithful ...”
- Not a second chance for those who lead evil lives.



Who Wants To Be The Kingdom's Heir?



1. Why do we have to die?

- a. God thought it was the best way to get us from earth to heaven
- b. We brought it upon ourselves by our sinfulness
- c. Cain killed Abel, which started a chain reaction
- d. There is no real reason, it's just a fact of life



2. What happens in death?

- a. We are called back to God
- b. The soul is separated from the body
- c. We experience the end of earthly life
- d. Our time to accept God's offer of redemption is over
- e. All of the above



3. What is particular or individual judgement?

- a. God's judgement of a particular fault or sin
- b. Thinking of the eternal consequences of our own particular actions
- c. The Last Judgement at the Second Coming of Christ
- d. The judgement of an individual at the moment of death



4. How is it that a person gets sent to Hell?

- a. God predestines some people to Hell
- b. God is vengeful and doesn't care what happens to people who die in the state of mortal sin
- c. The punishment of Hell is a direct consequence of the nature of sin
- d. No one goes to Hell – it is just there to scare us



5. Do we still believe in Purgatory?

- a. No, the Church has rethought the position on Purgatory
- b. No, Purgatory was never actually a part of the official teaching of the Church
- c. Yes, we believe in Purgatory as we always did
- d. Yes, but we think of it differently



6. Does our prayer has any effect once a person is dead?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. We are not sure, so we do it "just in case"



7. Who does God want to save and reach the eternal joy of heaven?

- a. People who do what God commands
- b. Only those people who are Christians
- c. Everyone who at least belongs to a religion
- d. Everyone



8. In his Second Coming, what criteria will Christ use in deciding the Final Judgement?

- a. The secret disposition of hearts
- b. What religion a person practised
- c. Who accomplished the most
- d. How successful a person was on earth




9. What is Heaven. Pick an answer that doesn't fit.

- a. A state of total perfect unity with God
- b. Eternal and peaceful rest
- c. The place to wait for the Second Coming when we will get to be with God if we are good
- d. God' life of happiness






10. In the Apostles' Creed, what does "I believe in the resurrection of the body" means?

- a. Jesus arose from the dead on Easter
- b. Every "mortal bodies" will one day come to life again
- c. The bodies of the faithfuls will be reunited with their souls at the Second Coming
- d. It has nothing to do with actual bodies – this is symbolic of our spiritual rising to Heaven in the Second Coming




Tea Break


Discussion

- Discuss your understanding of
 - Heaven
 - Hell
 - Prayer for the dead / Purgatory




Recap

- Last Judgement
 - Resurrection of the Body
- Individual Judgement
- Hell
- Heaven
- Purgatory



Q&A




Reflection – The Twin

A pair of twins was conceived. Weeks passed and they developed. As they grew, they sang for joy, "Isn't it great to be alive!" Together the twins explored the womb. When they found their mother's life cord, they shouted for joy, "How great is our mother's love that she shares her very life with us." As weeks passed, the twins began to change. "What does this means?" said the one. "It means that our life in the womb is coming to an end." said the second. "But I don't want to leave the womb. I want to stay here forever," said the first. "We have no choice," said the second. "Besides, may be there is life after birth." "But how can that be?" said the first. "We will shed our mother's cord, and how is life possible without it? Besides, there is evidence that there were others in the womb before us, and none of them has ever come back to tell us there is life after birth. No, this is the end."

Reflection – The Twin


And so the first twin fell in despair, saying, "If life in the womb ends in death, what's its purpose? It's meaningless! May be we don't even have a mother. May be we made her up." "But we must have a mother," said the second. "How else did we get here? How else do we stay alive?" And so the last days in the womb were filled with deep questioning and fear. Finally, the moment of birth arrived. When the twins open their eyes, they cried for joy. For what they saw exceeded their widest dreams.

"What no one ever saw or heard,
 what no one ever thought could happen,
 is the very thing God prepared for those who love him."
 1 Corinthians 2:9




Further Readings

- *At Home With God's People*
(ISBN 0-947282-13-0)
Chapter 25
- *Path Through Catholicism*
(ISBN 0-7829-0971-X)
Chapter 23



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I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE
St M. Toussin

I am the Bread of life;
He who comes to Me shall not hunger;
He who believes in Me shall not thirst:
No one can come to Me
Unless the Father draw him.

And I will raise you up.
And I will raise you up.
And I will raise you up
on the last day.

The Bread that I will give
Is my flesh for the life of the world,
And he who eats of this Bread,
He shall live forever:
He shall live forever

And I will raise you up.
And I will raise you up.
And I will raise you up
on the last day.

