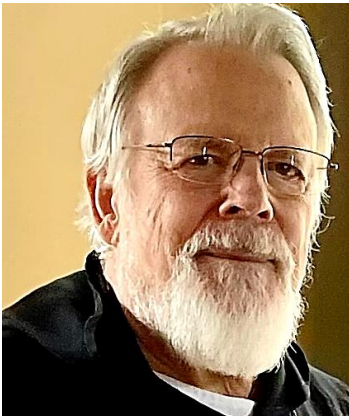


Our earthly life is the time given to us to respond to God's grace and form our ultimate destiny.

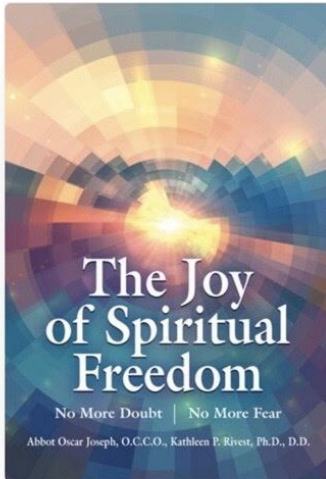
“Heavenly Father teach us to love heaven. May its promise and hope guide our way on earth.”

The Most Rev. Oscar Joseph, M.S., Ph.D., D.D., OCCO



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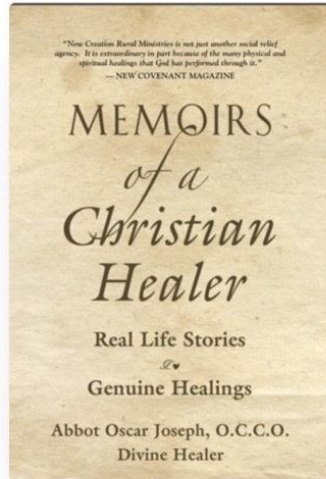
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The Joy of Spiritual Freedom

No More Doubts | No More Fear

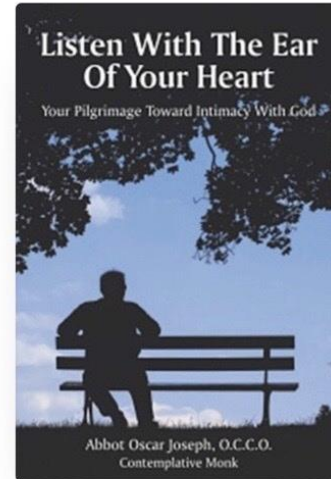
The Joy of Spiritual Freedom is the first of a trilogy that leads and inspires the reader to enter into a joy-filled relationship with a loving God. It is grounded in Biblical wisdom revealing how to remove debilitating doubt and fear. It draws from inspirational letters and case studies that illustrate the Gospel path toward freedom.



Memoirs of a Christian Healer

Real Life Stories | Genuine Healings

Memoirs of a Christian Healer chronicles the miraculous works of God. You will experience the joy of victory and the sorrow of human weakness. Incorporated within the many stories the Abbot includes reflective lessons on the Healing Ministry. The many stories are of real people and genuine healings.



Listen with the Ear of Your Heart

Your Pilgrimage Toward Intimacy with God

God created you to yearn for intimacy with Him. Listen with the Ear of Your Heart presents a dynamic pilgrimage utilizing Scripture, the teachings of the Church Fathers, The Rule of St. Benedict, prayer, meditation and contemplation.

Abbot Oscar Joseph's teachings:

Scripture and Church Fathers

Abbot Oscar Joseph places a strong emphasis on the foundational role of Scripture and the teachings of the Church Fathers. He encourages the study and meditation of the Bible, using it as a guide for personal and communal spiritual growth. The writings of early Christian theologians and leaders provide a rich resource for understanding the faith and its traditions.

Rule of St. Benedict

The Rule of St. Benedict is a cornerstone of monastic life and Abbot Oscar Joseph's teachings. This rule outlines principles for living in a monastic community, emphasizing values such as:

Prayer: Regular and disciplined prayer is central to deepening one's relationship with God.

Work: Engaging in meaningful work as a form of prayer and service.

Community Life: Building a supportive, loving community where individuals grow together in faith.

Prayer, Meditation, and Contemplation

These spiritual practices are vital in Abbot Joseph's teachings:

Prayer: Engaging in regular, heartfelt communication with God.

Meditation: Reflecting on Scripture and spiritual writings to gain deeper insights.

Contemplation: Experiencing the presence of God in silence and stillness, allowing for a transformative connection.

Spiritual Direction

Abbot Oscar Joseph offers spiritual direction to help individuals navigate their spiritual journey. This involves one-on-one guidance to explore personal faith, address doubts and fears, and discern God's will.

Healing Ministry

A significant part of Abbot Oscar Joseph's work is his healing ministry, where he shares stories of miraculous healings and teaches others how to minister healing to those in need. This involves prayer, laying on of hands, and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Overcoming Fears and Misconceptions

He addresses common fears and misconceptions about God and faith, helping individuals to overcome these barriers and embrace a more intimate and joyful relationship with God.

Living a Joy-Filled Life

Abbot Oscar Joseph believes that a deep and joyful relationship with God is attainable for everyone. By letting go of doubts and fears, individuals can experience the peace and joy that come from knowing and trusting in God.

Abbot Oscar Joseph's biography

Education: He holds a Master of Science in Education, doctoral degrees in Sacred Theology (Scripture) and Christian Counseling, and several honorary doctorates.

Ministry: Ordained as a priest in 1993, he was consecrated as a bishop in 2002 and took his final vows as a monk in 1999. Served thirty-five years as a Christian Counselor, Abbot General For the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross.

Roles: He has served as a TV and radio personality, former pastor of a local conservative Anglican Church, college educator, retreat master, and seminar leader

Publications He has authored several books, including "Memoirs of a Christian Healer," "The Joy of Spiritual Freedom," and "Listen with the Ear of Your Heart."

Current Work: He is currently focused on his duties as the leader of the Cistercian Order, providing spiritual direction, conducting seminars, and healing services

Abbot Oscar Joseph is known for his extensive background in education, having taught psychology, sociology, Old and New Testament, English, and ethics at several local community colleges He is also the Founder/President of St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary.

Dear Reader,

I believe that God has brought you to this presentation because we are only drawn to holy things when we are first called to them.

I, too, was inspired to write this paper. I have researched information from the traditions of the Church Fathers, Scripture, and the teachings of Jesus as presented by the Roman Catholic Church.

Jesus was crucified so that we might all enjoy eternity with Him in Heaven. Our earthly life is the time we have to respond to God's grace and shape our ultimate destiny.

"Heavenly Father, teach us to love Heaven. May its promise and hope guide our way here on earth."

It is my hope that this presentation will inspire you to love God and Heaven so profoundly that you will grow in faith, focus on being obedient to Jesus's teachings, and ultimately join Him after your death.

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Heaven

What is the location of Heaven?

The Church has decided nothing on this subject.

The Nature of Heavenly Life

Life in Heaven is often depicted as a continuation of the soul's journey toward God. It involves a dynamic and ever-deepening relationship with the Divine, where the soul Heaven is considered the ultimate goal and destination for souls who have died in a state of grace. It is a state of eternal happiness, where one is in perfect communion with God.

The Beatific Vision

The central joy of Heaven is the ****Beatific Vision****, which is the direct, face-to-face experience of God's presence and glory. In this state, the souls of the righteous see God in His full essence, bringing complete fulfillment and perfect joy.

Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live forever with Christ for they 'see him as he is,' face to face."

Eternal Union with God

Heaven is described as a place or state of eternal life and union with God, the angels, and the saints. This union provides a profound sense of community and belonging, where all the saved share in the divine life and love of God.

Resurrection of the Body

The Church believes in the resurrection of the body at the end of time. This means that, in Heaven, individuals will experience a glorified, physical existence. The soul and body will be reunited in a state that is free from suffering, pain, and death.

Joy and Peace

Heaven is characterized by perfect joy, peace, and happiness. It is free from all forms of suffering, sin, and evil.

This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity—this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed—is called 'heaven.' Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness.

Communion of Saints

In Heaven, there is a profound communion of saints, where the blessed are united with one another and with God. This communion is an eternal bond of love and solidarity among all the members of the heavenly community.

What do we do in heaven?

The idea of what a person does in Heaven is often shaped by religious teachings and personal beliefs. In many Christian traditions, heaven is described as a place of eternal joy, peace, and communion with God. Here are some common beliefs about what people experience or do in heaven:

Worship and Praise

One of the central activities in Heaven is worshiping and praising God. Many believe that the joy of being in God's presence inspires continuous adoration and worship.

Communion with God

Heaven is described as a state of perfect communion with God. This means experiencing God's love, wisdom, and glory in an intimate and direct way.

Reunion with Loved Ones

Many believe that Heaven includes joyous reunions with loved ones who have also entered eternal life. This includes family, friends, and others who have passed away.

Eternal Joy and Peace

Heaven is often depicted as a place of ultimate happiness, free from pain, suffering, and sorrow. It's a state of eternal peace and contentment.

Exploration and Learning

Some traditions suggest that heaven offers endless opportunities for exploration, learning, and growth. This could involve gaining a deeper understanding of God, the universe, and one's own purpose.

Do the souls in heaven enjoy communion and fellowship with one another?

Communion of Saints

Unity in Heaven: The Church teaches the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, which encompasses all the faithful, both in heaven and on Earth. This unity means that souls in heaven are in a state of perfect communion with one another.

Interaction:

This perfect communion suggests that souls can indeed interact, meet, and converse with each other. They share in the joy and love of God's presence together.

Family and Loved Ones

Reunions: It is a comforting belief that souls are reunited with their loved ones in heaven. This includes family members and friends who have also attained salvation.

Perfect Love:

The relationships in heaven are perfected and free from any earthly limitations. This means that the love and connection experienced with loved ones are deepened and purified.

Saints and Historical Figures

Meeting Saints: In heaven, souls can meet and converse with the saints—those individuals recognized for their exemplary lives of faith and virtue. This includes well-known saints as well as those who may not be widely recognized but have attained holiness.

Famous Figures:

Souls may also encounter historical figures and other famous individuals who have lived righteous lives and are now in heaven.

Eternal Joy and Fellowship

Shared Joy: The joy and fellowship in heaven are communal. Souls share in the happiness and glory of being in God's presence, which includes engaging in loving and meaningful interactions with one another.

Eternal Celebration: The imagery of the heavenly banquet also suggests a communal celebration where souls partake in the eternal joy and peace of heaven together.

In summary, souls in heaven do meet, converse, and enjoy fellowship with family, friends, other souls, and saints. This communion is a central aspect of the eternal joy and fulfillment experienced in the presence of God.

What Role does God the Father have in heaven?

God the Father holds a central and supreme role in heaven.

Creator and Sustainer

Creator: God the Father is acknowledged as the Creator of all things. He is the source of all existence and has brought everything into being through His divine will.

Sustainer: He continuously sustains and upholds all creation. Everything exists through His ongoing presence and power.

Sovereign Ruler

Supreme Authority: God the Father is the supreme ruler of heaven and Earth. His will is sovereign, and He governs all creation with perfect wisdom, justice, and love.

Divine Providence:

He exercises divine providence, guiding the course of history and the lives of individuals according to His plan. This includes the fulfillment of His divine purposes and the salvation of humanity.

Source of Divine Love and Grace

Fountain of Love: God the Father is the fountain of divine love. His love is the foundation of the relationship within the Holy Trinity and extends to all creation.

Giver of Grace: He is the source of all grace, which is imparted to humanity through the sacraments and the work of the Holy Spirit. This grace enables individuals to grow in holiness and ultimately reach heaven.

Father of the Family of God

Parental Role: As Father, He has a special and intimate relationship with His children. The souls in heaven experience this paternal love in its fullness, which brings them perfect joy and contentment.

Communion with the Saints: God the Father unites the saints in heaven in perfect communion with one another and with Him. This communion reflects the familial and communal nature of His divine plan.

Ultimate Judge

Judgment: God the Father, through Jesus Christ, exercises judgment. He is the ultimate judge who will preside over the Last Judgment, where the full truth of each person's life will be revealed, and His justice and mercy will be made manifest.

Eternal Source of Joy and Fulfillment

Beatific Vision: The Beatific Vision, the direct and perfect vision of God, is the ultimate joy and fulfillment for the souls in heaven. God the Father is the source of this vision, and in His presence, souls experience perfect happiness and peace.

Eternal Relationship: The relationship with God the Father in heaven is eternal. Souls experience His love, wisdom, and goodness in an unending and profound way.

In summary,

God the Father's role in heaven encompasses His creative power, sovereign rule, paternal love, source of grace, role as ultimate judge, and the eternal joy and fulfillment He provides to the souls in heaven. His presence and relationship with the souls in heaven are central to their experience of eternal bliss and communion.

What is Jesus' role in Heaven?

King and Lord

Reigning as King: Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, reigning as King of Heaven and Earth. His ascension signifies His exaltation and the beginning of His eternal kingship.

Lord of All: Jesus is acknowledged as the Lord of all creation, and His sovereignty extends over everything in heaven and on Earth.

Mediator and Intercessor

Mediating Between God and Humanity: Jesus continues His role as the one mediator between God and humanity. He intercedes for us before the Father, presenting our prayers and petitions.

High Priest:

As the eternal High Priest, Jesus offers Himself continuously in the heavenly liturgy. His once-for-all sacrifice on the cross is eternally efficacious and present in heaven.

Advocate and Protector

Advocating for the Faithful: Jesus advocates on behalf of His followers, ensuring their continued sanctification and protection. He supports and guides the faithful as they navigate their spiritual journeys.

Shepherd of Souls: He is the Good Shepherd, caring for and guiding the souls of the faithful who are in heaven and those still on Earth.

Judge and Redeemer

Final Judge: Jesus is the ultimate judge of the living and the dead. At the Last Judgment, He will judge all humanity, revealing the full truth of each person's life.

Redeemer: He is eternally recognized as the Redeemer who has saved humanity through His passion, death, and resurrection.

Head of the Mystical Body

Head of the Church: Jesus is the head of the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church. This mystical body includes the faithful on Earth, the souls in purgatory, and the saints in heaven. He is the source of all grace and life for the Church, continually imparting His divine life to the members of His body.

Eternal Presence

Eternal Word: Jesus is the eternal Word of God, fully divine and fully human. His presence in heaven is a constant reminder of God's love and salvation.

Beatific Vision:

Through Him, the souls in heaven enjoy the beatific vision, which is the direct and perfect vision of God, bringing eternal joy and fulfillment.

What is the Holy Spirit's role in Heaven?

Presence in the Holy Trinity:

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Holy Trinity, eternally united with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit's presence in heaven is integral to the unity and communion of the Trinity.

Source of Sanctification:

The Holy Spirit is the source of all sanctity and holiness. In heaven, the Holy Spirit continues to sanctify and perfect the souls of the blessed, making them fully participate in the divine life.

Communion of Saints:

The Holy Spirit fosters the communion of saints—both those in heaven and those on Earth. This communion is a deep, spiritual connection that unites all members of the Church in Christ.

Eternal Joy and Love:

The Holy Spirit fills heaven with eternal joy, love, and peace. The Holy Spirit's presence ensures that the beatific vision (the direct encounter and sight of God) is an experience of profound and everlasting bliss.

Intercessor:

The Holy Spirit acts as an intercessor and advocate, continuously praying and interceding for humanity. This intercession helps to bridge the gap between the divine and human realms.

What role does Mary, the Mother of God, have in Heaven?

Mary, the Mother of God, holds a uniquely exalted role in heaven.

Queen of Heaven

Queenly Title: Mary is honored with the title "Queen of Heaven." This title signifies her exalted status and her intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, the King of Kings.

Coronation:

The Church celebrates the Assumption of Mary into heaven and her Coronation as Queen of Heaven and Earth. This underscores her role as a queenly intercessor and mother.

Mother of the Church

Spiritual Motherhood: Mary is regarded as the spiritual mother of all the faithful. As the Mother of Jesus, she extends her maternal care and intercession to all Christians, guiding them toward her Son.

Mother of the Church: Mary is also called the "Mother of the Church," signifying her role in the life of the Church and her special concern for its members.

Intercessor

Intercessory Role: One of Mary's primary roles in heaven is interceding for the faithful. She prays on behalf of humanity, bringing their needs and petitions to her Son, Jesus.

Powerful Advocate: Mary's intercession is considered powerful and effective because of her unique relationship with Jesus and her purity and holiness.

Model of Holiness

Exemplar of Faith: Mary is a model of perfect discipleship and holiness. The faithful are encouraged to emulate her virtues, such as humility, obedience, and trust in God.

Guide and Example: By reflecting on Mary's life and actions, believers can find inspiration and guidance in their own spiritual journeys.

Mediatix and Co-Redemptrix

Mediatix: Mary as the "Mediatix of All Graces." This means that through her intercession, God's graces are distributed to humanity.

Co-Redemptrix:

While this title is more theological and less officially recognized, it acknowledges Mary's unique participation in the redemptive work of Christ through her willingness to bear and raise Him.

Participant in Divine Glory

Assumption: Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. She participates fully in divine glory, reflecting the resurrection and the hope of eternal life for all the faithful.

Heavenly Presence:

In heaven, Mary continues to participate in the divine life and glory, enjoying the Beatific Vision and the eternal presence of God.

What is the role of Angels in Heaven?

Worship and Praise

Eternal Worship: Angels are primarily engaged in the eternal worship and praise of God. They glorify and adore God continuously, reflecting His divine majesty and holiness.

Heavenly Liturgy: They participate in the heavenly liturgy, which is a perpetual act of worship in the presence of God. This liturgy is a reflection of the Church's liturgical celebrations on Earth.

Messengers and Servants of God

Messengers: The very name "angel" means "messenger." Angels are sent by God to deliver His messages and execute His will. They have been known to communicate important divine messages to individuals on Earth throughout biblical history.

Servants: Angels serve God by carrying out His commands and overseeing various aspects of His creation.

Guardians and Protectors

Guardian Angels: Each person is believed to have a guardian angel assigned to protect and guide them. These angels offer spiritual support and protection, helping individuals resist temptation and stay on the path to salvation.

Protectors of the Church

Angels are seen as protectors of the Church as a whole, guiding and defending it against spiritual and temporal dangers.

Intercessors

Interceding for Humanity: Angels intercede for humans before God, praying on their behalf and presenting their petitions and prayers to Him. They act as intermediaries, supporting the faithful in their spiritual journeys.

Executors of Divine Justice

Divine Justice: Some angels are tasked with executing God's judgments and administering His justice. They play roles in biblical accounts of divine retribution and are believed to continue these duties in various ways.

Role in the Final Judgment

Participation in the Last Judgment: Angels will have a role in the Last Judgment, assisting Christ in separating the righteous from the wicked and carrying out His final judgment on humanity.

Can you lose your salvation?

Free Will:

God has endowed humans with free will. This ability to choose freely is a fundamental aspect of being made in the image of God. It allows for genuine love and moral responsibility.

Seriousness of Choices: The decisions we make, especially concerning our relationship with God, carry significant weight. The

Church teaches that our earthly life is the time given to us to respond to God's grace and form our ultimate destiny.

Knowledge and Intent

Informed Decision: For a decision to reject God to be considered definitive, it must be made with full knowledge and deliberate intent. The Church acknowledges that not all choices are made with full awareness or freedom due to various factors such as ignorance, coercion, or psychological limitations.

Mercy and Justice:

God's judgment is perfectly just and merciful. He takes into account the individual's circumstances, knowledge, and ability to make a fully informed decision.

Grace and Conversion

Abundant Grace: God provides abundant grace throughout a person's life, constantly inviting them to turn towards Him. The sacraments, prayers, and the support of the Church community are means through which God's grace is offered.

Opportunity for Conversion:

The Church emphasizes the importance of repentance and conversion. Every person has multiple opportunities to respond to God's grace and seek forgiveness.

Eternal Consequence

Definitive Choice: At the moment of death, the soul makes a definitive choice for or against God. This choice reflects the cumulative decisions made throughout one's life.

Respect for Free Will:

God respects human free will even in its finality. If a person definitively rejects God's grace, this choice is honored, resulting in eternal separation from God.

How can I prepare for eternal life with God?

Maintain a State of Grace

Frequent Confession: Regularly participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps ensure you remain in a state of grace by confessing sins and receiving absolution

Avoid Mortal Sin: Make a conscious effort to avoid actions that constitute mortal sin, which separates one from God's grace.

Participate in the Sacraments

Attend Mass Regularly attend Mass, especially on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, to receive the Eucharist, which is a source of grace and spiritual nourishment. The frequent reception of Holy Communion strengthens your relationship with God.

Pray Regularly

Daily Prayer Engage in daily prayer, including personal prayers, the Rosary, and reading Scripture.

Devotionals: Participate in devotional practices like the Divine Mercy Chaplet, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and other traditional prayers.

Live a Virtuous Life

Practice the Virtues: Cultivate virtues such as faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

Follow the Ten Commandments: Live in accordance with the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.

Love and Serve Others

Acts of Charity Perform acts of charity and kindness towards others, especially those in need.

Corporal Works of Mercy:

Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, and perform other corporal works of mercy.

Spiritual Works of Mercy Counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offenses, bear wrongs patiently, and pray for the living and the dead.

Seek Spiritual Guidance

Spiritual Direction Seek guidance from a spiritual director or confessor to help discern and grow in your spiritual life.

Engage in Community: Be an active part of your parish community, participating in communal prayers, study groups, and charitable activities.

Trust in God's Mercy

Trust in Divine Mercy: Place your trust in God's infinite mercy, knowing that He desires the salvation of all souls.

Final Perseverance: Pray for the grace of final perseverance, to remain faithful to God until the end of your life.

Reflect on Eternity

Meditate on Heaven: Reflect on the joys of Heaven and the ultimate goal of eternal life with God.

Prepare for Death: Live with an awareness of the afterlife, making preparations for a holy death, including receiving the Last Rites if possible.

By incorporating these practices into daily life, we grow closer to God, deepen our faith, and live in a way that prepares us for eternal life in heaven.

Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Mary's Intercession The Blessed Virgin Mary, as the Mother of God, holds a special place of intercession. She intercedes for believers, asking her Son, Jesus, to grant their petitions. This is reflected in the practice of praying the Rosary and other Marian devotions.

Angels and Their Role

Guardian Angels: The role of guardian angels, who are believed to protect and guide individuals throughout their lives. These angels continue to assist and intercede for people on Earth.

Does everyone share the glory of heaven equally?

The idea of varying degrees of glory in Heaven is linked to the virtues and merits accumulated during one's earthly life. Here are some specific groups of people who are often considered to receive superior glory in heaven:

Martyrs

Martyrs are those who have died for their faith. Their ultimate sacrifice for the sake of Christ is considered the highest form of witness and love. The Church honors martyrs as having a special place in heaven.

Saints

Canonized Saints: These are individuals who have been officially recognized by the Church for their exemplary lives of virtue and holiness. Their lives serve as models for other believers, and they are believed to experience a high degree of glory in heaven.

Doctors of the Church

Doctors of the Church: These are saints who have made significant contributions to theology and doctrine through their writings and teachings. Their profound understanding and communication of the faith are believed to be rewarded with greater glory.

Confessors

Confessors: These are individuals who have lived lives of heroic virtue without undergoing martyrdom. They are often recognized for their steadfast faith, charity, and dedication to God.

Virgin Saints

Virgin Saints: These saints are honored for their commitment to chastity and purity, often dedicating their lives wholly to God. Their sacrifice and dedication are believed to earn them a higher place in heaven.

Religious and Monastics

Monks, Nuns, and Religious: Those who have taken religious vows and lived lives of poverty, chastity, and obedience are often considered to have a special place in heaven due to their radical commitment to living out the Gospel.

Laypeople of Extraordinary Virtue

Laypeople of Extraordinary Virtue: While sainthood is often associated with religious figures, many laypeople who have lived lives of exceptional virtue and holiness are also believed to receive superior glory. This includes individuals who have shown great charity, faith, and service in their everyday lives. This includes people who have been married.

Founders of Religious Orders

Founders of Religious Orders: Those who have established religious communities and orders that have had a significant impact on the Church and the world are often considered to hold a special place in heaven.

Missionaries

Missionaries: Those who have dedicated their lives to spreading the Gospel, often in difficult and dangerous circumstances, are believed to be rewarded for their zeal and dedication.

Teachers and Catechists

Teachers and Catechists: Those who have devoted their lives to educating others in the faith and nurturing spiritual growth are also considered to receive higher glory for their service to the Church.

These groups reflect the Church's recognition of various ways to live out the Gospel and contribute to the faith. Everyone's capacity to love and serve God is unique, and the Church teaches that God rewards each person justly according to their deeds and virtues.

This idea is rooted in the belief that the rewards of Heaven correspond to the virtues and good deeds performed during one's earthly life. Here are some specifics about this concept:

Scriptural Basis

1 Corinthians 15:41-42: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also, is the resurrection of the dead."

Matthew 16:27: "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will reward each according to his works."

Teachings of the Church Fathers

St. Augustine: He compared the different degrees of glory in heaven to the varying brightness of stars, emphasizing that all the blessed share in eternal happiness, but the degree of glory is proportionate to their merits.*St. Thomas Aquinas: In his work, the ****Summa Theologica****, Aquinas elaborates that the varying degrees of glory in heaven are related to the capacity of the soul to enjoy God. He states that **those who have lived holier lives will have a greater capacity for enjoying the divine presence.**

Analogies Used by Theologians

Theologians often use analogies to explain this concept. For instance:

Vessels of Different Sizes: Imagine different-sized vessels filled to the brim with water. Each vessel represents a soul, and the water represents the joy and glory of heaven. While each vessel is full, the larger ones contain more water, symbolizing a greater capacity for happiness in heaven.

Personal Merit and Capacity for Joy

The differences in glory are based on:

Personal Merit: The good deeds, virtues, and the extent of one's love for God and others during earthly life.

Capacity for Joy:

Each soul's ability to experience and enjoy the divine presence, which is shaped by their earthly life and spiritual growth.

Universal Happiness

Despite the differing degrees, all in heaven experience perfect happiness and fulfillment. The differences in glory do not create envy or dissatisfaction but reflect the justice and generosity of God in rewarding each according to their deeds.

Recognition and Honor

Those who have achieved greater holiness and virtue may receive special recognition and honor in heaven. Saints and martyrs are often seen as having a higher degree of glory due to their profound witness and sacrifices for their faith.

Encouragement for Spiritual Growth

This teaching encourages the faithful to strive for greater holiness and virtue in their earthly lives, aiming to grow in their love for God and neighbor, knowing that their efforts will be richly rewarded in heaven.

This concept, while deeply theological, is ultimately about the profound and unique relationship each person has with God. It underscores the belief that God's justice and mercy are perfectly balanced, rewarding each soul according to their love and service.

Upon our death how are we transformed from our earthly state?

Negativity and criticism:

Can often prevail in our earthly state. Being transformed to the perfected state of being in heaven is a profound journey of grace, purification, and divine love.

Human Condition on Earth

Original Sin: Humanity inherited Original Sin from Adam and Eve, which inclines us to sin and negativity. This explains why people can be critical, judgmental, and negative.

Temptation and Weakness:

Life on Earth is marked by the presence of temptations and human weaknesses. Our struggles with sin, selfishness, and the limitations of our human nature contribute to our negative behaviors.

The Role of God's Grace

Sanctifying Grace: The process of transformation begins with sanctifying grace, received through the sacraments, especially baptism and the Eucharist. This grace helps to heal our wounded nature and aligns us more closely with God's will.

Divine Assistance:

Through prayer, the sacraments, and the support of the Church community, individuals receive the divine assistance needed to grow in virtue and overcome negativity.

Purification in Purgatory

Purgatory: Souls who die in a state of grace but are not yet perfectly purified undergo a process of purification in purgatory. This purification removes any remaining attachment to sin and prepares the soul for the fullness of heaven.

Cleansing of Imperfections:

In purgatory, the imperfections and negative tendencies of the soul are cleansed, allowing the soul to enter heaven in a state of perfect holiness.

Transformation in heaven.

Beatific Vision: In heaven, souls experience the Beatific Vision, the direct and perfect vision of God. This encounter with God's infinite goodness, love, and beauty transforms the soul completely, eliminating all negativity and imperfection.

Perfect Union with God:

The souls in heaven are in perfect union with God and are fully immersed in His love. This union fills them with perfect joy, peace, and love, leaving no room for negativity or criticism.

Communion of Saints

Perfected Relationships: In heaven, relationships are perfected. The communion of saints means that souls experience perfect harmony and love with one another, free from the conflicts and misunderstandings that can occur on Earth.

Eternal Joy:

The joy and fulfillment of being in God's presence and in perfect communion with others eradicates any lingering negativity, as the soul is fully satisfied and content.

Tell us about our resurrected bodies

Glorified Bodies

Perfect State: Resurrected bodies are believed to be in a glorified and perfect state, free from any imperfections, suffering, or limitations of earthly life. This state of perfection transcends specific ages.

Traditional Beliefs

Prime of Life: Some theologians and saints, such as St. Thomas Aquinas, have speculated that resurrected bodies will resemble the prime of life. This is often considered to be around the age of 30, reflecting the age at which Jesus began His public ministry.

Youth and Vitality:

The prime of life is seen as a time of peak vitality, health, and strength, symbolizing the fullness of human potential.

Symbolic and Mystical Understanding

Beyond Earthly Age: The concept of age may not apply in the same way in the eternal and timeless reality of heaven. The focus is on the glorified and perfected nature of the resurrected body rather than a specific age.

Eternal Youth:

The idea of eternal youth and vitality reflects the state of everlasting joy and fulfillment in God's presence.

Resurrection of the Body:

Our bodies will be transformed and glorified, reflecting the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This transformation goes beyond physical age to encompass a state of perfect unity with God.

Particular Judgment and last judgement

The Church teaches that immediately after death, a person's soul undergoes what is known as the "particular judgment." This is the individual judgment by God, where the soul is judged based on their faith and works during their earthly life.

Particular Judgment:

At the moment of death, each person receives their eternal recompense in their immortal soul, in a particular judgment that refers their life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven—through a purification (purgatory) or immediately—or immediate and everlasting damnation (hell).

No Waiting Period:

There is no waiting period between death and this judgment. The soul's eternal fate is determined immediately.

This particular judgment differs from the "Last Judgment" which will occur at the end of time when Christ returns. The Last Judgment will involve the resurrection of the body and the final judgment of all humanity.

The Last Judgment

will not change the outcome of the judgment that occurs immediately after death. Instead, the Last Judgment will reaffirm and publicly reveal the justice and mercy of God's judgment.

Particular Judgment:

This occurs immediately after a person's death and determines their eternal fate—either heaven (possibly through purgatory) or hell.

Last Judgment: T

his occurs at the end of time when Christ returns in glory. It is a public judgment that involves the resurrection of the body and the final affirmation of all individual judgments.

The purpose of the Last Judgment is to reveal God's justice and mercy to all creation and to show how God's plan has been fulfilled. It is a time when the full meaning and consequences of each person's life and actions will be made manifest to all.

The idea of the Last Judgment involves a comprehensive revelation of God's justice and mercy. During the Last Judgment, the full truth of each person's life—including their thoughts, words, deeds, and omissions—will be made manifest.

This means that everything, including our sins and virtues, will be revealed and understood in the context of God's plan. However, the focus is not on shaming individuals but on demonstrating the righteousness and fairness of God's judgment. This revelation will show how even the hidden aspects of our lives played a role in the grand tapestry of God's creation.

Revelation of Truth:

The Last Judgment will reveal the truth of each person's life in the light of God's justice and mercy.

Context of God's Plan: The purpose is to show how each person's life contributed to the fulfillment of God's plan.

Divine Justice:

It demonstrates the perfect justice and mercy of God, ensuring that everyone understands the reasons behind God's judgments.

The focus during the Last Judgment is on God's perfect justice and mercy rather than on judgment by other souls. Here's a nuanced view:

Divine Judgment:

God alone is the judge. His judgment is perfectly just and merciful, considering all aspects of a person's life, including their intentions, actions, and repentance.

Souls in Heaven:

Souls that are in heaven are united with God and experience perfect happiness. They are not concerned with judging others but are in a state of grace and eternal joy.

Communion of Saints:

The Church teaches the communion of saints, which means that all souls in heaven, purgatory, and on earth are united in Christ. This unity fosters understanding, compassion, and a desire for the salvation of all, rather than judgment and condemnation.

Focus on God's Plan:

During the Last Judgment, the emphasis will be on how each person's life has contributed to God's overarching plan. The revelation of sins is not to induce shame but to demonstrate the fullness of divine justice and mercy.

So, in essence, other souls will not judge us; rather, they are part of a divine community that understands and accepts God's just decisions.

Communion of Saints

Can those in heaven help us on earth?

It is believed that the saints and the faithful departed in heaven do indeed intercede on behalf of those still living on Earth. Here are some key points about this intercession:

Intercession of the Saints

Communion of Saints The concept of the ****Communion of Saints**** encompasses the unity of the Church in heaven, Purgatory, and on Earth. This unity allows the saints in Heaven to intercede for those on Earth.

Praying for the Living:

Saints are believed to pray for the living, asking God to grant them graces and blessings. This is rooted in the understanding that the saints are closer to God and can intercede effectively on behalf of the living.

Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Mary's Intercession The Blessed Virgin Mary, as the Mother of God, holds a special place of intercession. She intercedes for believers, asking her Son, Jesus, to grant their petitions. This is reflected in the practice of praying the Rosary and other Marian devotions.

Angels and Their Role

Guardian Angels: The role of guardian angels, who are believed to protect and guide individuals throughout their lives. These angels continue to assist and intercede for people on Earth.

Theological Foundation

Scriptural Basis: The belief in intercession is supported by various biblical passages, such as Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4, which depict the saints and angels presenting the prayers of the faithful to God.

What can we on earth do for the departed?

Prayers for the Departed

Mutual Support: While those in heaven intercede for the living, we are encouraged to pray for the souls in Purgatory, helping them through their purification process.

The intercession of the saints and the faithful departed is a source of comfort and strength for many providing a sense of connection and support from the heavenly community.

Does God send human souls back to Earth to influence or help mankind?

The Church teaches that God works through various means to guide, support, and inspire people but there is no belief that he sends human souls.

Saints and Intercession: The Church believes in the intercession of saints. Saints are those who have lived exemplary lives of faith and virtue and are now in heaven. While they don't return to Earth, they can intercede on behalf of the faithful, praying for us and aiding us through their intercession.

Angels:

Angels are sent by God to help and guide humanity. They are spiritual beings created by God to act as His messengers and protectors.

Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit is believed to be actively present in the world, guiding, inspiring, and empowering individuals and the Church as a whole.

Divine Providence:

God can also act through ordinary events and people to accomplish His will. He can inspire individuals to acts of kindness, wisdom, and leadership that benefit humanity

Hell

What is hell all about?

Hell is a state of eternal separation from God, reserved for those who die in a state of mortal sin and have definitively rejected God's grace and mercy. It is a place of eternal suffering and despair.

Nature of Hell

Eternal Separation Hell is characterized by the complete absence of God's presence, which is the source of all goodness and joy.

Suffering:

It is a place of eternal suffering, often described in terms of fire, darkness, and torment. This suffering is both physical and spiritual.

Despair:

Those in Hell experience eternal despair, knowing that they are forever separated from God and the possibility of redemption.

Who Goes to Hell?

Unrepentant Mortal Sinners:

Those who die in a state of mortal sin without repenting and seeking God's forgiveness.

Rejecters of God:

Individuals who knowingly and willingly reject God and His grace throughout their lives.

Blasphemers Against the Holy Spirit:

Those who commit the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which involves a persistent and willful rejection of God's grace.

Perspective on Hell

God's Justice and Mercy:

The Church teaches that God is both just and merciful. While Hell is a reality for those who reject God, the Church also emphasizes God's desire for all to be saved and His infinite mercy.

Hope for Salvation:

We are encouraged to live virtuous lives, seek forgiveness for their sins, and trust in God's mercy.

The Role of Free Will

Choice: Individuals have free will to choose their actions and their relationship with God. Hell is seen as a consequence of the free choice to reject God and His love.

Tell me more. Who cannot go to heaven?

Entrance into Heaven is contingent on one's relationship with God, particularly through the state of grace at the time of death.

State of Mortal Sin

Mortal Sin:

Those who die in a state of mortal sin without repenting are excluded from Heaven. Mortal sins are grave offenses that sever one's relationship with God. For a sin to be mortal, it must meet three conditions: grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent.

Unrepentant Sinners:

Individuals who knowingly and willingly reject God's grace and persist in grave sin without seeking forgiveness are at risk of not entering heaven.

Unrepentant Grave Offenses

Grave Immorality: Engaging in actions that are gravely immoral and failing to repent can lead to exclusion from Heaven. This includes acts such as murder, adultery, and other serious violations of God's commandments.

Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

*Unforgivable Sin**:* According to Jesus' teachings in the Gospels, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is considered an unforgivable sin. This involves a willful and persistent rejection of God's grace and the refusal to accept forgiveness.

Lack of Charity

Failure to Love: Failing to show love and compassion toward others, particularly those in need, can jeopardize one's eternal salvation. Jesus emphasized this in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46).

Final Judgment

God's Justice and Mercy: Ultimately, the final judgment belongs to God, who perfectly balances justice and mercy. Only God fully knows the state of a person's soul at the time of death and their relationship with Him.

The Hope of Salvation

Purgatory: Those who die in God's grace but are not yet fully purified may undergo a process of purification in Purgatory before entering heaven. This reflects the hope of eventual salvation for many who may not be immediately ready for heaven.

Are the souls in hell aware of heaven?

The souls in hell are indeed aware of the goodness and beauty of heaven, but this awareness is part of their suffering.

Awareness of Heaven

Contrast of States: The souls in hell are fully aware of the stark contrast between their state of eternal separation from God and the joy and fulfillment of heaven. This awareness adds to their torment, as they realize what they have lost.

Understanding of Loss:

The souls understand the gravity of their choices and the eternal separation from God's love, grace, and the communion of saints. This realization deepens their anguish.

Speculative Theology:

There are theological speculations and discussions about the possibility of universal salvation, but these are **not** part of official Church doctrine. The Church maintains the teaching of hell's eternity while also trusting in God's infinite mercy.

More Questions

More descriptions of heaven

Descriptions of heaven often use symbolic and poetic language to convey the joy, beauty, and perfection of the afterlife. While the Church does not provide detailed physical descriptions of heaven, some traditional imagery includes elements like flowers, fields, forests, lakes, and homes to help illustrate the beauty and peace of eternal life with God.

Symbolic Imagery

Natural Beauty: Heaven is often described using imagery of natural beauty, such as flowers, fields, forests, and lakes. These elements symbolize the perfect harmony, peace, and joy that souls experience in the presence of God.

Paradise:

The idea of heaven as a paradise is deeply rooted in Christian tradition. This includes lush gardens and idyllic landscapes, reflecting the original perfection of creation before the Fall.

Heavenly Homes and Dwelling Places

Heavenly Mansions: Jesus speaks of preparing a place for His followers in heaven, using the imagery of mansions or dwelling places. In John 14:2, He says, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" This suggests a sense of belonging and personal connection.

Symbolic Representation:

These homes represent the unique and personal relationship each soul has with God and the eternal security and comfort they find in His presence.

Perfect Communion

Union with God: The central joy of heaven is the perfect union with God, known as the Beatific Vision. This transcends all earthly imagery, providing complete fulfillment and joy beyond human understanding.

Communion of Saints: Heaven is also described as a communal experience, where souls are united with the saints and angels in perfect harmony and fellowship.

Beyond Human Comprehension

Mystical Language The Church acknowledges that the full reality of heaven is beyond human comprehension. The symbolic language used in Scripture and tradition helps believers grasp the profound joy and beauty of eternal life with God.

Clothing

The concept of clothing for souls and resurrected bodies is largely symbolic, reflecting deeper spiritual truths.

Souls in Heaven

Symbolic Clothing: The souls in heaven are typically understood to be in a state of pure spiritual existence, without physical bodies. Therefore, the idea of clothing is symbolic, representing the soul's purity, sanctity, and righteousness.

White Garments:

Scripture often uses the imagery of white garments to symbolize the purity and holiness of the saints in heaven. For example, in the Book of Revelation, the saints are described as wearing white robes, indicating their victory and sanctity (Revelation 7:9, 7:13-14).

Clothing Imagery:

The idea of clothing for resurrected bodies may be used symbolically to convey dignity, honor, and the state of being clothed in God's grace and glory. This imagery helps illustrate the transformed and exalted state of the resurrected body.

Wedding Feast: Jesus often used the imagery of a wedding feast, where guests are properly attired, to describe the Kingdom of heaven. This suggests a state of readiness and honor (Matthew 22:1-14).

Transfiguration The transfiguration of Jesus, where His clothes became dazzling white (Mark 9:2-3), offers a glimpse of the glorified state that believers may share in the resurrection.

Beyond Physical Description

Spiritual Reality: Heaven is primarily a spiritual reality rather than a physical location with weather conditions and landscapes as we know them. It's a state of perfect union with God, where the soul experiences complete fulfillment and joy.

Paradise and Gardens:

While the imagery of paradise, gardens, and beautiful landscapes is symbolic, it helps illustrate the profound peace and beauty of the heavenly experience.

Banquets and Feasts: The symbolic imagery of banquets and feasts conveys the eternal celebration and communion that souls share in God's presence.

No Weather Conditions

Timeless and Perfect: Heaven is timeless and perfect, so there are no weather conditions or natural phenomena as we experience on Earth. The focus is on the spiritual and eternal joy of being with God.

Beyond Human Comprehension

Mystery of Heaven: The full reality of heaven is beyond human comprehension. The Church uses symbolic language to help believers grasp the profound joy and beauty of eternal life with God, but the actual experience is far greater than any earthly description.

Will non-Christians go to heaven?

The Church teaches that salvation is through Jesus Christ and that the ordinary means of salvation is through faith in Him and participation in the sacraments of the Church. However, the Church also recognizes that God's mercy and grace are not limited by human understanding or formal membership in the Church. Here are some key points regarding non-believers and salvation:

Salvation Through Christ

Central Role of Christ: The Church teaches that Jesus Christ is the universal Savior and that salvation is only possible through Him. This is rooted in Scriptures like John 14:6, where Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Inclusivity of God's Mercy

Possibility of Salvation: The Church acknowledges that those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ or His Church but seek God with a sincere heart and strive to do His will as they understand it can also achieve salvation. This is based on God's universal salvific will, which desires that all people be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).

Vatican II

Lumen Gentium: The Second Vatican Council's document "Lumen Gentium" (Light of the Nations) emphasizes that salvation is possible for non-believers who act according to their conscience and seek truth and goodness.

Will infants who die or are aborted go to heaven?

All human life is sacred from the moment of conception. The fate of unbaptized infants, including those who are aborted, has been a topic of theological reflection and discussion. Here are some key points:

Traditional Teaching

Limbo: Historically, the concept of "limbo" was proposed as a theological hypothesis. Limbo was thought to be a state of natural happiness where unbaptized infants would

go, as they had not committed personal sin but were not baptized. However, this was never an official doctrine of the Church.

Modern Understanding

Hope in God's Mercy: The Church now emphasizes hope in God's mercy and love for all souls, including unbaptized infants.

Baptism of Desire: The Church also acknowledges the concept of "baptism of desire," which means that God's grace can reach those who, through no fault of their own, were not baptized. This includes infants who die before baptism.

In summary,

While there is no definitive teaching on the fate of aborted babies, it emphasizes hope in God's mercy and entrusts these souls to His loving care. The Church believes in God's infinite compassion and justice, trusting that He provides a way for all souls to be united with Him.

Is there a concept of time in heaven?

Time in heaven

is fundamentally different from our earthly understanding of time.

Eternal Presence

Eternity: Heaven is often described as an eternal state, where the souls experience the "eternal now." This means that there is no past or future, only a continuous present moment in the presence of God.

Timelessness: The souls in heaven are outside of the temporal constraints that govern earthly life. They experience the fullness of time without its limitations.

Beatific Vision

Endless Joy: The Beatific Vision—the direct and perfect vision of God—provides a state of complete fulfillment and joy. This state transcends the need for time as we understand it, as every moment is a perfect realization of God's presence.

Perpetual Contemplation: Souls in heaven are perpetually immersed in the contemplation of God's infinite goodness, love, and beauty.

Communion of Saints

Perfect Communion: Communion with other saints and angels is also experienced in this timeless state. Relationships are perfected, and the joy of being united with loved ones and other holy souls is continuous and unending.

Are there animals in Heaven?

Creation and God's Love:

While the Church teaches that all of creation is a reflection of God's love and beauty, and animals are part of God's creation, and their existence reflects His goodness there is no direct teaching on animals in heaven.

Saint Francis of Assisi:

Saint Francis, the patron saint of animals and ecology, had a deep love and respect for animals, viewing them as part of God's creation. His teachings suggest a special place for animals in the divine plan.

Theological Speculations:

Some theologians speculate that animals may be present in the new creation—a renewed heaven and Earth—at the end of time. This idea is based on the belief that God will restore all of creation to its original state of harmony and peace.

Pope Francis's Encyclical:

In his encyclical "Laudato Si'," Pope Francis emphasizes the interconnectedness of all creation and our responsibility to care for it. While not explicitly stating that animals are in heaven, this perspective highlights the value of all creatures in God's plan.

What is Not Definitively Stated

Animal Souls: The Church teaches that animals have material souls, which do not possess the spiritual and immortal nature of human souls. Therefore, animals do not experience salvation in the same way humans do.

Definitive Presence: The Church does not provide a definitive teaching on the presence of animals in heaven, leaving room for personal reflection and hope.

Can those who have committed suicide go to heaven?

The Church's teaching on suicide is nuanced and compassionate, recognizing the complexity of mental health and human suffering.

Traditional Teaching

Grave Matter: Suicide is considered a grave matter because it involves taking one's own life, which is seen as a rejection of God's gift of life.

Mortal Sin:

For an act to be a mortal sin, it must involve grave matter, be committed with full knowledge, and be done with deliberate consent. Traditionally, suicide was viewed as a mortal sin because it met these criteria.

Understanding of Mental Health

Psychological Factors: The Church acknowledges that psychological factors, severe emotional distress, and mental illness can diminish personal culpability. This means that individuals who commit suicide may not be fully responsible for their actions due to these factors.

Compassion and Mercy:

The Church teaches that God's mercy is boundless and that we cannot fully understand the state of a person's soul at the time of their death. Therefore, we should not despair of their salvation.

Pastoral Care

Support for Families: The Church offers pastoral care and support to the families and loved ones of those who have died by suicide. This includes prayers, counseling, and the celebration of Masses for the deceased.

Hope in God's Mercy: The Church encourages the faithful to trust in God's mercy and to pray for the souls of those who have died by suicide, entrusting them to God's loving care.

Is Cremation allowed?

The manner in which a body is treated after death—whether through traditional burial, cremation, or other means—does not affect the soul's participation in heaven.

Respect for the Body

Sacredness of the Body: The Church teaches that the human body is sacred because it was created by God and is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it should be treated with respect and dignity after death.

Tradition of Burial: Historically, the Church has preferred burial as it reflects the belief in the resurrection of the body and honors the deceased in a dignified manner.

Cremation

Allowed with Conditions: The Church allows cremation, provided that it is done with respect and that the ashes are properly interred in a sacred place. The intention behind cremation should not be to deny the belief in the resurrection of the body.

Guidelines on Ashes:

The ashes should not be scattered, kept at home, or divided among family members. They should be placed in a cemetery or columbarium.

Alternative Practices

Unusual Circumstances: In cases where traditional burial or cremation is not possible, the Church emphasizes the importance of treating the remains with respect. The dignity of the deceased should always be upheld.

Cultural Sensitivity:

The Church may take into account cultural practices and sensitivities, ensuring that respect for the body aligns with local customs, provided they do not contradict the faith.

Focus on the Soul

Salvation and Grace: The soul's salvation and participation in heaven are determined by one's faith, repentance, and relationship with God. The condition of the body after death does not affect the soul's eternal destiny.

Resurrection of the Body:

The Church believes in the resurrection of the body at the end of time, regardless of the body's earthly condition. God's power will restore the body to a glorified state.

Are the after-death experiences of others valid?

Stories of near-death experiences (NDEs) are indeed fascinating and have been reported by people across various cultures and backgrounds. These accounts often include vivid descriptions of what individuals perceive to be the afterlife, whether it's a sense of peace and light, or more distressing experiences such as visions of hell.

Personal Testimonies: The Church does not officially recognize or authenticate personal testimonies of NDEs. While these experiences can be profound and meaningful for the individuals who have them, the Church focuses on the teachings of Scripture and Tradition regarding the afterlife.

Mystical Experiences:

Mystical experiences can occur, but discernment is necessary. Such experiences are personal and subjective, and their interpretations can vary.

Consistency with Doctrine:

Any experience or vision that people report should be measured against the teachings of the Church. The Church emphasizes the reality of heaven, hell, and purgatory, but it does not base its doctrines on individual reports.

Scientific and Psychological Explanations:

There are also scientific and psychological perspectives on NDEs. Some researchers suggest that these experiences could be related to brain activity during critical moments. This does not necessarily negate the spiritual interpretations, but it offers an additional layer of understanding.

*While these stories can be compelling and sometimes even life-changing for those who experience them, they are **not** considered definitive proof of the afterlife. The Church advises focusing on faith, Scripture, and the teachings of Christ.*