

St. Gabriel's Youth Ministry

5271 Clinton Street, Elma, NY 14059

Jean Czerniak, Youth Director Anna Updike, Assistant

[jczerniak@stgabeschurch.com](mailto:jczerniak@stgabeschurch.com) 716-668-2070

**LIFE TEEN**

November 6<sup>th</sup> – KICK OFF

November 13<sup>th</sup> – Existence of God – pg. 2

November 20<sup>th</sup> – Religion or Freedom – pg. 9

November 27<sup>th</sup> – Holy or Hypocrite – pg. 15

December 4<sup>th</sup> – Trust or Fear (reconciliation) – pg. 22

December 11<sup>th</sup> – Death and Judgement – pg. 28

December 18<sup>th</sup> – Las Posadas

December 25<sup>th</sup> – OFF

January 1<sup>st</sup> - OFF

January 8<sup>th</sup> – Heaven and Hell

January 15<sup>th</sup> – Purgatory

January 22<sup>nd</sup> – Second Coming and Final Judgement

Theology of the Body: January 29<sup>th</sup>

February 5<sup>th</sup>

February 12<sup>th</sup>

February 19<sup>th</sup> OFF Winter Break

February 26<sup>th</sup>

**RETREAT MARCH 2, 2019 SATURDAY ADAMS MARC HOTEL**

- In addition to our Life Nights, our Youth are required to do Service Ministry
- Service Ministries will be offered as opportunities present themselves
- Along with our Ministry List
- Parents are always welcome to assist in our Service Ministry

## Existence of God 1

### GOAL

The goal of God or Unicorn is to address questions about God's existence and offer the teens solid proofs that give them confidence that He not only exists but wants to be in relationship with them.

**How Do We Know God Exists?** Take a few moments to write and reflect on this question as we begin this lesson.

**Pray an Our Father asking Our Lord to open your heart and mind to His teachings. Amen**

### KEY TERMS

**Doubt:** A feeling of uncertainty or lack of conviction or belief

**Faith:** A response to the gift of the grace of God; a personal adherence to God based on the truth that God has revealed and man has come to understand.

**Natural Law:** The truth of right and wrong, good and evil, that is written into the heart of each person by the creator from the beginning.

**Testimony:** A story or witness of the action of God in the life of a person

### QUESTIONS AND DOUBTS

- In the Church, we aren't afraid of questions.

We believe in God and the truth that He has revealed.

Asking questions leads us to deeper faith in Him.

- Questions become a problem, and indeed become sinful, when they turn into excuses; it is problematic when we don't lean into them but instead walk away from God and the Church.

Those who doubt, or no longer believe, are encouraged to take this time to re-open the process of questioning.

### IS GOD REAL?

- The first question of the believer has to be whether or not God exists. If He exists, then we can and should believe in Him; •We know that belief in God can be difficult because we can't directly see Him, and so it is important to look to the ways God has revealed Himself to us

Existence of God 1

### NATURE AND NATURAL LAW

- Share a story about a time when you were moved by beauty.
- One of the greatest gifts God has given us to know Him is the world around us. It is beautifully and intricately made with purpose and intention. It has the fingerprint of an ultimate creator — God Himself.
- God's existence is also revealed in the natural law. This is the knowledge of a basic moral code written on the human heart, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

## **REVELATION**

- We can know God and have a relationship with Him because He has revealed Himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Through Scripture and tradition, which is guarded and interpreted by the Church, we can know who God is
- Both Scripture and tradition have one ultimate goal: to hand on revelation so that everyone may know Jesus, live in the Spirit, and, in turn, live in the Father's care.

## **OUR HEARTS**

- In praying to the Holy Spirit, we can experience God in a real, personal way that allows us to know Him. God is personal and longs for a relationship with us.
- A testimony is the story of God's action in a person's life and the faith it has inspired in him or her. We all have a testimony. It is a powerful tool that can awaken and deepen the knowledge of God in others.

## **FAITH**

- All of this leads to faith, our personal adherence to God.
- Faith is not a matter of suspending our intellect in order to believe but rather looking at the revelation of God and choosing to believe
- Faith is not a matter of ignorance; it means leaning into questioning and discovering truth. In this series, we'll have a chance to explore our questions and seek the truth of God in order to deepen the gift of faith within us.

Existence of God 1

## **TEACHING**

## **QUESTIONS AND DOUBTS**

Each of us, in one way or another, will question certain things we have been taught. Whether it be a situation that causes us to rethink the world around us or a new piece of information that makes us doubt something we thought we knew, it is important for us to lean into these moments — to continue to learn, to ask good questions, and to seek truth.

Throughout this series, we will explore popular questions and objections to our Catholic faith. We will tackle them head-on and shed light on areas of our minds and hearts that keep us from diving below the surface of faith. We'll seek to encounter our questions in a helpful and positive way. Our inclination to question is not a bad thing. In fact, it can be a helpful thing as it leads us to seek the truth. Questions only become a problem, and indeed become sinful, when they turn into excuses; it is problematic when we don't lean into our questions but instead walk away from God and the Church. If any of us are past the point of asking questions, and perhaps doubt or no longer believe, we encourage you to take time during this series to re-open the process of questioning.

We are all encouraged to ask questions. The development of our faith hinges on those courageous enough to ask "Why?" and "How?" More importantly, though, these people have sought answers and were open to truth. Whether you are in a place of immense doubt or you haven't wrestled with your beliefs at all, now is the time to take the next step: ask the questions, learn how to get the answers, and, ultimately, encounter the God who makes all of this possible.

## **IS GOD REAL?**

The fundamental question for all people is the question of God's existence. Ultimately, all of our questions have to boil down to this one: Is God just another mythical creature or is He real? If God is real, then we can come to understand ourselves and all of creation in light of Him; if He is not real, then we shouldn't believe anything based off of the reality that He is.

Believing in God is often difficult for us because we cannot directly see Him. The scientific method, by which we test things to find that they are true, is ingrained in us, and God cannot be hypothesized and tested as in a chemistry lab. It does not mean that God does not exist or that science cannot help us conclude that He does. Rather, we must look within and beyond science to recognize the existence of God and know who He is. The fundamental things we can look to are nature and natural law, Sacred Scripture and the Church, and the experience of God in our lives and the lives of other believers. Ultimately, these show us that God can be known through reason which leads us to a deep faith in Him who created all things. CCC 36

Existence of God 1

## **NATURE AND NATURAL LAW**

Have you ever been to the Grand Canyon? The ocean? A beautiful countryside?

Share a story about a time when you were moved by beauty.

These places are so moving because their beauty shows the grandness and majesty of creation. When we look at nature, and we see the world around us, we are awestruck at the beauty, the complexity, and the grandeur of what we see. In all of creation, we find intention. Things have a specific purpose and way of operating, which we learn through scientific study.

Imagine you randomly find a pen in the woods. You have never seen one before. Do you assume that it randomly came to exist or that someone created it with a particular purpose in mind? All of creation bears the fingerprint of an ultimate creator — God Himself.

Along with the created world, we can reason that God exists through the natural law written on our hearts. Natural law is the innate desire of the human heart to pursue the good, true, and beautiful.

Share actions you knew, without being told, were wrong as a young child:

Written deep in our hearts is moral code that we can try to disguise, but each of us knows it's there; natural law points to an ultimate authority — God Himself. CCC 1954-1960

## **REVELATION**

While the order in creation and the natural law reveal God's existence, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church show us who God is. God reveals Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Both Sacred Scripture and tradition have one ultimate goal: to hand on revelation so that everyone may know Jesus, live in the Spirit, and, in turn, live in the Father's care.

**The Bible** — the revealed Word of God — is tradition written down, compiled, and interpreted with great care by the Church. It accurately reveals to us the story of God revealing Himself to His people slowly and in stages until He is fully revealed in Jesus Christ. The Gospels are the primary source of revelation about who Jesus is and His mission, but they are not the only source that attests to Jesus being a historical figure. Jesus is attested to in history books from Christians and non-Christians alike.

**The Church**, founded by Jesus, guards and interprets the words of Sacred Scripture and accurately passes down tradition from generation to generation. We can know God and have a relationship with Him because He has revealed Himself to us. CCC 156

## **Existence of God 1**

## **OUR HEARTS**

Ultimately, the greatest proof that God exists is found in the ways we experience Him in our day-to-day life. We don't believe in a distant God who created us and then left us to our own devices. Rather, we believe in a God who is alive and active in the smallest parts of our life and wants us to know us in real ways.

It is through the Holy Spirit that we interact with God in such a personal way. Sacred Scripture tells us that the Spirit allows us to know Jesus as God, so we can believe in Him and trust in His goodness. When



3. What is sacred scripture and the church tradition?
- 4 .What did God do on the seventh day of creation?
4. What is Natural Law?
5. Why do we ask questions?
6. Who is the Holy Spirit?
- 7.What is Faith?
8. What is a testimony?
9. What is the Book of Hebrews?
10. Who is John Paul II?
11. Who is St. Thomas Aquinas?

#### Existence of God 1

“A faith that just accepts is a child’s faith and all right for children, but eventually you have to grow religiously as every other way, though some never do... If you feel you can’t believe, you must at least do this: keep an open mind. Keep it open toward faith, keep wanting it, keep asking for it, and leave the rest to God.” The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O’Connor

By embracing the process of questioning, we, in turn, protect our faith, defend against doubts that pull us away from our creator, and nourish and deepen our love of Him. CCC 2088

As we seek greater faith and a deeper relationship with God, questions will inevitably be part of our growth:

Why does the Church teach what it teaches?

Why do people suffer?

How can I really know that God exists?

**Take the next few minutes to write down the questions you have about our Catholic faith . Invite God into the process of questioning**

**Once you are finished, pray the Litany of Trust.**

In all of our questions and doubts, we turn our hearts to God in trust to ask for His guidance and wisdom.

These next few weeks, we have the chance to lay our questions at His feet and give Him a chance to provide us with answers and increased faith and trust.

## Religion or Freedom? – 2

### GOAL

The goal of Religion or Freedom is to reveal the need for religion and the tendency toward religious practice each person has and foster confidence in the Catholic Church as the one church established by Jesus.

**Pray and Our Father before beginning asking God to open your mind and heart.**

**Why is organized religion important?** Take a moment to think about this question as it is the main focus of the lesson. What do you think the answer is? Is organized religion even important at all?

### KEY CONCEPTS

- The human person has a natural need for structure and religious practice.
- Our tendency toward sin can make it difficult to choose what is good and right.
- God established the Catholic Church through Jesus to guide us, strengthen us, and give us abundant life.

### KEY TERMS

**Catechism:** A popular summary or compendium of Catholic doctrine about faith and morals.

**Concupiscence:** Human appetites or desires which remain disordered due to the temporal consequences of original sin, which remain even after Baptism, and which produce an inclination to sin.

**Magisterium:** The living, teaching office of the Church, whose task it is to give an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form (Sacred Scripture) or in the form of tradition. The Magisterium ensures the Church's fidelity to the teaching of the apostles in matters of faith and morals.

## Religion or Freedom?

### WHY RELIGION?

How many times have you heard people say, "I'm spiritual, but not religious"? They often believe in the importance of soul and spirit, but they don't want to be defined by a specific religion or way of life.

Many people have real reasons for their lack of enthusiasm toward organized religion. They may have been hurt by someone who is "religious." They may only think of the religious wars they hear about in history class. They also probably feel like religion takes away their freedom. Yet, if we look at history, some form of organized religion has played a role in every major civilization. We are naturally religious people. We desire structure, community, and a moral code. Not only do we see this in history, but we see it in our world today. Magazine headlines and BuzzFeed articles are constantly giving us tips on how

to live a more structured and successful life. We are constantly creating new programs or routines to follow, and many times these routines are rooted in the ancient practices of the Church.

**\*\*\*\*Take a moment to read CCC 28\*\*\*\***

We have a deep, spiritual need for religion. We want a greater purpose that gives meaning to our daily life. We desire to worship something or someone — and whether we realize it or not, we will. But what or who do we worship? While the word “worship” may bring to mind images of the Mass or other church activities, here we are referring to the reverence and highest place of honor we give to something. Many of us worship sports, technology, or even ourselves. All of these things are good, but when we worship them, they lead us away from God. Many people miss Mass on Sunday to watch a big game or to attend a sports practice. They choose their sport over God. Other people spend all their time on technology. They say they don’t have time for prayer, but if you added up how often they are on their phones, computers, or televisions, it is clear that they are choosing it over God. Social media reveals that we often worship ourselves. Selfie after selfie, we wait to receive as many likes as we can get from others.

We desire to worship someone or something, and even when we say we desire to worship God, our actions often show something different. Each one of us is naturally misguided because of original sin. This tendency is called concupiscence. Since we naturally tend toward vice such as pride, ambition at the sake of others, and envy, God offers us the Church, an organized religion, to show us how to deal with our sin and to live a life that is fully alive.

## **WHY CATHOLICISM?**

**\*\*\*\*Please watch\*\*\*\***

**Fr. Mike Schmitz: “Why Be Catholic and Not Just Christian” ([ascensionpresents.com](http://ascensionpresents.com))**

**Christopher Stefanick: “The Rock of St. Peter” ([youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com))**

There are many religions in the world — Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, just to name a few. Each one gives parameters for how to live life with a particular purpose. So, why choose Christianity? Does it really matter? While we are not going to dive into the details of every other religion, it is important to note that Christianity is the only religion that has a God who became one of His creations. Jesus Christ walked the Earth and taught that He is God. It makes the most sense, then, to get to know Him, His life, and His mission. At the heart of every other religion, they lack the saving power that Christ offers us. He came, lived, and died for us so that we might be fully alive!

This brings us to another question: If I’m convinced of Christianity, why should I be Catholic? Very simply, it is clear in Sacred Scripture that Jesus calls the apostles out of their ordinary lives to give up everything to follow Him. They give up their pursuit of wealth and prestige to follow the one true God — but Jesus doesn’t stop there. He didn’t say to the early Christians, “Okay now that you know me, good luck living out your faith.” He gave them a structure with a leader.

**\*\*\*\*Take a moment to read Matthew 16:18-19\*\*\*\***

Jesus told Peter he would be the rock of the Church. He gave Peter the keys to the Kingdom. Jesus knew we would be tempted and guided by our sin. He knew we would have questions. He knew we would

seek answers. We are no different than the people of the early church. They, too, asked questions and disputed over what they believed was truth. What did they do when this dispute came up? Did they form a new church? Did they decide to just do what they thought best? No.

**\*\*\*\*Take a moment to read Acts 15:6-11, 19-22\*\*\*\***

They met to discuss the obligations of those who were converting to Christianity and came to a conclusion about how to proceed. Imagine what this council looked like. There were a number of men who had passionate ideas about what they thought was right. They had been preaching to different types of people, including Jews who had been living out certain customs and Gentiles who knew little of Jewish law. They came together to argue, debate, and make a decision about what the Church would teach. They had to, as an organized religion, come together to decide what Jesus would have said about this topic. In order to do that, He gave Peter authority as the first pope to lead us, guide us, and help answer our questions. The authority Peter received has been handed down to each pope since then.

**\*\*\*\*Take a moment to read Acts 15\*\*\*\***

The Church teaches that all other religions contain elements of the truth. As Catholics, we can recognize the good in many of their teachings and learn from their example. However, the Catholic Church has the fullness of truth and the means to continue to teach it.

**\*\*\*\*Take a moment to read CCC 818-819\*\*\*\***

## **TRUE FREEDOM**

We all have questions; we have questions about what is naturally good and right, about Church teachings, and about why we have to do the things we are told to do. It is because God knows our needs that He gave us the Church. Through the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the pope and bishops, the Church offers guidance and answers to these questions.

**\*\*\*\*Take a moment to read CCC 771\*\*\*\***

It is important to realize that the Church does not take away our freedom. It proclaims the ultimate freedom of a life lived with faith, hope, and charity. It is through the structure of the Church that we learn about the truth and grace God has given us. Ultimately, the Church gives us the tools to reach heaven. It is like a go-kart track. Imagine yourself riding around a track with twisting turns in your go-kart. If you are a good driver aware of how to turn appropriately, accelerating and decelerating as you go, you can make it around the track without ever hitting the bumpers. However, if you start going too fast, if someone else gets in your way, or if you just don't know how to drive well, the bumpers are there to help guide you along the track. They are there to help keep you safe and keep you on track. Some people barely touch the bumpers and some people seem to ride along them.

The doctrines of the Church guide us toward our mission and goal. They are there to keep us in line with Christ's will for us. There will be times when we are living in Christ's will, following the teachings of the Church, and we won't even seem to know they are there because we are moving around the track smoothly. Because of our tendency toward sin, though, there will be other times when it seems like we keep getting tossed from one side of the track to the other. In those moments, we need the Church and her teachings even more. Our Lord was very aware of this need and that is why He gave us the Church.

**\*\*\*\*Take a moment to read CCC 874\*\*\*\***

The bumpers can seem restricting at times, but the reality is that without them you could be seriously injured. They actually give you freedom to drive the go-kart before you are an expert at driving. They give you freedom to have fun on the track without the fear of injury. The doctrines of the Church are meant to give us the freedom to truly love the Lord and to know what path we need to take to live our life for Him.

## **THE CHURCH AND YOU**

So, what does this look like for you? How do you start to live in the freedom of the Church? The greatest tools Christ has given us, through the Church, are the sacraments. He has given us the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that we might be cleansed of our sin and reconciled back to God. He has given us the Sacrament of the Eucharist so that we might be nourished by His body and blood. He has given us the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation so that we might have the strength and grace to live out His will in the world. Some other beautiful tools the Church has given us are Sacred Scripture and models of prayer, such as lectio divina, the Liturgy of the Hours, and the Ignatian Examen.

If you still have questions about what the Church actually teaches on certain topics, you can go to the Catechism where the Church has laid out what and why she teaches what she teaches. Have you been taking advantage of these tools to live a deeper life of holiness?

## **SUMMARY**

### **WHY RELIGION?**

- How many times have you heard people say, “I’m spiritual, not religious”? Most of them have real reasons for why they don’t want to be “religious.”
- If we look at history, organized religion has played a major role in every civilization. We are naturally religious people. We desire structure, community, and a moral code.
- Read CCC 28.
- We have a deep spiritual need for religion. We want a greater purpose that gives reason to our daily life.
- Many of us worship sports, technology, or even ourselves. All of these things are good in themselves, but when we give them the highest place of honor in our life, they lead us away from God.
- Each one of us is naturally misguided because of original sin. The Church shows us how to deal with our sin and live a life that is fully alive.

### **WHY CATHOLICISM?**

- There are many religions in the world — Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity. Christianity is the only religion that has a God who became one of His creations.
- The Church teaches that all other religions contain elements of the truth. At the heart, they lack the saving power that Christ offers us. He came, lived, and died for us so that we might be fully alive!

- Read Matthew 16:18-19.

- Jesus knew we would be guided by our sin. He knew we would have questions. He knew we would seek answers. So, He established the Church and made Peter the head to lead us, guide us, and answer our questions.

### **TRUE FREEDOM**

- \*Read CCC 771.

- It is important to realize that the Church and her doctrines are not here to take away our freedom; they are here to proclaim faith, hope, and charity.

- The doctrines of the Church are meant to give us the freedom to truly love the Lord and to know what path we need to take to live our life for Him.

### **THE CHURCH AND YOU**

- We live in the freedom of the Church through the sacraments. We are given the Sacraments of Reconciliation, the Eucharist, Baptism, and Confirmation so that we might have the strength and graces to live out His will among the world.

- Some other beautiful tools the Church has given us are Sacred Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and models of prayer.

- Have you been taking advantage of these tools? Pick just one of them that you want to dive into more to help you continue living a life of holiness.

### **QUESTIONS**

Please answer the following questions:

1. Can you think of two reasons people may dislike organized religion?
2. What would you say in response to a person with this viewpoint?
3. Why do we need organized religion?
4. How do we know that the Catholic faith is the True Faith?



## Holy or Hypocrite – 3

### GOAL

The goal of Holy or Hypocrite is to acknowledge hypocrisy and judgment within the Church and to challenge you to recognize the Church as the path to holiness for all people.

### KEY CONCEPTS

- The Church is full of imperfect people who make mistakes, but the Church still remains sinless.
- The purpose of the Church is to sanctify and lead all her members to holiness.
- True friendship challenges a person to grow and pursue the call to holiness, which is intended for everyone.

### KEY TERMS

**Holiness:** The possession of sanctifying grace, which is present in a person from the moment of baptism and represents the person's likeness to God; it is accompanied by the practice of virtue.

**Hypocrisy:** A form of lying in which a person acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings.

**Rash Judgment:** A fault against the eighth commandment committed by one who assumes the moral fault of the neighbor to be true without sufficient foundation.

**Virtue:** A habitual and firm disposition to do good. The moral virtues are acquired through human effort aided by God's grace.

### SUMMARY

#### WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE?

- A common accusation against the Catholic Church is that it is full of hypocrites who are intolerant of different lifestyles.
- Many feel the Catholic Church has fallen into the same pharisaical behavior that Jesus warned against in the Gospels. Jesus firmly denounces religious leaders who demand one thing but live another.
- **Read Matthew 23:13-16, 23, 25, 29-30.**

## **HYPOCRISY AND JUDGMENT**

- The word hypocrite has its origin in the Greek word hypokrite, meaning “actor.” The modern definition of hypocrite has changed to describe a person’s moral character: “a form of lying in which a person acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings.”
- Usually, the error of hypocrisy goes hand-in-hand with judgment. While it is often necessary to make a judgment regarding a person’s actions, it is never in our authority to judge a person’s soul.

## **THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH**

- Unfortunately, people within the Church are hypocritical and judgmental, which negatively characterizes the Church as being duplicitous, elitist, and unfair.
- The Church remains perfect even though we, as her children, all fall short of perfection. We don’t go to church to prove our holiness but because we recognize our sinfulness and desire to be made holy.
- The Church exists to make us holy. We are not hypocrites if we are striving for holiness and fall into sin. Hypocrisy is holding others to a standard we don’t hold for ourselves.

## **STRENGTH IN THE SACRAMENTS**

- As often as we sin, we can go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation in which we are forgiven by God and restore our relationship with the Church.
- In partaking of the Eucharist, we consume and are consumed by Jesus, who both forgives sinners and corrects the self-righteous. Receiving Him strengthens us with patience and mercy toward ourselves and others.

## **FRIENDS AND FAMILY**

- It takes vulnerability and courage to share our struggles with another person. When a friend or family member entrusts us with a sinful struggle, how do we respond?
- Read John 8:3-11**
- Jesus, knowing that all sin leads to death, prompted us to examine our own consciences. Although we can and should condemn sin, we never condemn the person because God’s mercy is inexhaustible.

## **PLANKS AND SPLINTERS**

- Read Matthew 7:3-5**
- Jesus doesn’t excuse us from “removing the splinter” from our brother’s eye just because we have our own personal sins and struggles. Our faults and sins do not disqualify us from sharing God with others.

- The recognition of our own brokenness allows us to have a more charitable, tender, and understanding approach to the brokenness of others.

### **BE THE EXAMPLE**

- We fight hypocrisy by being honest with our own struggles and our need for grace. We fight judgment by seeking the good in others, being welcoming, and praying for self-awareness.
- It is imperative that we become the Christians we want to encounter. We are all works in progress, striving for holiness.

### **HOLY OR HYPOCRITE**

#### **WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE?**

“Why are you a Christian? Most Christians are hypocrites and so judgmental!”

In some way, we all encounter this objection — from society, close friends, family, or within ourselves. If everyone is a sinner, why do “church-y” people tell others to follow commandments they struggle to keep? If the Church is supposed to love like Jesus, why are Catholics intolerant of different lifestyles? Who are we to point out flaws in others? Isn’t the Bible rich in verses that speak out against hypocrisy and judgment?

Many people feel the Catholic Church has fallen into the same pharisaical behavior that Jesus warned against in the Gospels. Jesus firmly denounces religious leaders — also known as Pharisees and Scribes — with a series of “woe to you hypocrites...” statements.

**\*\*\*\*Take a break and read Matthew 23:13-16, 23, 25, 29-30\*\*\*\***

They demand strict observance of Jewish law but act as if they are not accountable to the law themselves. Jesus even instructs those listening to not follow their example of hypocrisy but to live out the truth of His teachings with humility and persistence. **Matthew 23:3**

### **HYPOCRISY AND JUDGMENT**

The word hypocrite has its origin in the Greek word hypokrite, meaning “actor.” Stage actors and actresses wore masks to distinguish themselves from characters they played. Although they were real people with real lives, as soon as they put on a mask, they would transform into a new character. They were one way but acting like another. The modern definition of hypocrite has changed to describe a person’s moral character: “a form of lying in which a person acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings.”

Usually, the error of hypocrisy goes hand-in-hand with judgment. We make healthy judgments every day. We judge our clothing choices and breakfast options. We even make judgments to discern safety in

social situations. However, when judgments are hastily made toward people, we consequently insult their inherent dignity. Often, this form of judgment includes criticizing, trivializing, and ostracizing people from a community. While it is never in our authority to judge a person's soul, it is necessary for us to make judgments regarding actions.

In refusing to distinguish between judging an action and a person, many accuse a moral stance, or judgment of actions, of being intolerant. Someone should never feel unwelcome or unloved because of their choices. However, we have to stay firm in teaching that certain acts are wrong. Following Christ requires a certain way of life — a way that leads to our ultimate joy and peace.

In regard to difficult teachings that challenge cultural lifestyles, the Church demands compassion and charity, while offering opportunities to receive forgiveness and healing. Showing love and respect does not mean accepting or encouraging the behavior of others.

Consider providing relevant examples of actions that are loving but not accepting of a person's behavior. The Church doesn't want to tolerate us; she wants to deeply love us and bring us into a relationship with God. This requires remaining steadfast in truth in an ever-changing world. **CCC 34-35**

### **THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH**

Unfortunately, people within the Church can be hypocritical and judgmental. Some may encourage pro-life support for the unborn, but not for death row inmates or immigrants and refugees. Some people are quick to speak out against homosexual actions, but not on issues of cohabitation or infidelity. Other times, Church leaders tell their congregation one thing while living out an adverse reality.

These approaches and actions hurt the Catholic Church as a whole and negatively characterize her as being duplicitous, elitist, and unfair. There is no denying that people within the Church are hypocritical and judgmental, but that is precisely why the Church exists. The Catholic Church is the unblemished Bride of Jesus, and He has loved her into perfection. The Church remains perfect even though we, as her children, all have moments of hypocrisy and judgment and fall short of perfection. Instead of throwing us aside, we are invited to receive divine grace which aids us in the process of holiness. We don't go to church to prove our holiness, but because we recognize our sinfulness and our desire to be made holy.

#### **Romans 3:23**

Every Sunday, we pray the Penitential Act aloud (found in the PRAYERS section). We publicly confess to God and to one another that we have sinned, and we humbly ask each other for prayers. This is less of an act of a hypocrite and more of a response from a penitent. When we confess our shortcomings to one another, it allows us to grow in the virtue of humility. It allows our brothers and sisters the opportunity to support us by their prayers and merciful actions. It's important to note that you are not a hypocrite if you are striving for holiness and fall into sin — we all do. Hypocrisy is holding others to a standard we don't hold for ourselves.

### **STRENGTH IN THE SACRAMENTS**

As often as we sin, we can go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When we confess, we are forgiven by God and restore our relationship with the Church, who is wounded by our sin. Since God forgives us, we should never withhold forgiveness from ourselves or others; and since the Church, by charity, example,

and prayer works hard for our return to holiness, we should do the same for our brothers and sisters in Christ. There is no judgment of the past, only hope for the future. **CCC 1422**

Wanting to strengthen us with spiritual nourishment, Jesus chooses to make Himself available to us through the appearance of bread and wine. In partaking of the Eucharist, we consume and are consumed by Jesus, who both forgives sinners and corrects the self-righteous. In the Gospel of Mark, we read that Jesus ate with sinners and, when questioned about it by a judgmental audience, responded, "...I did not come to call the righteous but sinners." Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist strengthens us with patience and mercy toward ourselves and others. **Mark 2:17**

### **FRIENDS AND FAMILY**

It takes vulnerability and courage to share our struggles with another person. When a friend or family member entrusts us with a sinful struggle, how do we respond? Do we correct and chastise them, or do we listen, pray for and with them, and assist them in taking positive steps forward?

**\*\*\*\*Take a break and read John 8:3-11\*\*\*\***

According to Mosaic law, adultery was punishable by death. The Pharisees and Scribes brought the woman to Jesus and pointed out her sin and its consequence. But Jesus, knowing that all sin leads to death, prompted them to examine their own consciences. Jesus was the only person who could have stoned her, but His response was one we all hope to hear when confronted with our sin: "Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin anymore." Although we can and should condemn sin, we never condemn the person because God's mercy is inexhaustible. From this encounter, we can learn that hypocrisy and judgment point a finger at a person's heart while compassion and mercy point a person to the heart of God. **John 8:3-11**

### **PLANKS AND SPLINTERS**

Although we may feel like it, our faults and sins do not disqualify us from sharing God with others. When we see a friend doing something contrary to their dignity, it is our responsibility to charitably lead him or her to truth. We first lead others by seeking God ourselves. We have to spend time with Him in prayer and allow Him to reveal areas of our own lives that need correction. It is also necessary to build up the cardinal virtue of prudence, which aids us in knowing when and how to approach situations with those in our life. Prudence assists us in making sure that we are not being careless, overzealous, prideful, or judgmental when leading others to Christ.

**\*\*\*\*Take a break and read Matthew 7:3-5\*\*\*\***

Jesus doesn't excuse us from "removing the splinter" from our brother's eye just because we have our own personal sins and struggles. However, it's important for us to acknowledge the obstacles of sin in our own life. The recognition of our own brokenness allows us to have a more charitable, tender, and understanding approach to the brokenness of others. Jesus never allowed anyone to leave Him the same as when they first approached Him. They were always different. Jesus may not have judged, but He did command people to be better — "go and sin no more." **John 8:11**

### **BE THE EXAMPLE**

Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen once wrote, "Criticism of others is thus an oblique form of self-commendation. We think we make the picture hang straight on our wall by telling our neighbors that all his pictures are crooked." Although we strive to grow in holiness, we make mistakes. We fight hypocrisy by being honest with our own struggles and our need for grace. We fight judgment by seeking the good in others, being welcoming, and praying for self-awareness. *Seven Words of Jesus and Mary*, Fulton J. Sheen

It is imperative that we become the Christians we want to encounter. Although the Church is perfect, we are all sinners in need of a Savior. We are all works in progress, striving for holiness

## **PRAYER**

### **The Confiteor**

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. What is the difference between being hypocritical and being discerning of a person or situation?
2. What does Jesus say about hypocrites?
3. If, while actively striving for holiness, we fall into sin, does this make us hypocrites? Why or why not?
4. What sacrament is there for us when we fall into sin?

5. What should our response be to a friend or family member who is struggling or going through a hard time?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How do you react when other people make mistakes? Are you quick to forgive or do you hold a grudge?

**Take some time to think and pray about what you have just learned. Is there anyone in your life that you have to forgive or ask forgiveness from?**

**Close with a Glory Be.**

## **Trust or Fear – 4**

**GOAL** The goal of Trust or Fear is to address the cause of suffering in the world and encourage you to turn to Jesus, who suffers with us and can transform our suffering into something beneficial.

**Pray an Our Father to open your mind and heart to the Lord.**

### **KEY CONCEPTS**

- The many forms of suffering we experience and witness are a result of the disorder caused by original sin.
- Although the world tries to eradicate or numb suffering, Christ unites our suffering to His and makes it redemptive.
- In the Eucharist, we encounter the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus and, at the same time, receive strength and a disposition of gratitude and thanksgiving.

### **KEY TERMS**

**Hope:** One of the three theological virtues; it is a combination of the desire of something and the expectation of receiving it, specifically union with God and eternal happiness (no more suffering and pain).

**Redemptive Suffering:** The belief that our suffering, when offered up as unitive to Christ's suffering in His Passion and death, can act as a small compensation for our sins or those of others.

**Trust:** Belief in the reliability and truth of something or someone.

### **SUMMARY CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

- God's role in suffering is one of the biggest objections to faith. In a world that cries for equality, tolerance, and fairness, suffering just doesn't seem to fit the narrative of pursuing and attaining happiness.
- God created us with a natural desire for happiness. Yet, there is still misery, unrest, evil, and suffering in the world.

### **THE FALL**

- Pain and suffering are a direct result of sin entering the world. When Adam and Eve chose to turn from God and His commands, their disobedience left a void in which sin was able to enter and take root.
- Some types of suffering can be a direct result of sin. However, suffering caused by natural disasters, sickness, and death are a ripple effect of original sin, which caused discord between all creation.

## HOW DO WE HANDLE SUFFERING?

- The world encourages us to ignore or minimize our suffering. If we find a way to numb it, then we have won and can move on.
- Ask the teens to think about ways they or others attempt to numb anxiety and fear.
- God encourages us to embrace our suffering and trust in Him and His divine plan. While respecting our free will, our all-powerful God can take any situation and allow it to work for our good.
- In becoming fully man, He experienced all that it means to be human, including pain and suffering. Christ suffered among us so that we would always know He was suffering with us.

## REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING

- In Baptism, we become part of the Mystical Body of Christ. Everything we experience is united — our joys and sufferings.
- Redemptive suffering is the concept that we can offer our suffering up for the redemption of ourselves or others when we choose to unite it to the suffering of Christ on the cross. In those moments, we can choose to participate in the saving work of Jesus.
- Jesus not only accepted His suffering but embraced it. It doesn't mean inflicting suffering on ourselves or refusing healing when it's possible. It means that when suffering comes our way, it can have meaning and purpose.
- In order to give us an accessible and constant reminder of His sacrifice, Jesus instituted the Mass and gave us the Eucharist. When we receive Communion, we are literally uniting ourselves with Christ's sacrifice.

## HOW TO DEAL

- In our own lives, we can embrace our suffering by not minimizing it, seeking the guidance and aid of others, keeping an eternal perspective, offering it up, and reaching out to others when we notice their suffering.

## TRUST OR FEAR 4

- In the end, we have two choices when faced with difficulties and suffering in our life: We can live in fear of the pain and the uncertainty or we can trust that the God of the universe is working all things for our good.

## LESSON CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Why do bad things happen to good people? How can a good God allow suffering in the world? Have you ever asked these questions? Have you wrestled with the answers? Whether or not you have experienced suffering in your life or seen it in someone else's, God's role in suffering is one of the biggest objections to faith. In a world that cries for equality, tolerance, and fairness, suffering doesn't seem to fit the narrative of pursuing and attaining happiness. However, in God's greater plan, in light of eternity, struggling is OK. Even more than that, it is an opportunity to find beauty and purpose in pain. From the earliest moments, many of us are taught that God loves us and wants us to be happy. In fact,

God created us with a natural desire for happiness. Yet, there is still misery, unrest, evil, and suffering in the world. Doesn't that seem like a conflict of interest?

### **CCC 1718**

#### **THE FALL**

If we were created to seek happiness, and God ultimately wants us to be happy and united with Him, then where does suffering come from? The answer to that question lies within the stain of Adam's sin. "Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command." When Adam and Eve chose to turn from God and His commands, their disobedience left a void in which sin was able to enter and take root. Because this darkness gained a foothold, the consequences are death and suffering.

### **CCC 397**

You may have studied Newton's Third Law in school; it teaches that every action has a reaction. As such, sin is not just an action in a vacuum. It causes ripple effects — reactions. One of those reactions is suffering. For example, if someone takes your lunch or lunch money out of your backpack, you don't have anything to eat for lunch that day and become hungry, tired, and possibly annoyed. In your annoyance, you snap at your mom when you get home. Because of their selfishness, you suffer, react, and cause more suffering. Although this is an extremely simple example, it's reflective of how sin can cause a snowball effect. There is also suffering in the world that is not always directly related to our actions and the actions of others — sickness, depression, death. Suffering of this type can often be the hardest to handle, as it seems to lack a logical origin. It is caused by the discord between all of creation after the Fall. In general, it is hard for us to deal with something we cannot explain or make sense of.

#### **HOW DO WE HANDLE SUFFERING?**

What solution does the world offer? Society says to ignore it, fix it, get rid of it as fast as possible, or just get over it. When we think about it, there are so many things designed to numb our feelings, especially negative ones. Think about ways you or others numb anxiety and fear. Drugs, alcohol abuse, or other types of addictive distractions such as our phones or gaming devices are all forms of numbing anxiety and fear. Bullying and manipulation are especially popular methods of trying to control personal suffering. Some people think that if they cause enough pain to others, then maybe for a moment, they can gain some respite from the negativity in their own lives. But, what solution does God offer? Our infinite God, whose knowledge and understanding far surpasses our own, can do anything. While still respecting our free will, He can take any situation and allow it to work for our good. He can make beauty from ashes. We have to keep in mind that there is a greater plan in motion, one that we cannot fully see or comprehend. In nature, sometimes it takes a fire in a wooded area to clean out that which keeps smaller, but important, foliage from getting enough sunlight to grow. While still tragic, the fire gives the environment an opportunity to grow back in a more balanced way. God can use suffering to clear out bad things and draw us deeper into His mercy. Most importantly, God sent His only Son, His most precious gift, to Earth. In becoming fully man, He experienced all that it means to be human, including pain and suffering. While He experienced great suffering related to His death, Christ also experienced anguish when His friend Lazarus died. He had extreme anxiety in the Garden of Gethsemane. Christ

suffered among us so that we would always know He was suffering with us. Look at the good that came from those moments — conversion and the salvation of the world.

**Isaiah 61:1-3, John 11:35, Matthew 26:36-42**

### **REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING**

Have you ever considered that the struggles you go through, when united with the cross, can actually assist in saving souls? Beyond just enduring and accepting the suffering that occurs in our life, we are offered the chance to make it something greater. In Baptism, we become part of the Mystical Body of Christ. Everything we experience is united — our joys and sufferings. If we are intentional about it, suffering can not only transform our life but the lives of others as well. In other words, your suffering, offered up can assist in the redemption of souls. With hope, a person suffering can bring others to the faith. It all depends on what we choose to do with it. When you choose to unite your suffering with that of Christ's Passion, which can be as simple as asking for God to do so, your suffering "acquires a new meaning; it becomes a participation in the saving work of Jesus." Something as simple as the sharp pain after you stub your toe, when surrendered to God in that moment, can share in the salvific work of Christ. It doesn't mean that we need to seek out suffering or refuse treatment for ailments that can be healed or remedied; we will all encounter plenty of suffering in life without inflicting it upon ourselves. It simply means that when suffering comes our way, it can have meaning and purpose.

### **CCC 1521**

It is not easy; it is scary to embrace all that this life can throw at us. It requires an infinite amount of trust in God and His plan for our life. Think about how Christ suffered. Did He shy away from it or try to get over it? No, He embraced it — so much so that His suffering became a part of His very self when He was resurrected. After He died and rose again, He still bore the wounds as a visible sign of the greatest suffering offered in love for us. He could have removed them and had a perfect corporeal body as He used to. Instead, the wounds in His hands and side were His identifying feature when He appeared to His disciples. John 20:20 In order to give us an accessible and constant reminder of His sacrifice, Jesus instituted the Mass and gave us the Eucharist. In each encounter with the Eucharist, we are reminded of Christ's suffering and sacrifice — how He gave Himself up for us — and we have a chance to unite our own bodies with His. In that moment, we can draw strength and courage from the body of Christ, literally.

### **HOW TO DEAL**

So, what now? What can we do in our own lives when faced with suffering? First, don't minimize it or think you are an inconvenience. It is OK for it to be hard. God can't promise that life will be painless, but He promises to give us the grace to live in and through the pain, while He uses it to draw us closer to Him. Acknowledge the struggle and seek guidance and advice from trusted adults and friends.

### **John 16:33**

Second, keep an eternal perspective. It is easy to get stuck in the present, especially when you are experiencing suffering. However, we need to remember the big picture. Every trouble, no matter how small or how short, is producing an eternal glory for you. These small struggles are not in vain but have an eternal impact on your soul. Just like working out can cause suffering (soreness), it is working toward



**3. Why should we hold on to hope in the midst of suffering?**

**4. What is suffering an opportunity for?**

**5. Why do people suffer?**

**\*\*\*\*\*Close with a Glory Be\*\*\*\*\***

## Death and Judgement – 5

### GOAL

The goal of Memento Mori is to acknowledge the reality of death and judgment as a consequence of original sin but instill joy and hope in Jesus as our loving and merciful judge.

### KEY CONCEPTS

- Jesus conquers the evil of death through His own death and Resurrection, giving us hope for eternal life. • In Baptism, we die sacramentally with Jesus and are given the opportunity for new life in Him — physical death completes this process.
- Immediately after death, each person faces a particular judgment before Jesus; the result of our judgment — heaven, hell, or purgatory — is determined by faith in Him and the actions we have taken to live out our faith.

### KEY TERMS

**Baptism:** The first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification.

**Eternal Life:** Living forever with God in the happiness of heaven, entered after death by the souls of those who die in the grace and friendship of God.

**Particular Judgment:** The eternal retribution received by each soul at the moment of death, in accordance with that person's faith and works.

**Open with an Our Father, asking God to open your hear to hear him speak**

### TEACHING POINTS Time and Eternity

•Ask the teens if they have experienced a moment where time seems to stand still, and ask a few to share this experience with the large group.

\*Our relationship with time is a strained one. In certain moments, time feels as if it stops. In others, there never seems to be enough.

\*We often see time as an enemy, but if we embrace life as God intends, time can become a great friend.

\*Look at an hourglass. It serves as a reminder that our time is limited but also points to the fact that our time goes somewhere. The sand does not disappear but is stored for the future. How we spend our time now is an investment in who we will be in our lifetime and where we will spend eternity.

### **Memento Mori**

- Memento mori is an ancient Latin phrase which means “remember your death,” or “remember that you have to die.” It is a long suggested practice to help order our time in this life.
- Death is a tough reality for all of us, though. God never intended for us to suffer it; we experience death as a result of sin. Whether or not we place our hope in Christ, it is a painful event.

### **Hope in Grief**

- By dying on the cross, Christ transformed death into something that works for our good. We take part in His new plan for death through the Sacrament of Baptism.
- In Baptism, we die with Christ sacramentally, and physical death completes the process of our new life with Him.

### **Particular Judgment**

- At the moment of death, we are immediately judged by Jesus Christ. The result of our judgment — heaven, hell, or purgatory — is determined by faith in Him and the actions we have taken to live out our faith.
- The truth of our immediate judgment should inspire a healthy fear in us — the realization that it is possible to spend eternity without God.

### **Die Everyday**

- Practices of sacrifice and service are actually practices of death. They are not just nice things to do when we have the time or required hours to clock for school, Confirmation class, or a resume.
- We are dying to ourselves, to our own desires, and placing someone else before us. These small deaths are incredible preparation for the moment we breathe our last breath, the moment we leave time behind and enter into the natural state we were created for — eternity.

## **TEACHING**

### **TIME AND ETERNITY**

Time is such an interesting thing. In certain moments, it feels as if it stops. In others, there never seems to be enough. C.S. Lewis, a famous Christian author, wrote to a friend and said the following of time:

Consider projecting the quote as you read it.

“If we complain of time and take such joy in the seemingly timeless moment, what does that suggest? It suggests that we have not always been or will not always be purely temporal creatures. It suggests that we were created for eternity. Not only are we hurried by time, we seem unable, despite a thousand generations, even to get used to it. We are always amazed by it — how fast it goes, how slowly it goes, how much of it is gone. Where, we cry, has the time gone? We aren’t adapted to it, not at home in it. If that is so, it may appear as a proof, or at least a powerful suggestion, that eternity exists and is our home.”

**-A Severe Mercy by Sheldon Vanauken**

Our relationship with time is a strained one. On the one hand, we act as if we have as much of it as we want. We are careless with it and make hazardous choices, an attitude that coined the phrase, “You only live once.” At certain points, though, we spend life grasping at time, worrying about how little we have — when you have a test the next day, a friend visiting from out of town, or a family member on their deathbed. We often see time as an enemy. However, if we embrace life as God intends, time can become a great friend. Look at an hourglass. We flip it over, most often while playing a game, and immediately watch the top half — the sand running out. Rarely, though, do we focus on the place it goes. An hourglass does serve as a reminder that our time is limited, but it also points to the fact that our time goes somewhere. The sand does not disappear but is stored for the future. How we spend our time now is an investment in who we will be in our lifetime and where we will spend eternity. How do you spend your time? Do you live your life to store up for your time with God in eternity?

**MEMENTO MORI**

Memento mori is an ancient Latin phrase, which means “remember your death,” or “remember that you have to die.” It is a long suggested practice to help order our time in this life. It is represented in the history of art as a skeleton, skull, or hourglass. In the Church, we celebrate All Souls Day, Dia de los Muertos, and feasts of saints on the day they died. Quite often, we hear phrases during Mass or in prayers linked to preparation for death.

Death is a very difficult reality for all of us, though. God never intended for us to suffer it; we experience death as a result of sin. Whether or not we place our hope in Christ, it is a painful event.

**CCC 1008**

Some of you may have dealt with the expected or unexpected death of family members and friends. Unfortunately, we may experience the shock of a tragic accident involving students at our school or in our community. The topic of death may be very sensitive for you right now, or you are struggling to see God’s goodness because of it. Sometimes, well-intentioned people try to bring comfort with phrases such as “It was God’s will,” or “Everything happens for a reason.” It can make the sting of death and our grief worse because God seems to be the cause of such terrible pain in our lives. It is important not to dismiss the burden of death because it is not what God intended; in a sense, it is not natural.

## HOPE IN GRIEF

In order to reveal God's intent, Christ enters into the terrible experience of death Himself. By dying on the cross, He transforms death into something that works for our good. We are able to take part in His new plan for death through the Sacrament of Baptism.

### Philippians 1:21

When we are baptized, we are dunked or sprinkled with holy water. It is an action meant to represent death. We die to our old self, who is stained with original sin and unable to enter into the Kingdom of God, and become His adopted son or daughter. We now have the opportunity to share in His divine life for all of eternity. In Baptism, we die with Christ sacramentally, and physical death completes the process of our new life with Him.

### CCC 1010, 2 Timothy 2:11

The gift of Baptism offers us hope and transforms something so ugly into the most beautiful moment we can experience as a Christian. It is proof that God goes to every length to make His divine life possible for us. As we learn to trust in His plan and timing for our life, we also have to trust that we will each experience death at a moment that is perfect for our salvation.

Notice, however, that Baptism only offers us an opportunity for eternal life. It is not magic or a ticket we pull out of our wallet at death. It requires our cooperation. We are still responsible for living our life in a way that the grace of the sacrament can flourish and grow in us.

### CCC 978

The practice of memento mori is arguably the best way to take up that responsibility. It might seem a bit depressing or strange. It may be difficult because of fear or the freshness of grief from a loss, but remembering our death leads us to life. As Christians, it leads us deeper into the hope of the Resurrection, a reality that fully unites us with God and reunites us with those we love. By remembering our death, we can orient our temporary lives toward life beyond death.

## PARTICULAR JUDGMENT

For many reasons, there is a lot of confusion regarding what happens when we die.

The Church teaches that all experience a particular judgment at the moment of death. We are immediately judged by Jesus Christ, who opened the gates of heaven for us through His death and Resurrection. The result of our judgment is determined by our faith in Christ and how we expressed that faith during our life. We are judged on how we served God in the people around us. We are judged by the kind of daughter or son, sister or brother, spouse, and neighbor we were throughout our life. We are judged by the mercy we offered when we were hurt or offended, and the mercy we seek for ourselves.

\*\*\*\*\***Read the story of the good thief in Luke 23:32-43**\*\*\*\*\*

Many people and world religions have different ideas about what happens to us when we die. We know, through Christ and His Church, what happens. We will not become an angel or ghost. We will not be sent back to Earth to re-experience life as a cow or a king. We will not receive our own planet or even cease to exist. We will instantly see our life measured by Christ's. Immediately, or through a period of purification, we will enter the joy of heaven or immediately enter the eternal suffering of hell.



4. List some ways you can die to yourself every day.

5. Why should we always be thinking of life after death?

6. What will happen to us immediately after we die?

**\*\*\*\*\*CLOSE WITH A GLORY BE\*\*\*\*\***



## GOAL

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how much of it is gone. Where, we cry, has the time gone? We aren't adapted to it, not at home in it. If that is so, it may appear as a proof, or at least a powerful suggestion, that eternity exists and is our home."

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Our relationship with time is a strained one. On the one hand, we act as if we have as much of it as we want. We are careless with it and make hazardous choices, an attitude that coined the phrase, "You only live once." At certain points, though, we spend life grasping at time, worrying about how little we have — when you have a test the next day, a friend visiting from out of town, or a family member on their deathbed. We often see time as an enemy. However, if we embrace life as God intends, time can become a great friend. Look at an hourglass. We flip it over, most often while playing a game, and immediately watch the top half — the sand running out. Rarely, though, do we focus on the place it goes. An hourglass does serve as a reminder that our time is limited, but it also points to the fact that our time goes somewhere. The sand does not disappear but is stored for the future. How we spend our time now is an investment in who we will be in our lifetime and where we will spend eternity. How do you spend your time? Do you live your life to store up for your time with God in eternity?

**MEMENTO MORI**

Memento mori is an ancient Latin phrase, which means "remember your death," or "remember that you have to die." It is a long suggested practice to help order our time in this life. It is represented in the history of art as a skeleton, skull, or hourglass. In the Church, we celebrate All Souls Day, Dia de los Muertos, and feasts of saints on the day they died. Quite often, we hear phrases during Mass or in prayers linked to preparation for death.

Death is a very difficult reality for all of us, though. God never intended for us to suffer it; we experience death as a result of sin. Whether or not we place our hope in Christ, it is a painful event.

**CCC 1008**

Some of you may have dealt with the expected or unexpected death of family members and friends. Unfortunately, we may experience the shock of a tragic accident involving students at our school or in our community. The topic of death may be very sensitive for you right now, or you are struggling to see God's goodness because of it. Sometimes, well-intentioned people try to bring comfort with phrases such as "It was God's will," or "Everything happens for a reason." It can make the sting of death and our grief worse because God seems to be the cause of such terrible pain in our lives. It is important not to dismiss the burden of death because it is not what God intended; in a sense, it is not natural.

**HOPE IN GRIEF**

In order to reveal God's intent, Christ enters into the terrible experience of death Himself. By dying on the cross, He transforms death into something that works for our good. We are able to take part in His new plan for death through the Sacrament of Baptism.

**Philippians 1:21**

When we are baptized, we are dunked or sprinkled with holy water. It is an action meant to represent death. We die to our old self, who is stained with original sin and unable to enter into the Kingdom of God, and become His adopted son or daughter. We now have the opportunity to share in His divine life

for all of eternity. In Baptism, we die with Christ sacramentally, and physical death completes the process of our new life with Him.

### **CCC 1010, 2 Timothy 2:11**

The gift of Baptism offers us hope and transforms something so ugly into the most beautiful moment we can experience as a Christian. It is proof that God goes to every length to make His divine life possible for us. As we learn to trust in His plan and timing for our life, we also have to trust that we will each experience death at a moment that is perfect for our salvation.

Notice, however, that Baptism only offers us an opportunity for eternal life. It is not magic or a ticket we pull out of our wallet at death. It requires our cooperation. We are still responsible for living our life in a way that the grace of the sacrament can flourish and grow in us.

### **CCC 978**

The practice of memento mori is arguably the best way to take up that responsibility. It might seem a bit depressing or strange. It may be difficult because of fear or the freshness of grief from a loss, but remembering our death leads us to life. As Christians, it leads us deeper into the hope of the Resurrection, a reality that fully unites us with God and reunites us with those we love. By remembering our death, we can orient our temporary lives toward life beyond death.

## **PARTICULAR JUDGMENT**

For many reasons, there is a lot of confusion regarding what happens when we die.

The Church teaches that all experience a particular judgment at the moment of death. We are immediately judged by Jesus Christ, who opened the gates of heaven for us through His death and Resurrection. The result of our judgment is determined by our faith in Christ and how we expressed that faith during our life. We are judged on how we served God in the people around us. We are judged by the kind of daughter or son, sister or brother, spouse, and neighbor we were throughout our life. We are judged by the mercy we offered when we were hurt or offended, and the mercy we seek for ourselves.

**\*\*\*\*\*Read the story of the good thief in Luke 23:32-43\*\*\*\*\***

Many people and world religions have different ideas about what happens to us when we die. We know, through Christ and His Church, what happens. We will not become an angel or ghost. We will not be sent back to Earth to re-experience life as a cow or a king. We will not receive our own planet or even cease to exist. We will instantly see our life measured by Christ's. Immediately, or through a period of purification, we will enter the joy of heaven or immediately enter the eternal suffering of hell.

### **CCC 1022**

The truth of our immediate judgment after death should inspire a healthy fear in us. Healthy fear is not a crippling fear; it is the realization that it is possible to spend eternity without God. It is even considered one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit — Fear of the Lord. It pushes us to seek His will every day and to live a vibrant and heroic life of service and sacrifice.



5. Why should we always be thinking of life after death?

6. What will happen to us immediately after we die?

\*\*\*\*\*CLOSE WITH A GLORY BE\*\*\*\*\*