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The goal of life is unity with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit forever in heaven in a new and resurrected body on the last day.

The path toward that goal is holiness.

On earth, no matter what we desire to have or to be, we need to cultivate a desire to become a saint above all else.

This is not easy. Even as a priest I sometimes think more of material things than spiritual ones, choosing the world over prayer.

It takes time, effort to get this new desire. Here are some helps for you to understand your destiny and the way to get there.

Those of you under 60 years may never have had laid the basic foundation of faith. Let's do that together right now.

When I was a child at St. Clare Catholic School in suburban Pittsburgh, we studied the faith through the Baltimore Catechism, a simple question and answer system of faith organized into different themes from the Bible and the Tradition of the church.

<https://www.catholicity.com/baltimore-catechism/>

Question 1: Who made me?

Answer 1: God made me.

In the beginning, God created heaven and earth. (Genesis 1:1)

Question 2: Who is God?

Answer 2: God is the supreme being who made all things.

In him we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28)

Question 3: Why did God make me?

Answer 3: God made me to show forth His goodness, to know, to love, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him in the next.

Eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love him. (I Corinthians 2:9)

Question 5: From whom do we learn to know, love, and serve God?

Answer 5: We learn to know, love, and serve God from Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who teaches us through the Catholic Church.
I have come a light into the world that whoever believes in Me may not remain in darkness. (John 12:46)

Question 23h. What is the chief message of the New Testament?

Answer 23h: The chief message of the New Testament is the joyful announcement of our salvation through Jesus Christ.
These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His name. (John 20:31)

Question 24. Is there only one God?

Answer 24: Yes, there is only one God.
I am the Lord, and there is none else: there is no God besides me. (Isaiah 45:5)

Question 25. How many Persons are there in God?

Answer 25: In God there are three Divine Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 28:19)

Question 77. Did God abandon man after Adam fell into sin?

Answer 77: God did not abandon man after Adam fell into sin, but promised to send into the world a Savior to free man from his sins and to reopen to him the gates of heaven.
For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting. (John 3:16)

Question 78. Who is the Savior of all men?

Answer 78: The Savior of all men is Jesus Christ.
For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, bearing witness in his own time. (I Timothy 2:5-6)

Question 79. What is the chief teaching of the Catholic Church about Jesus Christ?

Answer 78: The chief teaching of the Catholic Church about Jesus Christ is that He is God made man.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

Question 80. Why is Jesus Christ God?

Answer 80: Jesus Christ is God, because He is the only Son of God, having the same Divine nature as His Father.

And the high priest said to him, "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "Thou has said it." (Matthew 26:63)

Question 81. Why is Jesus Christ man?

Answer 80: Jesus Christ is man, because He is the son of the Blessed Virgin Mary and has a body and soul like ours.

Question 82. Is Jesus Christ more than one Person?

Answer 82: No, Jesus Christ is only one Person; and that Person is the second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Question 83. How many natures has Jesus Christ?

Answer 83: Jesus Christ has two natures: the nature of God and the nature of man.

Question 84. Was the Son of God always man?

Answer 84: The Son of God was not always man, but became man at the time of the Incarnation.

But when the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that he might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)

Question 85. What is meant by the Incarnation?

Answer 85: By the Incarnation is meant that the Son of God, retaining His Divine nature, took to Himself a human nature, that is, a body and soul like ours.

The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore the Holy One to be born shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)

Question 86. How was the Son of God made man?

Answer 86: The Son of God was conceived and made man by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Question 87. When was the Son of God conceived and made man?

Answer 87: The Son of God was conceived and made man on Annunciation Day, the day on which the Angel Gabriel announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she was to be the Mother of God.

Question 88. Is Saint Joseph the father of Jesus Christ?

Answer 88: Jesus Christ had no human father, but Saint Joseph was the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the guardian, or foster father, of Christ.

Question 89. When was Christ born?

Answer 89: Christ was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Christmas Day, in Bethlehem, more than nineteen hundred years ago.

Question 89a. How many years did Jesus Christ live on earth?

Answer 89a: Jesus Christ lived on earth about thirty-three years.

Question 89b. How did Jesus Christ spend His life on earth?

Answer 89 b: Jesus Christ spent His childhood, youth and early manhood in the home of His mother Mary and His foster father Joseph, working as a carpenter in the village of Nazareth in Palestine; He spent His last years in the work of His public ministry.

Question 89c. What work did Jesus Christ perform in the course of His public ministry?

Answer 89c: In the course of His public ministry Jesus Christ gave us an example of great virtue, preached the message of salvation, proved the truth of His message through miracles and prophecies, and established the Church with its sacrifice and sacraments for the salvation of men until the end of time.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he gave the church then and now what is called the divine commission, that is what we are supposed to do until he comes again: Matthew 28:19, Go therefore and teach all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I have taught you, and know that I will be with you until the end of time.

This then is our work of serving God, to come to Him who comes to us. To invite everyone else into His Holy Catholic Church to know Jesus and to be saved. This is what it means to know, to love, and to serve God in this world.

Have you ever been invited to a non Eucharistic Christian worship service? Have you ever invited others into the perfect Eucharistic celebration of Jesus Christ at Holy Mass? Don't deprive anyone of the great gift that you have been given to live and given to share.

Jesus is with us in the church, but intimately in our souls as well. Like Santa,

He sees you when you're sleeping
He know when you're awake
He knows if you've been bad or good
So be good for goodness' sake!

I cannot hide anything in my life from Jesus. Yet I don't have to be perfect for Him to love me.

Jesus loves me just as am; but much too much to let me stay that way.

He is united to me intimately in my soul since the day of my baptism. His goal is to show forth His goodness, to help me to know, to love, and to serve God in this world, and to be happy with God in the next.

One hymn from the protestant tradition is called "In The Garden".

In the Garden Anne Murray

I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses

And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known

He speaks and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing
And the melody that He gave to me
Within my heart is ringing

And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known

I'd stay in the garden with Him
'Tho the night around me be falling
But He bids me go; through the voice of woe
His voice to me is calling
And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known

He is with me constantly. I do not leave the house in the morning before sitting down with Him, just as I would not think to leave without bodily hygiene and fresh clothes, my wallet, driver's license, etc.

To ignore him would be my peril.

Like you, I am not cloistered as a monk in a monastery where I live only to pray. I live in the world. While I might like to linger on longer in my morning prayer, Jesus dismisses me to go out into the world to be His face to all the people that I meet. I do not always do it well.

Yet unless we have a conscious intimate relationship with Jesus, even though He is in our soul to guide us and to speak to our conscience, often we ignore Him or do not hear Him.

Has anyone ever made a big decision regarding you without consulting you? Did it make you angry or feel dismissed that you were not a part of it?

It can be that way with our moral lives in Jesus. ignoring Him who can help us make the right choice in moral decisions.

Whether I root for one team or another is not a moral decision

When, however, a Catholic walks with the Jesus who is in the soul and who loves Jesus and has developed the habit of discernment of moral decisions that affect our faith and salvation, then one consults the Lord in many things: time of temptation, time of trouble, which decision is best for us, and so forth.

Jesus always comes to us to help us just as He did at the first coming in Bethlehem, and as He will on the last day.

I am not perfect, yet Jesus loves me as I am and is perfecting me. My human nature is blemished by the original sin of Adam and Eve who chose to define what was good and bad for themselves rather than to listen to God. Jesus' human nature that he took is unblemished, so He was tempted certainly by the devil, but from the outside, not from within as we are.

Jesus is with me to transform my:
pride into humility
ire into meekness
greed into generosity envy into magnanimity
sloth into diligence
gluttony into temperance
lust into chastity.

The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus comes to us, His ADVENTS that is He comes to us, in two ways;

In His first coming as a babe in Bethlehem, he came in humility and weakness.

At His second coming He will come in glory and majesty to judge the living and the dead.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux reminds us that there is a third coming in between these two where Jesus comes in spirit and power. That is what I am speaking of right now. He is constantly present, in this garden of life, in this valley of tears as we say in the prayer Hail Holy Queen.

He is here. And if He is, then run to meet Him now. He will embrace you and love you, cleanse you from your sins, teach you how to walk in holiness, make you over into His own image.

He loves me with my sins, my weaknesses, my imperfections, my successes, my failures, my joys, my sorrows.

We celebrate advent waiting in Excitement and joyful hope for the coming of Jesus.

Jesus celebrates our advent in excitement and joyful hope that we choose to come to Him each morning, each Sunday in the Eucharist, each moment of our lives when we bring him everything.

That's why we pray the morning offering as we begin our day:

O Jesus,
through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
I offer You my prayers, works,
joys and sufferings
of this day for all the intentions
of Your Sacred Heart,
in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
throughout the world,
in reparation for my sins,
for the intentions of all my relatives and friends,
and in particular
for the intentions of the Holy Father.

Jesus first coming was not only to instruct us. He showed his power as God through the miracles of feeding, healing, and nature. He overcame the devil in temptation and vanquished the devil forever with his sacrifice on the cross, robbing the devil of the souls in the nether world. He told us to do the sacrifice in His memory and that he would come back for us to take us with Him where he was going for a while to prepare a place for us, and if he is going to prepare a place, he would return for us, but that we would have to be ready.

How do you think we get to heaven? Is it like school where the teacher comes to us, gives us books, instruction, and then we have to pass a test to advance to the next grade?

There is a saying about us old people "Why do old people study the bible? We're cramming for final exams."

If you did have to take an exam, how would you want to do it? Instruction, reading, and then the test? An open book test? Or how about being able to come to the teacher at any time in the exam to have the teacher help you work out the problem, pointing out how you may be doing it wrong and drawing you into the right way to get the answer?

That is our life with Jesus if only we will allow Him in and live it with Him right now.

Saint Anselm, bishop

Insignificant man, escape from your everyday business for a short while, hide for a moment from your restless thoughts. Break off from your cares and troubles and be less concerned about your tasks and labors. Make a little time for God and rest a while in him.

Enter into your mind's inner chamber. Shut out everything but God and whatever helps you to seek him; and when you have shut the door, look for him. Speak now to God and say with your whole heart: I seek your face; your face, Lord, I desire. ...

Look upon us, Lord, hear us and enlighten us, show us your very self. Restore yourself to us that it may go well with us whose life is so evil without you. Take pity on our efforts and our striving toward you, for we have no strength apart from you.

Teach me to seek you, and when I seek you show yourself to me, for I cannot seek you unless you teach me, nor can I find you unless you show yourself to me. Let me seek you in desiring you and desire you in seeking you, find you in loving you.

Lord, my God, teach my heart where and how to seek you, where and how to find you. Lord, if you are not here where shall I look for you in your absence?

Many Christians today, Catholics among them, do not live in anticipation of Jesus' comings: first, final, and current presence among us.

Many do not think of salvation and eternal life. In the opening prayer at Mass tonight we prayed

Almighty and merciful God, may no earthly undertaking hinder those who set out in haste to meet your Son, but may our learning of heavenly wisdom gain us admittance to his company. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Many consider only the events and needs of this life.

Jesus is not important, rather an after thought.

How did we get here? What are these earthly undertakings that hinder those who set out in haste to meet Jesus:

Affluence for one. I have everything I need: a paid for condo in Kihei, retirement check and social security that doesn't make me rich but pays my bills and allows me to eat, buy gas, pay utilities. What does Jesus have to do with this?

Poor preaching regarding salvation and eternal life. Lately I hear more about rights, fairness, justice, and equality according to the mind of the speakers rather than the voice and teaching of Jesus in the Holy Bible.

The media, education, politics, pressure groups and even some in the church have used techniques to convert our thinking to theirs rather than that of Jesus. They use desensitizing, jamming and finally conversion. The same themes are presented in talks, tv, books so that we no longer are repulsed by them. If we object we are called rigoristic, uncaring, prejudiced, and so forth, so finally we relent and accept them.

Bad morality. One US bishop said that there is a reasonable hope that all men will be saved. Yet now all sorts of behavior seems to be accepted in the church with no call to change of life toward Jesus. I say that there is a reasonable hope that all might be saved if we follow Jesus, allow Him to guide us and change our lives.

I am not preaching AT you here. The first person I always preach to is ME. I'm simply sharing my own spiritual journey with you, guided by Jesus, the bible and the Tradition of the Holy Catholic Church, not just over the last 68 years of my life, but from the 19 centuries before that.

When my life is over I will face the last things, just as will you, so it is important that we know about them.

THE LAST THINGS

The last things are **death, judgment, heaven and hell.**

Death is the separation of man's mortal body and immortal soul. It comes to all men as a result of original sin. It is a temporary state, for at the

end of the world, all men shall rise again to be **judged** by Christ. Thus the whole man, body and soul, will be rewarded for the good or evil that he has done, body and soul, in this life.

At the moment of death, each human person is **judged** by God based on his conduct in this life, and goes immediately to his reward or punishment. Moreover, at the end of the world, *Jesus Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.* At that time, God's whole plan for the world shall be revealed, and his mercy and justice demonstrated.

Heaven is the eternal state of perfect happiness resulting from the face to face vision of God, which is the reward of those who have served Him in this life.

Hell is the eternal state of torment and despair which awaits those who, in this life, have freely rejected God and the happiness which He offers.

Before the end of the world, there will be an intermediate state called **purgatory**. There, those who are bound for heaven, but whose love for God is still marred by some imperfection, undergo a temporary period of purifying suffering. When this purification is complete, they are fit to enter God's presence and are admitted to the joys of heaven.

Thus it is ever more imperative to walk this earth with Jesus at every moment of our lives with the end of living with Him in perfect joy in heaven.

I occasionally get letters from inmates asking about faith issues. This man was convicted of pedophilia and asked if he ever could be forgiven, especially since he cannot see his children and because he is abused by fellow inmates for his crime. My response to him follows.

Dear J,

I speak to you of repentance, forgiveness, temptation, identity, and consequence of sin.

Yes, absolutely God will forgive you if you repent of your sins and are sorry, even though the temptations may remain!

God will forgive; society, other prisoners, and those offended may not.

Acknowledge the misdeed and the continuing temptation in your life. You have done that in your letter.

We are men and women in Christ, NOT our sins unless we choose to give over to them and identify ourselves by them with the intention of committing them again.

The reestablishment of your identity as a child of God and not "pedophile" is part of the gift of forgiveness.

Still, the consequences of sin remain. The damage done to others through sexual abuse will affect their future sexual development. For them, as for you, there is hope in Christ.

In the prison system are others who find it easier to judge another rather than to face their own misdeeds, thus your current suffering from them.

You have a repentant heart. Confess your sins to the priest. Receive the absolution. Make your act of contrition to God. Do the prescribed

penance, knowing that conversion from this sin is a lifetime walk with your Savior, Jesus Christ.

The lesson tonight for you and for me is that even though our sins may not be as heinous as this man's, we still need Jesus at every moment of our lives to guide us from sin to goodness, from death to eternal life, from isolation to communion with God and one another.

A fellow in ethics and Catholic Studies, Stephen White recently commented, "death is not the end of life; it's our way home. It's our chance, as C.S. Lewis once put it, to go farther up and farther in."

He continues, "this is a time of the year when the Church speaks to us about death and the ending of all things. And of the hope that all things will be made whole in a world where so much is broken."

Continuing, White comments, "The work of making broken things whole can sometimes seem futile. ...

"... All our efforts at justice are insufficient. All our attempts to make whole what was broken by sin are, ultimately, inadequate. The most we can do by our efforts – the most any of us can ever hope to do – is not enough. This does not mean those efforts are in vain, simply that our hope is not to be found in our ability to heal, repair, restore, or reform. All these are needed, all our effort and zeal and wisdom are required. But we must know that they are not enough.

Advent is a season of hope because we believe that the One who does make things whole is on His way. He is our hope. He is the one who heals all. He is the divine physician. The healing He offers is accomplished, literally, through death. In this sense, the Cross always hangs over the manger – not a sign of ominous doom, not as a sword of Damocles, but as a sign of our salvation.

Death comes for us all. It is the wage of our sin. Thanks to the babe of Bethlehem, it is also our one true hope for healing. When we understand all this – if we live this way and face our own inadequacy and brokenness this way – we will help others, all throughout this valley of tears, to do the same. And we will be sharing in the work of the One who makes all things new.

That's as great a gift as we can give."

PRAY

Jesus told us to watch and wait for His coming. Are we supposed to be looking out over the patio to see if He's coming up the road or down from the sky?

In Matthew chapter 6, we have the pillars of piety and these are how we wait and watch as we go about our daily activities for our material needs and as we announce His love and coming to the world:

Prayer, fasting, almsgiving. Jesus disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, and he taught them the Our Father.

As we grow in love with Jesus, we can pray more deeply. Here are some ways that I pray that you may find helpful.

The purpose of prayer is not just telling God our desires like our lists to Santa Claus. Ultimately it is to know what is God's will and to put that will into practice.

Knowing God's will does not just come like an email, text, fax rather this is a process of talking, listening, studying, reflecting.

4 kinds of prayer are called ACTS:

ADORATION

CONTRITION

THANKSGIVING

SUPPLICATION

He speaks to me in the depth of my soul in ways that are not easily understood. He speaks clearly to me in the Holy Bible and the readings at Mass.

I read six chapters of the bible every day. I divide the Bible into 6 sections:

LAW: Genesis to Deuteronomy

HISTORY: Joshua to 2 Maccabees

WISDOM: Job to Sirach

PROPHETS: Isaiah to Malachi

GOSPELS: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

ACTS-REV: Acts through Revelation

In the very beginning I start at the first chapter of each section and continue until I complete that section and start over. Some sections will finish before others, so just start over on the next section when you finish it.

For petitions, I make a spread sheet like Excel on Windows or Numbers on Mac.

I put headings on the top: family, friends, church, sick, deceased, special needs, people that work my last nerve.

I pray for them every day. Have over 1000 names now and pray twice as long in thanksgiving as I did in supplication.

I sit before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament or before a crucifix or bible and ask the Holy Spirit to possess my thoughts, my desires, my actions.

Little by little, the relationship with Jesus grows.

FOR WHOM AM I PRAYING: young woman whose husband asked for prayers because she has tumors in pancreas, liver, and lungs; retiree who went in for a simple procedure and now has complications from that surgery; another woman in her 60's whose sister died of breast cancer, who has the same disease, who was told that all was resolved and now has had to return to the Cancer Centers of America; a family who lost their young son to suicide; families who spend more time visiting government agencies to sustain themselves for food, housing, health care because of one parent home situations; and on and on.

Make a spread sheet with headers in the columns: Family, friends, the sick, the deceased, the needy, people who work my last nerve. Pray for them by name every day.

Let St. Bernard of Clairvaux remind us of the power and presence of Jesus in salvation history and in our personal lives.

From a sermon by St Bernard, abbot

(Sermo 5, In Adventu Domini,1-3: Opera Omnia, Edit. cisterc. 4 [1966], 188-190)

God's Word will come to us

We know that there are three comings of the Lord. The third lies between the other two. It is invisible, while the other two are visible. In the first coming he was seen on earth, dwelling among men; he himself testifies that they saw him and hated him. In the final coming *all flesh will see the salvation of our God, and they will look on him whom they pierced*. The intermediate coming is a hidden one; in it only the elect see the Lord within their own selves, and they are saved. In his first coming our Lord came in our flesh and in our weakness; in this middle coming he comes in spirit and in power; in the final coming he will be seen in glory and majesty.

In case someone should think that what we say about this middle coming is sheer invention, listen to what our Lord himself says: *If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him.* There is another passage of Scripture which reads: *He who fears God will do good,* but something further has been said about the one who loves, that is, that he will keep God's word. Where is God's word to be kept? Obviously in the heart, as the prophet says: *I have hidden your words in my heart, so that I may not sin against you.*

Keep God's word in this way. Let it enter into your very being, let it take possession of your desires and your whole way of life. Feed on goodness, and your soul will delight in its richness. Remember to eat your bread, or your heart will wither away. Fill your soul with richness and strength.

Because this coming lies between the other two, it is like a road on which we travel from the first coming to the last. In the first, Christ was our redemption; in the last, he will appear as our life; in this middle coming, he is our rest and consolation.

If you keep the word of God in this way, it will also keep you. The Son with the Father will come to you. The great Prophet who will build the new Jerusalem will come, the one who makes all things new. This coming will fulfill what is written: *As we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, we shall also bear the likeness of the heavenly man.* Just as Adam's sin spread through all mankind and took hold of all, so Christ, who created and redeemed all, will glorify all, once he takes possession of all.

The advents then, the first coming, the final coming, and the daily coming are mutual times of waiting in excitement and joyful hope; we for Jesus to come to us, and Jesus waiting in excitement and joyful hope for us to come to Him!