

Fr. Perozich comments —

Since the November 08, 2022 election I have received comments lamenting that society is embracing evil in passing legislation and for failing to elect better candidates as some folks had expected.

I continue to be told by clergy not to speak of things political even though I address morality as defined by God and Sacred Tradition, and I recently neither have endorsed nor rejected a particular candidate by name in my preaching.

This article is 13 years old. It still is as timely as ever in offering a response to situations that have gotten out of control.

We clergy are chastised by the laity for failing to speak in homilies on abortion, holy matrimony, sexual license, contraception, and of how both to live the faith and of how to address these issues in the political realm.

We clergy are chastised by the bishops for speaking in homilies on abortion, holy matrimony, sexual license, contraception, and of how both to live the faith and of how to address these issues in the political realm.

I endure both of these chastisements in my priestly life,

I endure the chastisements of the laity and the bishops.

I endure the chastisements of coopted Christians and their non believing voting companions in my society in the results of elections.

I endure the chastisements of the Lord for my personal sins and those of the society in which I live.

I endure the chastisements which I deserve for my imperfections in life.

I endure the chastisements because I BELIEVE IN THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME. AMEN!

I Believe in the Life of the World to Come

DO YOU?

By Abbot Joseph | January 2009

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The past few months have given me plenty of opportunity for meditation on death. My good friend Laura and my Aunt Peggy have both died of cancer. As I write, my Uncle Thomas is in the advanced stages of cancer, and by time you read this he may very well have left this world. Several friends, acquaintances, and friends-of-friends have recently died as well. It is worthwhile, then, to reflect a bit on the final article of faith in the Nicene Creed, “I believe in the life of the world to come.”

Before I take it for granted, though, I should ask: **Do you believe in the life of the world to come?** If this question were asked fifty years ago in Western countries, there would have been a high percentage of affirmative replies. But in our present postmodern age, everything seems to be subject to doubt or disbelief. Books by atheists are making the bestseller lists, and traditional beliefs are

almost universally scoffed at in the media and in academic and other “sophisticated” circles. God is seen as a quaint relic of an irrelevant past — tolerated, if at all, with a curious mixture of amusement and contempt. **Man is the measure of all things; God is a concept that may be left to the realm of one’s subjective self-medication, as long as it is excluded from all serious public discourse and policymaking.** By cutting ourselves loose from God, the secular prophets tell us, we have finally evolved. We have seen the light and have left the Dark Ages behind, no longer dependent upon the superstitious props of religion and its pie-in-the-sky hopes.

Since God has been run out of town, all beliefs and silly mythologies (like eternal life) must depart along with Him. All that’s left is the City of Man, the earthly project that history demonstrates is doomed to repeated collapse and rebuilding and collapse. The new Tower of Babel is under construction. We can design our future, redesign our own species, and create more refined and effective means of obliterating that species from the face of the earth.

Let’s hear what we can expect after a life of human accomplishment in this brave new godless world, from one of the most famous and outspoken atheists of the past century, Madalyn Murray O’Hair: “There is no God. There’s no heaven. There’s no hell. There are no angels. When you die, you go in the ground, the worms eat you....”

A deceased human being, O’Hair wrote, was nothing

more than “a fallen leaf from a tree, a dog killed on the highway, a fish caught in a net.” That is the glorious conclusion to our bright and wonderfully evolved existence.

I beg to differ with Ms. O’Hair, who, after having been brutally murdered in an act of revenge toward her unlimited (and well-documented) spite and hatefulness, must see things quite differently now, for better or worse.

The falling away from faith has a long and complex history (and there have been unbelievers in every time and place), but its current manifestations can probably be traced to the advent of “modernism” in the late-19th and 20th centuries. Pope St. Pius X, who formally condemned modernism as “the synthesis of all heresies,” said that it was philosophically rooted in agnosticism: **Man is at the center, religion is merely a vehicle for man’s subjective desire for the divine** (understood merely as inner experience or “religious consciousness”), and all religions are true to the extent they reflect the human psyche.

As for the future of the Catholic Church in such a Spirit-less context, the modernists’ position can perhaps be summed up by the excommunicated ex-priest Alfred Loisy: “Another Catholicism will have to come into being... in no way conditioned by the pontifical institution or the traditional forms of Roman Catholicism.” Catholicism in no way conditioned by traditional Catholicism? Uh, why then do they still want to call it Catholicism? If that is their idea of the Church, then the dogmas of our Faith —

Eucharist, Resurrection, Virgin Birth, Heaven and Hell, etc. — have no place in this new enlightened religion, which ends up as little more than an emotional appendage to the ever-changing “truths” of modern science, psychology, and politics.

So, what has man gained, liberated from faith in, and hence obedience to, God? Are we really free, unrestrained, and unrestricted now? Are we securing a life of earthly happiness, without enslavement to fear of some future Judgment concerning our eternal destinies? No, **today's enlightened and “free” unbelievers are nothing more than “the loose-jointed marionettes of contemporaneity,”** to use Thomas Howard's phrase. As for me, I believe in the life of the world to come.

I will not attempt to demonstrate that there is life in a world to come, for I didn't say that I have proven it, only that I believe in it. In so doing, I am joining billions of people who have for millennia also believed, among whom are numbered many of the greatest intellectuals the world has ever known. The only reason I specify “intellectuals” here is that in these days they are among the greatest and most vocal doubters and scoffers. **For me, the testimony of the Scriptures (which includes eyewitness accounts of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension), the combined testimony of countless saints and mystics, as well as my own limited personal experience, are enough to convince me that there is indeed a world to come:** the Kingdom of Heaven, to which we have been explicitly

directed ever since John the Baptist preached his first fiery sermon on the banks of the Jordan.

Another John, the sainted seer of the Apocalypse, described his vision of the heavenly Jerusalem, and this has been handed down to us as Divine Revelation. Though his vision is symbolic (for example, we don't have to check, should we be found worthy of entering therein, if the courses of precious stones in the walls line up with the biblical account), it is nonetheless true — that is, it speaks of a reality that is, and that will be manifested for every eye to see when the appointed time comes.

Recent decades have witnessed the phenomenon of “near-death experiences,” which claim to give evidence of the reality of the afterlife. Many people who have had these experiences say they have been taken to Heaven; a few say they have been taken to Hell. It is very difficult to judge these experiences — and they are quite numerous — but if even one vision of Heaven really is true, then the life of the world to come is true. Personally, I can't believe them all, but neither can I categorically say that they are all some sort of psychic deception. **If we believe in God, we must believe in what He has revealed, which includes the reality of Heaven and Hell.** So if some people's experiences verify these revelations, I think we should give them serious consideration.

We sell God short if we think He has created us — and sent His only Son to suffer and die for the expiation of our sins — merely so we could eke out a few decades of anxiety-ridden life in this world marked by endless sorrow and suffering. It

wouldn't have been worth it, for Him or for us. And we sell ourselves short if we live as if that were the case. St. Paul agrees: "**If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable of men**" (**1 Cor. 15:19**).

We have in fact been created for an eminently noble and glorious purpose, one that exceeds all possible hopes for happiness in this world. The breathtaking beauty of much of God's creation is but a faint intimation of what God has prepared for those who love Him. Being created in the image of God, we shall not perish like insects or grass or Ms. O'Hair's roadkill. God created and redeemed us out of love, "so that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16). **Eternal life, unending life with the One who loved us into being, who breathed life into us, creating our immortal souls at the moment of our conception.**

The God of life has revealed to us something far greater than the relatively brief span of our earthly lives: He created us to live forever, spiritually to survive bodily death and ultimately to recover — in an eternally vibrant and glorious state — the body/soul unity that fully constitutes our human nature. In short, **God has created us for Heaven, for the life of the world to come. This present life is but a preparation, a test, to see if we are willing to embrace what God has revealed and to follow His “directions” to His Kingdom of everlasting life and joy.**

If, then, men don't merely die like flies but rather have an eternal destiny, **we ought to pay close attention to what our Creator says about it.** Indeed, though all souls will endure forever, there are divergent destinies. We ought to make every effort to secure our place in the abode of happiness — and not discover all too late that, by our choices in this life, we have made reservations in the abode of torment. The great gift of immortality is not given lightly. Part of what it means to be created in the image of God is to have free will. God gives us the necessary grace to choose Him and His ways, and He also gives sufficient freedom to reject Him, if we wish to be so tragically foolish.

God is love and has created beings capable of love. One can truly love only in freedom, so God took the risk of making us free so that we would have the opportunity to love Him and one another, learning what it means to give ourselves in service to God and to others. **Heaven is the place where love reaches its fullest and eternal expression, which is why it is a place of joy and peace as well.** Hell is the place of torment because it is the place of hate, of radical selfishness and the rejection of all that is holy and good. Using freedom to love as Jesus loves and to live for God carries us to Heaven, while using freedom to serve our own desires and to rebel against God drives us to the slavery of Hell.

Holy Scripture repeatedly calls us to live in such a way that we are well prepared for the life of the world to come. St. Paul calls us to seek the

things of Heaven, to set our minds and hearts where Jesus reigns with His Father, so that when He comes in His glory, we too will be glorified with Him. Colossians 3 gives practical advice on what to do, and what not to do, if we are to attain our goal. We see this in other places as well: what not to do (1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:9-10) and what to do (Rom. 12:9-21); how not to be (Gal. 5:19-21) and how to be (Gal. 5:22-26). This is all for the sake of entering the Kingdom of God, the only thing that ultimately matters.

Paul's Letter to the Hebrews urges us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus (12:1-2), and to go to Him — even to the point of suffering for Him — for He has suffered and died to sanctify us by His own blood (13:12-13). In the next verse we are given the reason: “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come” (13:14). And what kind of place is that? It is “a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (11:16). We’re not asked to believe in Heaven as if it were just one more piece of information that we are to file in with the other things we know or believe. It is really a highly practical and urgently serious matter, for here we have no lasting city. We are going to die, all things are eventually going to decompose, even the earth itself will not last forever. What is left when we are faced with the indisputable fact that our “city” — our present life, possessions, etc. — will not last? We must have faith in the lasting “city,” the heavenly one, the ultimate goal of our lives, the reason why God created us in the first place.

But to believe in the life of the world to come is not like taking out some sort of insurance policy that will guarantee our salvation while we satiate our carnal indulgences in the meantime. We have to live our whole life with our eyes on Heaven, and allow the reality of Heaven to be that which conditions the way we live on earth. If we are living for this present life instead of the life to come, we will be consumed with self-interest, we'll order our lives according to our desire for comfort or personal advantage — and we will flee all sacrifice, suffering, and self-denial as being detrimental to our immediate happiness.

It has been said that all believers really do want to go to Heaven — especially when one considers the alternative. But is that general wish manifested in practical ways in our daily lives? And is Heaven so important to us that we are willing to forsake everything else to attain it? **How do we know that we are really living for Heaven and not for this passing world?**

Here are a few **practical points** to ponder. If we get disappointed because things don't go our way, we are living for earth and not for Heaven. If we get upset, indignant, and defensive when someone points out a fault of ours — rather than being grateful for the opportunity to repent of it before we have to carry it to the Judgment Seat of God — we are living for earth and not for Heaven. If we resist or complain about the demands of our state in life, we are living for earth and not for Heaven. If we refuse to accept sufferings, hardships, and even occasional ill-treatment, refuse to accommodate another's wishes, or if

we return evil for evil, or hold grudges or refuse to forgive, or in any way insist on our own ideas or opinions, we are living for earth and not for Heaven.

Why is this? **It is simply because we thus manifest in practice — despite what we might say or think — that our own present comfort, self-esteem, personal vindication, or preferences in life are the most important things to us.** If we don't act like we are living for Heaven, then we aren't living for Heaven. But if we are living for Heaven, all these selfish things that belong to this passing life will be of little concern to us, for our eyes are fixed on Jesus and the fulfillment of His promises in us. We will be equally content if things go our way in this life or if they don't. **For this world is not our home, this is not our destiny. Heaven is our home and destiny, and if we really live for Heaven, we will not respond inappropriately to the insignificant irritations of this life.** This is a tall order, but Heaven is a tall place, so to speak.

To have our eyes and hearts fixed on Heaven does not mean that we don't take seriously our earthly responsibilities — for our fidelity and obedience on earth will decide whether or not we will go to Heaven — but it does mean that we won't take ourselves too seriously, we won't be touchy, easily offended, or suspicious of others. People who are going to Heaven don't act as if it is of utmost importance to get their way on earth.

Several times in his first epistle, St. Peter describes Christians as strangers, sojourners, and exiles in this world, who are expected to “set [our] hope fully upon the grace that is coming at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:13) — that is, at His Second Coming. That’s when it will be finally manifested that this world is “no lasting city,” and that the only lasting “cities” will be the heavenly one and the infernal one.

Believe in the life of the world to come. The present life is relatively short and is often marked by sorrow and pain. But lo, a day is coming in which those who believe in God and His revelation and have obeyed His commandments will enter His marvelous and joy-giving presence forever. God “will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:3-4). Everything that makes up this present life, all that we tend to cling to or put our hope in, will soon be referred to as “the former things that have passed away.” Let us not cling to passing things, but rather look to the yet unseen eternal things, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, setting our hearts on Heaven, as we await the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.