

The Things People Ask!

*Society of
St. Pius X* - Southern Africa

by Fr. Justin Swanton

When, if ever, should one take part in prayer with non-Catholics is the very reliant question in this month's issue. The answer is not as simple as one might initially suppose. Write in with tricky questions of your own as we are once again out of stock!

Q. Can a Catholic take part in interdenominational prayer services, and what value do they have?

A. Catholic may not take part in any active way in a non-catholic service of any kind, be it of one denomination or of several. The reason for this is that a non-catholic prayer service, even an interdenominational one, contains a religious outlook that implicitly is in opposition to Catholicism. Interdenominational prayer services are effectively protestant prayer services and Protestantism (as the name implies) contains tenets that are opposed to Catholicism, even if modern-day Protestants are not themselves anti-catholic. To actively take part in such services is to imply a tacit approval or acceptance of those tenets, which would be to cause scandal in the strict sense of the word.

Passive attendance at such a service may sometimes be justifiable, eg. at a wedding or funeral. In this case it must be clear that one is attending out of consideration for the people concerned - the bridal couple or the deceased, say - and not out of any approval for the service itself. One may sit or stand with the others but nothing further should be done. One can pray privately during the ceremonies. For example by praying the rosary. It can happen that attendance even at such a service may be wrong, for example in the case of a Catholic friend who chooses to marry outside the Church. One needs to weigh up whether he is ignorant or in bad faith. It is best in such cases to speak to a priest whose judgment you trust, before committing yourself.

It can happen, and quite often does, that one is asked to pray with a non-catholic friend or friends (*eg* in a hospital). There is nothing wrong with that since such a gathering does not constitute a "prayer service": no one is being asked to give tacit approval to anything. This could even be the opportunity to introduce one's non-Catholic friends to Catholic devotions like the rosary or the scapular. It is my experience that in our time one makes more converts by simply being good friends with non-Catholics and gradually introducing them to the practice of the Faith, as opposed to giving them all the arguments from Catholic apologetics. The times of informal prayer together are invaluable - swallow your human respect and use them!

As regards the efficacy of interdenominational prayer services, it all pretty much depends on the dispositions of those taking part. A prayer service is not a sacrament, hence of itself it does nothing. Most non-catholics today (and an increasing number of Catholics) have no clear concept of a unique Christ-founded Church; and hence take part in such services in good faith. God sees their goodwill and hears their prayers accordingly, thus perhaps bringing them ultimately to the true Fold.

What exactly is wrong with swearing, and with faith healers especially if they are kind enough to offer to heal you? Next month we look at interdenominational prayer and its efficacy. Any other questions?

Q. Which Commandment does swearing violate, and why?

A. In the past swearing was generally limited to the irreverent use of God's name or the name of some holy thing or person, and so went against the Second Commandment:

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain".

This remains true today, but the subject matter of swearing now extends into other areas, notably impurity and bodily functions (to put it politely). In the first case, a great gift of God designed to bring new human beings into the world as well as being a means of affection and union between spouses, is viewed as something low and crude, fitting for expletives designed to shock and debase.

In the second case there is a kind of glorification of the unpleasant aspect of a perfectly natural bodily function. Swearing in these ways drags into the mud a man's concept of God's nature and His natural gifts. When done before others it goes against the Fifth Commandment "Thou shalt not kill" since this Commandment includes not giving bad example and scandal, and swearing constantly before others lowers their own respect for the things used as ammunition for expletives.

Even if one swears in the absence of company it is a fault since one must respect the natural gifts of God as well as God Himself., however if it is something habitual and thoughtless, it is not a sin. But one must have a serious intention of overcoming the bad habit, and make an effort to do so.

Q. If someone who claims to be a faith-healer offers to pray over you when you are sick what should your response be?

A. To decline politely. There are of course innumerable cases of miraculous cures in the Church in the past, but these were by Saints who clearly stood by and upheld the Faith. Cures at places of apparitions, eg Lourdes. underscored the message of these apparitions, which always fostered the practice and spread of the true Faith. I do not know of any modern faith healer who in an unambiguous and uncompromising way promotes Catholicism, and God does not endorse by signs and wonders a false set of beliefs or a false religion. To do so would be to add to the confusion of Creeds modern society is cursed with, and increase the religious bewilderment-and ultimately indifference-of people today.

Many Protestants have a tripartite view on human nature, i.e. they hold that a human being is composed of three parts: body, soul and spirit. The answer to this week's question examines the Biblical foundation for this theory.

Q. What is the difference between soul and spirit and where in the Bible is there reference to an immortal soul?

A. This question I presume refers to I Cor. 14: 14: "If I use a strange tongue when I offer prayer, my spirit is praying, but my mind reaps no advantage from it. In the New Testament the words 'spirit' and 'soul' have a variety of meanings which I can only summarise here.

Soul has four different meanings:

a) *Individual life*, as opposed to life in general. "I am the only one left, and my life (soul), too, is threatened."—Rom. 11:3.

b) *The subject of life, the person*. "Every soul must be submissive to its lawful superiors"—Rom. 13:1.

c) *The soul itself as distinct from the body*. "And there is no need to fear those who kill the body, but have no means of killing the soul; fear him more, who has the power to ruin body and soul in hell."—Mt. 10:28.

d) *The soul as principle of corporeal life*. "Such are the men who now keep themselves apart, animal—of the soul, soul-like) natures, without the life of the Spirit."—Jude 19.

Spirit has three meanings in the New Testament:

a) *As principle of thought in man*. "Who else can know a man's thoughts, except the man's own spirit that is within him?"—I Cor. 2:11. In this sense it is distinct from the soul as principle of life, even though both belong to the same substance, just as intellect and will are distinct faculties in the same soul.

b) *The Holy Ghost himself*, usually referred to by the terms *Spirit of God*, *Spirit of Christ* and *Holy Spirit*.

c) *Man under the influence of the Holy Ghost*. In this sense is to be understood I Cor. 14:12: "Since you have set your hearts on the *spirits*....", and I Cor. 14:32: "and it is for the prophets to exercise control over their own *spirits*". This refers to the charisma, or spiritual gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Thus is the text from I Cor. 14:14 to be understood: the spirit is the charism of glossalalia, enabling a man to praise God in a language unknown to his auditors or even himself, whilst his mind, or intellect, remains idle.

As regards the query about the soul's immortality, the Scriptures do not state in black and white "the soul is immortal" since that was a truth so self-evident to its readers that it did not have to be formulated. But one can conclude on the soul's immortality from passages like the following:

"Go far from me, you that are accursed, into that eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels."—Mt. 25:41. There is no mention anywhere of the devil being annihilated at any future date, and so one can take "eternal" in the literal sense. If wicked souls are to be punished with a fire that is eternal, then evidently they are eternal themselves.

Q. Was Our Lady, the second Eve, tempted by the devil in any way - as the first Eve was?

A. The short answer is that there is no reliable record of Our Lady being tempted by the devil as her Son was. She was certainly tried by God throughout her life (e.g. in her submission to the will of God in the Annunciation), and she passed through these trials perfectly, but also grew greatly in grace and merit by them, but there is no sign that the devil played any part in this testing.

Q. Did Our Lady die?

A. Pius XII, in his definition on the Assumption of Our Lady (Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*: 1st Nov. 1950) declared that "Mary, the immaculate perpetually Virgin Mother of God, after the completion of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into the glory of Heaven." Note how he carefully leaves out the question, debated for centuries, of whether Our Lady actually died (in imitation of her Son as some hold), or merely remained in a state of dormition (since she was without Original sin and hence not subject to death, as others maintain). To date the question remains open.

Q. Have the apparitions of Our Lady at Garabandal been approved by the Church? If not, is it sinful for Catholics to go there on pilgrimage?

A. The apparitions of Garabandal have never been condemned by the Church, nor have they been as yet recognized by her. In a 1992 interview Bishop Juan Antonio del Val Gallo of Santander (the diocese of Garabandal) was asked if the apparitions had even been condemned. He replied, "No. The previous bishops did not admit that the apparitions were supernatural but to condemn them, no, that word has never been used." With the repeal in 1967 of Canons 1399 and 2318, it is permitted to publish information about alleged manifestations and visit the sites thereof so long as there is nothing in these manifestations contrary to the Church's teaching on Faith and Morals. Garabandal falls into this category.

Bishop Fellay, on being asked what he thought of Garabandal, replied, "Let it prove itself. When the miracles and prophecies come to pass then we will believe it like Fatima [in that Fatima was proved by a promised miracle taking place]."

Catholics may visit the site of Garabandal without sin and pray there, but they should not condemn other Catholics who remain sceptical.

A widow continuing to draw a pension after marrying in Church but neglecting to register her marriage with the state and inform her former husband's employers is the question looked at this month. We remain open to any other questions you may send!

Q. A widow draws a pension from her late husband's employers. A widower draws a lesser pension from his previous employers. The couple decide to marry and both being Catholic, get married in the Church, with Nuptial Mass, all valid in the eyes of God. In order to supplement their income they do not register in the eyes of the law, thus allowing the widow to retain the benefit of her pension. The company paying the widow's pension is not advised of the change in the marital state of the widow and therefore carries on paying the pension as normal. The widower retains his pension until his death. The couple were advised that this practice is acceptable in the Church.

1). What is the ruling of the Traditional Church in this case?

2). Is it fraudulent of the widow not to advise the pension department of her change in status?

A. In only one case is it permitted to take or retain the property of another - if there is extreme necessity. "Necessity is extreme when life is in danger or some comparable evil is imminent, and the person in need cannot extricate himself unaided."-H. Davis: *Moral and Pastoral Theology*, vol. II p310. In a case of merely grave need, where the person can see to his essential material requirements though with difficulty, such taking of property is not permitted.

And so, to answer the question it is necessary to know just how penurious the state of the couple would be with the pension of the man alone. If it involved nothing worse than a certain - and certainly bearable - drop in the standard of living, then it would be morally unjustifiable for the widow to retain her pension by not declaring her new marriage, and would amount to fraud and theft. To justify such a practice would contribute to the general climate of fraud which is weakening the fabric of society, to the detriment of all. However, from what I know of pensions I think it probable that the penury of such a couple living on the man's pension alone would drop below the reasonable.

If their basic needs cannot be met with the man's pension then the widow could retain her pension - but only as much as will pay for those basic needs the balance must be returned *if at all possible* to the company paying out the pension, since the couple have no right to that surplus. If repayment of the surplus is impossible (ie one cannot do it without risk of detection) it can be given to a charitable cause.

As a corollary, the couple in question must have a sufficiently grave reason for marrying in the first place if it means putting themselves into the position of extreme need, weighing up whether it wouldn't be better for them to remain unmarried and thus avoid placing themselves into this morally and physically onerous position.

How far the extent is of the 6th and 9th commandments, whether theft is ever justified, and what to think of the Pentecostal 'gift of tongues' are the questions treated this month.

Q. The 6th and 9th Commandments use the words "adultery" and "wife" the terminology of which would seem relates to married people only. The sin for single people is called fornication. What convincing reply can one give to non-Catholics or unbelievers that the 6th and 9th Commandments totally embrace the sin of impurity and apply to everyone?

A. The best reply I can think of is the one from common sense. Morality in all its detail is a highly complex subject that theologians will never cease to elaborate on. The Ten Commandments, on the other hand, are a succinct summing up of the moral law that every Jew (and every Christian) had no trouble knowing by heart. Each Commandment is in fact a heading for a whole chapter of related moral obligations and sins. 'Honour thy father and thy mother', for example, concerns all the duties of justice, not just the debt of respect for one's parents. 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' and 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife' are convenient ways of expressing the moral ban on all sins of impurity, in thought as well as in deed.

Q. Is it a sin for a poor person to steal food or any of the basic necessities of life for himself and his family if he has no money and cannot find work?

A. Let me quote from Henry Davis S.J.: "One may take the property of another without being guilty of moral fault, both in the case of extreme necessity and for legitimate occult compensation.

"Necessity is extreme when life is in danger or some comparable evil is imminent, and the person in need cannot extricate himself from it unaided. A person in such necessity may take so much of the goods of another as will relieve present need, unless that other is in a like necessity. In such need, the goods of the earth are common property; rights of exclusive private ownership lapse; there is, in fact, an obligation to preserve life, which is a higher good than property. Even before extreme necessity is actually present but when it is imminent, the same principles are true. However, in merely grave need—that it, such as a person can relieve, though with some difficulty -- it is not permitted to take others' property, for many live in grave necessity, and if such appropriations were allowable, the insecurity of private property would be very great." *Moral and Pastoral Theology*, Vol. II.

Q. Can you give a detailed and convincing reason for a non-Catholic Pentecostal why their "speaking in tongues" is nonsense, evil and does not relate to the special "speaking in tongues" Gift of the Holy Ghost given to the Apostles at Pentecost?

A. The short answer to the question is that a cursory glance at the second chapter of Acts shows that the Apostles did not speak a language of incomprehensible syllables, as do the Pentecostals, but languages spoken by their auditors: "the multitude came together and were confounded in mind, because that every man heard them speak in his own tongue."-- Ac 2:6.

To be fair to the Pentecostals, however, it must be stated that a "Gift of Tongues" did exist in the early Church that was not simply an ability to speak other spoken languages, but at times was a language that was not understandable to others: "for he that speaketh in a tongue, speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man heareth. Yet by the Spirit he speaketh mysteries."-- I Cor. 14:2. At times, too, the tongue was not understandable to the speaker: "And therefore he that speaketh by a tongue, let him pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is without fruit."-- *ibid.* 14:13&14.

What was the point of such a gift? To quote from F. Prat S.J.: "Bringing together all the traits relative to the glossolalia, we see it was the supernatural faculty to pray to or praise God in a foreign language, with an enthusiasm bordering on exaltation. Indeed, the apostles sang of "the wonderful works of God", the household of Cornelius "glorified God", the neophytes of Ephesus "prophesied" in the Biblical sense, those of Corinth "speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man heareth. Yet by the Spirit he speaketh mysteries", the sense of which was lost on the bystanders. But on the other hand the excitation of the Apostles is attributed to new wine, and St. Paul fears that his Corinthians will be accused of insanity if they use their gift in front of infidels or catechumens.

"These marvelous manifestations verified the prophecies, proved in a visible way the permanence of the Holy Ghost within the Church, symbolised the great Catholic unity and the universality of the Gospel, destined to speak every language and to gather all the peoples into the profession of the same Faith."-- *La Theologie de Saint Paul*. 1922 with Imprimatur.

What, then, to make of the Pentecostals? Two things first must be said about the gift of tongues in the early Church. Firstly, it was not the most important of the glossolalia as St. Paul makes clear in I Corinthians 14, and secondly, it did not last long. The generally accepted chronological order of St. Paul's Epistles is 1 and 2 Thess, Gal, 1 and 2 Cor, Rom, Col, Phm, Eph, Phil, Heb, 1 Tim, Titus, 2 Tim. In the later Epistles there is no mention of Tongues even though one would have expected St. Paul to have to deal with a gift so open to abuse. Once the Church had spread rapidly and established herself, there was no longer such a need for extraordinary manifestations of God's presence, and they declined.

Is there a need for them now? As Fr. Prat makes clear, all the extraordinary gifts had for purpose to show that the Holy Ghost dwelt supernaturally in the Church, i.e. they proved dramatically that the Church was of God and not just of man as is the case of false religions. Hence there can be no manifestation of God's power that would in any way confirm or give credence to a false religions. The supposed Gift of Tongues, as it manifests itself today, gives support to the Pentecostal forms of

Protestantism, which contain serious errors of doctrine, and does little or nothing to confirm the Catholic Faith. For that reason it is immediately suspect.

Furthermore, this Gift of Tongues appears in conjunction with a group of other supposed gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit which are not at all scriptural, e.g. being "struck by the Spirit" (where the recipient falls over at the imposition of hands) and the "Toronto- blessing" (where he falls over and breaks out into uncontrollable laughter). All these phenomena, far from strengthening Faith, serve as a substitute for it, feeding a desire for extraordinary manifestations of God's presence rather than nourishing that supernatural union with God that is quiet and undramatic.

In tackling a Pentecostal on the subject of Tongues, I feel it better to admit that such a Gift did exist in the early Church, but then to add that it can be counterfeited, diabolically or even just by human hysteria. Then go on to basics: which of the two faiths -- Protestant or Catholic -- is the true one? God would be the author of Tongues only in the Church of His making, to uphold the true Faith. Show a Pentecostal that Catholicism is indeed the true Church founded by Christ, and he will draw the conclusion himself that all the 'gifts' in Pentecostalism are as phony as three pound notes.

The efficacy of non-catholic sacraments, the do's and don'ts of the Billings method and the problems with annulments is the subject-matter of this month's questions. Don't hesitate to send in a few of your own that have worried you!

Q. Can the use of the Internet by Traditional Catholics be likened to the use of television? In other words, when and to what extent can the Internet be used? With E-commerce and modern business trends, access is increasingly a *sine qua non*, but what are the limits on other use?

A. The Net, like television, is an instrument that in itself is neither evil nor good, but becomes evil or good depending on the use men make of it. In modern business it is becoming indispensable for an increasing number of occupations, and Catholics in those occupations may of course make prudent use of it with a clear conscience.

When it comes to using the Net for recreation or information-gathering one has to be very careful. I am told that about 70% of the material on the Net is pornographic in content. This may be an exaggeration, but it underlines the fact that it is a dangerous source of temptation.

Another problem with the Net is that 'surfing' it takes time, and one can spend hours drifting from one pretty and, diverting website to another, without actually accomplishing anything worthwhile.

In conclusion, then, if you are someone with sufficient moral character to go into the Net knowing what you want and able to avoid its pitfalls, then you may make prudent use of it. If, however, the Net is a source too strong of temptation to immorality or idleness, then keep clear of it. How you have used to Net up to now will tell you in which category you belong.

Q. When one meets with a conservative' Novas Ordo Catholic and the subject of Tradition arises in conversation, what are some good starting points? Most have a mental block when it comes to the obedience issue and that of schism and cannot comprehend the arguments of Traditional Catholics.

A. Many conservative Catholics have made their Faith depend upon the structures of the Church, i.e. a Catholicism that finds its peace of mind in the thought of a 'good' Pope, a functioning hierarchy, and more-or-less healthy Catholic institutions. Nothing must be allowed to shake that peace of mind and so any direct criticism of the papacy or of the hierarchy as a whole is not permitted. It is extremely difficult for people with this kind of thinking to grasp that the survival of the Church does not depend upon churchmen doing their duty, although it is certainly helped by it. In dealing with such Catholics it is best, I think, simply to state the case for Tradition by describing the Catholic notion of obedience, i.e. that blind obedience is never owed to one's superiors, not even the Pope, when Faith or morals are compromised. Give proofs of this from the history of the Church (eg. St. Athanasius and Pope Liberius) and from the Church's teaching, all of which can be found in Traditional publications. If your interlocutor cannot grasp the point then agree to disagree and talk about something else. Persistent

argument is useless, and keeping his goodwill may enable you, by the grace of God, to get through to him at a later time.

Q. Is it correct that it is most irreverent to chew the Sacred Host, but one should swallow It after receiving as soon as possible. I can understand this, but please explain if this is grave matter.

A. Chewing the Host would be sinful only if one did it as a deliberate act of irreverence, however Catholics are told not to chew but simply swallow the Host since chewing is something one associates with ordinary food, which the Host is not, and in any case is unnecessary given its size.

Q. If the priest were to upset the Chalice, thus spilling the Precious Blood, what , procedures are taken? Similarly, when the Host is dropped?

A. In the case of a spilled Chalice, the three altar cloths must be purified in water afterwards; if any precious Blood spills, on the ground, that area must be scrubbed using a towel and a basin of water. If (which has happened) it is spilled on the altar missal, then the missal must be burnt since it is impossible to purify it.

In the case of a dropped Host, it must be picked up and a cloth (eg the lavabo towel) placed on the spot. Afterwards, that area is scrubbed using a cloth and basin of water. The basin itself must be emptied onto earthen ground (eg the garden).

Q. What are the rulings about singing hymns during Mass? We sing an English hymn after Mass, but I believe such is not allowed during the Mass, though apparently this happened in some places pre-Vatican II. Where do Latin hymns fit in the liturgy (like *Ave Maria*, *O Sanctissima*, *Panis Angelicus*, etc.)? Must the choir first sing the Proper chant (eg Offertory) and then the hymn?

A. In Low Mass, Hymns may not be sung in English during the Mass itself, although it is permitted to sing a suitable hymn before Mass begins and after the end of Mass. Hymns in English have become customary during the Offertory at High and Sung Masses. In what concerns Latin hymns during Mass, let me quote Rev. J. O'Connell: "At the Offertory, after the antiphon has been sung, a short motet, in Latin, in keeping with this part of the Mass may be sung. It must not continue beyond the Secret. After the Communion a Latin motet suitable for that part of the Mass may be sung." — *The Celebration of Mass* (Ed. 1963 with imprimatur), p 433.

Q. What kinds of popular music are out of bounds to Catholics? Some Traditional priests are stricter than others with regard to what music we may listen to.

A. Since popular songs come out at the rate of several dozen a week, it is impossible for a priest — or anyone else for that matter — to compile a list of what one may or may not listen to.

As a general guide, if a song contains words that are immoral or blasphemous, or by its nature is connected with something immoral or blasphemous, then one should not listen to it unless there is a sufficiently grave reason for doing so, eg when writing an article or something similar on modern music.

For the rest, one should try to acquire a taste for music that rises above the current BOOM BOOM Yeah Yeah culture. One destroys what one replaces, and a love of Church music, Classical music, Operatic music and the other forms of authentically beautiful and moving music should be enough to kill any interest in the rhythmic (and sometimes rhythmless) noise that beats on our ears from radios, emergency taxis and supermarket loudspeakers. If you have children then it is especially important to give them a taste for genuine music while they are young.

Which leads to another question: why should one listen to music at all? If it is just a harmless form of recreation then it would be on a level with ping-pong or draughts, but there is more to music than that.

Music is a form of beauty, and beauty is something that only the soul can appreciate — animals have no understanding of it. Listening to good music expands the soul and — even if only on a natural plane — raises one above purely material preoccupations: making money, acquiring possessions, gratifying the passions. A soul thus expanded and elevated is better able to grasp and appreciate the supernatural world of the Faith, which itself results in a better love of beauty, and so on. It is not a coincidence that

the loss of Faith in the West has gone hand in hand with a loss of beauty in the arts.

This month we look at whether Catholic lawyers can take on divorce cases, what the Church says about affirmative action, and what attitude a Catholic should adopt towards the modern economic system based on usury.

Q. Is the position of a Catholic lawyer with respect to a client wanting a divorce akin to that of a Catholic doctor with respect to someone wanting an abortion? In other words, would the lawyer be bound to refuse such assistance or advice on the grounds that he would be co-operating in "putting asunder what God hath joined together"?

A. To quote from H. Davis S.J.: "Catholics may apply to the Civil Courts for a decree of judicial separation after submitting the case to the ecclesiastical authorities. They may also apply for declaration of nullity after submitting their case to their ecclesiastical authorities, and getting from them such a declaration. It is obvious that Catholics may not under any circumstances petition for an absolute divorce with the intention of remarriage. Catholics may, however, petition for a divorce in the Civil Courts in order merely to obtain the civil effects of a civil divorce, but they should first submit the case to the local Ordinary. Since Catholics may, with due permission, do these things, a Catholic judge may pronounce a decree of civil divorce, and Catholic lawyers and solicitors may undertake such cases, but with due submission to ecclesiastical authorities, who will be the best judges as to whether or not grave scandal might arise from such a practice."-*Moral and Pastoral*

Theology, vol. IV. In present circumstances a Catholic lawyer should consult a priest whose judgment he trusts if he is confronted with a doubtful case.

Q. What is the Catholic position on affirmative action? Does it have any foundations in justice, or is it totally against the social teaching of the Church?

A. I have not been able to find anything in the Church's social teaching directly treating affirmative action, however one can take more general principles and apply them to this case.

Those who advocate affirmative action contend that, in the past, one race would be preferred in employment over another, purely on grounds of race. This was unjust, and must now be corrected by giving the other race preferment in employment. One must note that in both cases the qualifications and competency of those to be employed do not have the prime say in who gets the job.

In dealing with employment in general, H. Davies, repeating the Church's teaching, says: "Every man has a right to a decent livelihood if he works. Since most men cannot directly get at the fruits of the earth, their only method of winning sustenance is to work for wages. The workman's wage, therefore, must be the first call on the employer's turn-over, after payment for raw materials and depreciation." The minimum wage owed to a workman "is that amount of wage that will keep him and his wife and family in frugal comfort, commensurate with the conditions of life of the normal worker of his class." This is as much as is required by justice from employers.

The healthier the economy, the more there will be jobs available. Two things go very far towards making an economy healthy: filling jobs with the most qualified and competent people one can find, and making the availability of jobs dependent on one's willingness to work. Ideally, there should be a job for everyone, but if there is not, then making those jobs available to those who can best do them will, in time, result in an increase in available jobs. Hence, employing people on the criterion of race and not of competency or is wrong, since it ultimately harms the good of all.

Q. What would the correct attitude be for a Catholic today with respect to interest charged by banks? Bank loans are unavoidable, but surely their interest rates are usurious in some cases. What true Catholic alternatives, practicable in today's economic system, are there, if any?

A. This is rather like the question on usury that appeared in the August 1999 *Nova et Vetera*. Let me reproduce part of my reply to that question: "Hiliare Belloc in his essay *On Usury*, makes a distinction

between the productive loan, which is morally justifiable, and the unproductive loan, which is not.

A productive loan is one in which the money borrowed is used to found some enterprise that will produce wealth. The interest required on the loan comes out of the profits of the enterprise. An unproductive loan is one used for something that does not produce any wealth itself. For such a loan one cannot in conscience demand interest, just repayment. Belloc gives an example of such a loan: "Now let us suppose that [a] man comes to you and says: "I know the case of a man in middle age who has been suddenly stricken with a terrible ailment. Medical aid costing £1,000 will save his life, but he will never be able to do any more work. He has an annuity of £100 a year to keep him alive after the operation and subsequent treatment. Will you lend the £1,000? It will be paid back to you on his death, for his life has been insured in a lump payment for the amount of £1,000." You answer: "I will lend £1,000 to save his life, but I shall require of him half his annuity, that is £50 a year for every year he may live henceforward, and he must scrape along as best he can on the remaining £50 of his annuity." That answer would make you feel a cad if you have any susceptibilities left...." Unproductive loans requiring interest repayments generally put a heavy and even intolerable financial burden on the borrower, and hence have always been condemned by the Church."

In the present economic situation, however, it is very difficult to acquire the necessities of life without making loans and contracting debts. As one wag put it, the more money you owe the more successful you are. There are not many who can make money quickly enough to pay cash for the larger necessities of life, like a house or, for some professions, a car. One is obliged to take out interest-bearing loans that are unproductive and hence burdensome, ultimately paying far more for the item than it is in fact worth. The only proviso is to do so with prudence, not taking on more debt than is strictly necessary, and peeping at a minimum the consequent burden of debt and worry about money that can be very harmful, morally and spiritually.

Correction

The answer to last month's question concerning Communion at the two Masses of Easter and Christmas, and their fulfilling of the precept, needs to be corrected.

1. *Do the Vigil Masses, fulfil the obligation?* Pius XII, in his Motu Proprio of 16 December 1940, made clear that "all who piously attend the Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Vigil of Christmas, satisfy the sacred precept of the Christmas obligation." This applies equally to the Mass of the Easter Vigil.

2. *May one receive Communion at both Masses?* Bishop Tissier de Mallerais, at the request of Bishop Fellay clarified the question of Communion at the Masses of Christmas and Easter as follows:

"At Christmas and at Easter, one may not receive Communion twice (in the night and in the day) except at Easter (when Communion is not received in the morning) if the Mass begins at such a time that Communion is received before Midnight (Mass of the Vigil)." -3 March, 1994.

Nausea after Communion, the problems raised by Easter and Christmas midnight Masses, and what to do if one forgets one's penance are the subject matter for this month's questions. Send in some more of your own as we have run out!

Q. If, after receiving Communion, the communicant becomes nauseous and brings up the host, what should he do?

A. Lovely question! It is a point of theology that if the accidents of the host and wine are no longer recognizable as such, then there is no longer a Real Presence. For example, should the Precious Blood be diluted with water to the point where it would no longer be recognizable wine; then the Real Presence would be lost.

In the case given in the question, if there are no recognizable pieces of Host in what has been brought

up, the best course of action would be simply to scoop it up and bury it. If there are pieces of host present, then dilute them with water until they are no longer recognizably bread, and the scoop them up and bury them.

Q. Do the Midnight Masses of Easter and Christmas fulfill the obligation of the Feast, and can one receive Communion at these Masses and at the Mass of the day?

A. The Midnight Masses of Easter and Christmas are considered Masses of those feasts, and hence attending them fulfills the obligation, i.e. one is not then obliged to attend the Mass of the day. The Midnight Mass at Easter may begin before midnight provided the Vigil ceremonies begin after nightfall. The Midnight Mass of Christmas must not begin before midnight.

As regards receiving Communion, although there is nothing specific in the Church's liturgical manuals on the subject, it has always been the practice in Tradition to permit the reception of Communion at the Mass of Midnight and the Mass of the day. Hence the faithful may continue in this practice.

Q. If someone going to Confession does not know the penance the priest gives him, or forgets it afterwards, what should he do?

A. Either ask the priest for another penance if he does not know the penance that the priest has given him, or ask another priest to give him another penance if he has forgotten the penance his confessor gave him. The faithful may not substitute a penance of their own for any penance given by the confessor which they cannot for one reason or another perform.

The reason for this is that the penance is a complement to the sacramental absolution, and hence can be changed only by he who has the power to give absolution. Anyone who has substituted penances of their own in good faith need not panic, however. Just mention the fact to a priest in the next confession and ask him for a penance to cover those that could not be said.

The order of the seven sacraments in the Penny Catechism and the problem of proving the incorruptibility of embalmed bodies are the subject matter this month. Send in your questions soon as they are drying up here in Durban!

Q. Why are the sacraments in the order given in the Penny Catechism?

Why are the seven sacraments always quoted in the order given in the Penny Catechism? It cannot be chronological order because Confirmation is normally received after Confession and Holy Communion, and Extreme Unction is generally the last sacrament we receive. It cannot be in order of importance because Confirmation is not necessary for salvation and is surely of less importance than Confession and Holy Communion. I think the order given is confusing for Catechists teaching children because they ask why the sacraments are always quoted and even depicted in that strange order.

A. The order of the sacraments in the Penny Catechism is: **Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Order and Matrimony.** This order follows the analogy between the life of the body and the life of the soul which the sacraments nurture. To quote from *The Catechism Explained*, by Fr. Spirago: "The seven sacraments answer exactly to the needs of the soul, which resemble to a certain extent the exigencies of the body. The life of the soul begins at Baptism, it is fortified by Confirmation, brought to perfection by the Holy Eucharist; if the life of the soul be lost, it is restored by Penance and Extreme Unction; it is kept up by Holy Orders and Matrimony from generation to generation." The first five sacraments meets the needs of the individual; the last two meet the needs of the spiritual society of which the individual is a part.

Q. Does embalming preclude the possibility of a miracle?

As Archbishop Lefebvre's body was apparently embalmed before being entombed, would the discovery of his incorruptible body in future years still be considered to be a miracle for canonisation?

Embalming does not maintain the body in anything like a perfect state of preservation (take a look at an Egyptian mummy!) but merely keeps its exterior appearance more or less intact. Incorruptible bodies of saints are much better preserved than that. The doctor who examined the liver of St. Bernadette (the first organ to become corrupt) more than 50 years after her death stated that it was in the state of a liver of someone who had died only half an hour previously. It would be easy for a doctor who examined the body of the Archbishop to tell the difference between incorruption and the state of preservation maintained by embalming.

The status of 'brain death' and the infallibility of Canonisations form the subject matter of this month's questions. Next month we will look at the peculiar order of the Seven Sacraments, unless other questions probe more pressing...

Q. When is a 'brain-dead' patient really dead?

When a person has had an accident or a stroke, and the brain is pronounced dead although the person is still physically alive on a machine, has the soul left the body? Suppose such a person is kept alive for years on a machine, although brain dead, is his soul still in his body, i.e. could such a person be baptized after months on such a machine?

A. The soul is the principle of life in the body, hence as long as the body is still living, the soul is still present in it. A person who has been 'brain-dead' for years can still be validly baptized, presuming he had shown good will when conscious. As a consequence of all this, a patient in brain death must be treated like any other living patient and given at least normal care—food, drink and elementary medical attention. Medical attention that poses an onerous financial burden on the patient's family, or is of doubtful help is not obligatory.

Q. Are Canonisations infallible?

I read in "The Catholic" that Canonisations do not fall under the Pope's infallibility. I was shocked to learn that there is a Cause now for Pope John XXIII to be canonised a Saint. If this goes through, is it possible that he might not, in fact, be a Saint, i.e. in Heaven? If Canonisations are NOT infallible, then is it possible that some of those Saints canonised over the years might not be saints after all, i.e. not be in Heaven?

A. Canonisations are infallible: "...if the Pope so decides, the solemn ceremony of Canonisation is performed, during which the Holy Father, making use of his supreme and infallible authority: solemnly declares that the person is a saint, enrolling him in the canon or catalogue of the saints of God."—*Virtue's Catholic Encyclopedia* (with Imprimatur).

Beatifications...however, by which a "venerable servant of God" is declared a Beati, or a Blessed, by the Pope, do not fall under papal infallibility. In the case of John XXIII the process is underway for his Beatification, not his Canonisation. Personally, I think it highly unlikely that the Latter will ever take place. A Blessed may receive public veneration, but restricted to certain liturgical devotions, and is usually limited to certain places or groups of people, while a decree of canonisation, in contrast, affects all Catholics throughout the Church, thus making it infallible.

The precise moment to stand or kneel at Mass can be the cause for quite a bit of uncertainty and awkwardness. Here are some questions on the subject as well as a question on appropriate sports for

children. Send in any question of your own!

Q. At the beginning of a Low Mass, when is the correct time to kneel?

A. Although there is no hard and fast rule about this, the best time to kneel is at the point when the priest genuflects and mounts up the altar steps to deposit the chalice on the altar.

Q. After the Leonine Prayers, when is it the correct to stand?

A. One stands with the priest right after the Prayers are finished.

Q. During Mass, at the elevation of the Host and Chalice, what is the best way to express our adoration?

A. There are no specific rules here. Bowing one's head making the Sign of the Cross are two good practices which were traditional in the Church: "The adoration of the Eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ during the sacrificial celebration was always customary in the Church. (...) This adoration in the course of time differed ritually. According to the Roman Ordines and the Middle Age writers, up to the twelfth century mainly the bowing (inclination) of the head, or of the body, was prescribed as the sign and expression of adoration (....) [In the fourteenth century] the faithful recite at the Elevation, in most humble deportment, various aspirations, usually making the sign of the Cross and, in token of interior compunction, striking their breast." - Gehr: *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass* p643-4.

Q. At the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, should we look up and adore Our Lord or should our heads bow in respect? Should we make the Sign of the Cross?

A. Again, there are no hard and fast rules here. Making the Sign of the Cross is a custom in some places, but it is not mandatory. Whatever helps in making an act of adoration of the blessed Sacrament is good.

Q. When is the least time to approach the Communion Rail (to receive Holy Communion at Mass): during the Confiteor or after? If one did so too late would you run risk keeping the priest waiting?

A. The best time for the faithful to approach the Communion rail is just after the Domini non sum dignus

In the case of a Sung Mass it is customary for the choir to approach earlier in order for them to sing the Communion.

Q. What kind of sports should Catholic children participate in? Surely for boys, soccer, baseball and tennis, for example, are better than boxing, karate, judo, etc. And I read somewhere that catholic girls should not participate in competitive sport. Is that true?

A. In the more 'martial' sports like boxing, karate, etc., the intention behind them is all-important, as it conditions the way in which they are practised. Boys are naturally more aggressive than girls, and rightly so. Since it is that aggressiveness, well channelled, that will enable them to surmount the obstacles that stand in the way of their future role as breadwinners. A boy who has acquired the endurance, quick and cool thinking under pressure, and toughness against hard knocks, necessary to box well, will find them very useful later on. Girls, it is true, need this kind of training less as they are not, generally-speaking, intended for a gritty professional life, but there is no harm in the milder forms of competitive sport. 'they help form a spirit of co-operation and are fun, after all!

The purpose of the Bible the example of spiritual authors, and the delicate question of who the greatest saint is and why more men than women are canonized form the matter of this month's queries. Feel free to send in delicate questions of your own!

Q. What is the Church's stance on Catholics reading the Bible?

Many church-going Protestants know the Bible extremely well, and most Catholics do not. As we know, these Protestants quote the Bible out of context to try and prove their point of view, but, of course, the Catholic Faith is based on both Tradition and the Bible. I was taught as a youngster that Catholics need not worry too much about reading the Bible because (a) it was a mysterious book which needed Catholic interpretation, and (b) the priests (who have studied the Bible properly in Seminary) explain the various Epistles and Gospels anyway in their Sunday sermons.

Is it important, beneficial, or even essential for Catholics to read the Bible compared to other good Catholic spiritual books? If so, should one bother with the Old Testament (if one has little time) or is it the New Testament which really should concern lay people? If the reading of the Bible is important, which are the Catholic Bibles one should read?

A. The Popes have granted an indulgence to any Catholic who reads the Scriptures devoutly for half an hour. The Bible is God's inspired word, and hence is obviously meant to be read by His faithful. All the saints (at least those who could read) were familiar with it—I have read of one saint who knew it by heart, from cover to cover

The misfortune is that Protestants have made use of the Bible in a way it was never meant to be used, claiming that with no other guide than the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, anyone can open it and work out what he is supposed to believe. A cursory glance through the Scriptures should be enough to show that the Bible was never meant to serve this purpose; not one of its books lays out the Faith in a methodical fashion. Some of the most fundamental Christian truths—for example the Trinity—are not taught in unmistakable and definitive terms. The clear and systematic teaching of the Faith was entrusted to the Church, not the Bible.

It is, however, a very valuable complement to the catechism. The Faith is taught by the Church, but it needs to be "fleshed out" by the Scriptures. For example, one can learn the bare truths about Christ in religious instruction, but one really gets to know Him—and better love and serve Him—through the Gospels. The Bible is not a textbook of theology, but it is the greatest and most profound book of spirituality there is, and should be read by every Catholic.

The New Testament, of course, is more important than the Old, but the Old does complement the New. Some books of the Old Testament—the Psalms for example—are spiritual gold mines. The translations approved by the Church prior to Vatican II are: the Douay-Rheims, the Challoner revision, the Knox Bible, the Westminster Version, the New Confraternity Bible and the Jerusalem Bible.

Q. Are the contents of the *Imitation of Christ* canonised, as such?

Of all Catholic spiritual books, the *Imitation of Christ* has always been recommended as the most beneficial for Catholic reading: If it is true (as I was told) that in all books written by canonised saints, every word is also "canonised" as such, then surely the highly recommended *Imitation of Christ* should have had a canonised saint as its author.

Yet I understand that the author, Thomas A Kempis, will never canonised as it had been discovered years after his death that he had moved positions in his coffin, i.e. he had obviously been buried alive and thus, might have despaired. Under the circumstances, are the contents of the *Imitation of Christ* then "canonised" or not?

A. That poor Thomas A Kempis ought have wavered in his trust in Providence when he woke up alive in his coffin is something conjectured, not proven! But even if it were the case, it does not prevent his book being "canonised" in the sense that it is spiritually of very great benefit. Even the inspired books of the Bible did not necessarily have saints as authors. The authorship of the Canticle of Canticles and Ecclesiasticus is ascribed to King Solomon, who turned to pagan gods at the end of his life. There is an episode in the life of King Saul when, in the act of pursuing David in order to kill him, he was overcome by the spirit of God and prophesied. What he said was not recorded, but it would have entered the domain of "canonisable" literature if it had been. God can use any instrument He pleases to get His message across.

Q. Who is the greatest saint in Heaven?

As Lucifer was the greatest angel in Heaven, I understand that his throne is to be occupied by the greatest saint in Heaven. From the Scriptures, this would appear to be St. John the Baptist. Yet I have read that it is most likely St. Francis of Assisi because of his unsurpassed love of Our Lord. Still others say it must be St. Joseph. What could be the truth, or what does the Society tend to favour?

A. The Society tends to favour none in particular. Who the greatest is amongst the saints is one of those everlasting (and to my mind futile) points of dispute that can never be resolved since the answer has not been revealed to us. St. John the Baptist was "the greatest man born of woman" according to Our Lord, but that does not preclude a greater being born after him. Devotion to St. Joseph is fairly recent in the Church, and it is possible that he has been reserved by Providence for our times without that necessarily making him the greatest of the saints. In Heaven we will know.

Q. Do men occupy the highest places in Heaven?

I read in some spiritual book that there are more women than men in Heaven because women have a greater capacity for suffering than men and are generally more spiritually inclined. It was, therefore, pointed out that men who get to Heaven are much greater saints because it is so difficult for them to get there! What do you think of this theory?

A. Plausible, and quite wrong. Men and women are biologically, emotionally, psychologically and mentally different from each other, have different priorities and different roles. All this, however, is in the natural order of things. In the supernatural order, we are required to serve God and sanctify ourselves *in the circumstances God has placed us*, which gives men and women equal chances of saving their souls. The circumstances do not matter, what matters is the use we make of them for our spiritual benefit. To say otherwise would be to make salvation—an affair of the soul, which is identical in man and woman—depend, at least to an extent, upon biological orientation. That is already halfway towards Calvinism, whereby salvation is predetermined by God, who decides who goes to Heaven and who to Hell.

It is true that more men than women are canonised saints, but that, unlike salvation, depends entirely upon God's good pleasure. Since saints are held up as an example for the faithful, and since God has decided that men must play the role of leadership in the Church, it is *possible* that God willed that more men than women be canonised for the leadership role to be supported by outstanding example.

The origins of Benediction and the status of Catholic prophecy, the Catholic attitude towards astrology and the importance in present times of spiritual reading make up a real potpourri of questions for this month. Feel free to send a few yourself!

Q. What is the origin of Benediction?

Please explain the origin of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. In which century was the present form used?

A. Benediction finds its roots in the Feast of Corpus Christi, the liturgy of which was composed by St. Thomas Aquinas and which was instituted in 1264. Originally, the Blessed Sacrament was not carried in procession (Pope Urban IV does not mention it in his Bull of the Institution), but early in the 14th century there is mention of it, and by the beginning of the 15th century it was customary. Initially, the Sacrament was carried veiled over or enclosed in a sort of rich shrine, but in the latter half of the 14th century there is mention of monstrances, which were then shaped like towers. By the end of the 15th century, the modern form of monstrance was in use.

Keeping the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar after such processions became popular. In Germany the continual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament came into vogue, although this was never

officially permitted. It had also been customary since the 13th century to keep the Blessed Sacrament exposed during the singing of the Divine Office, and in England and France the Blessed Sacrament was sometimes exposed on the altar during evening services in honour of the Blessed Virgin. It was natural to combine the blessing of the processional expositions with the static form of these latter expositions, though the definitive form was fixed only later. The oldest form of Benediction, the Forty Hours' Adoration, was introduced shortly after 1500, and was indulgenced by Pope Paul III in 1539. In 1731 Pope Clement XII issued a code of regulations for the Forty Hours', known as the Clementine Instruction, and upon which the ritual for the modern form of Benediction is based, with the incensing of the Blessed Sacrament at the words *Genitari Gehitoque*, the use of the humeral veil, the giving of the blessing with the monstrance, etc.

Q. Apart from the Apocalypse, are there any Catholic prophecies that one may believe?

There is actually a paperback called "Catholic Prophecy"--is it authentic? I recently saw a documentary called "Armageddon" in which St. Malachy was quoted as having accurately predicted centuries ago the types of Popes still to reign, in a long line. He apparently even prophesied that there would be only two more Popes after this one!

A. It is important, in answering the question, to understand the purpose of God in revealing future events, as He did for example in the Apocalypse. The intention is more to show what really matters in human events rather than to give a detailed chronology of those events. It is easy for us, in the welter of worldly happenings, concerns, issues, etc., to lose sight of the supernatural perspective and no longer see what this earthly drama is really all about: the battle between good and evil over the souls of men.

Prophecies, by giving a glimpse of the future events and their importance from God's point of view, help us to get our priorities right.

Prophecies, however, should not be taken as a history lesson of the future. They are often deliberately couched in obscure and symbolic language; with no attempt to put the events into chronological order. This often means that the events predicted are only clearly understood after they have happened. In the Old Testament, for example, it is possible to gather, together enough prophecies of Christ's life and work to make up a fifth mini-gospel, but that is possible only by hindsight; not even the devil was able to discern just what the mission of Christ was until it had been accomplished.

Hence, whereas there are trustworthy Catholic prophecies, one has to be wary about attempts to interpret them, as there is no guarantee that those interpretations will be correct. In particular, I would advise readers of *Catholic Prophecy*, by Yves Dupont, to take it with more than a grain of salt. He devotes a chapter to the prophecies of Nostradamus, omitting to mention that this seer had been put on the Index where he remained until the Index itself was scrapped after Vatican II. Nostradamus is not a Catholic seer, and his prophecies are highly suspect.

In what concerns St. Malachy, I personally think it possible that his list applies only to notable popes, i.e. that he leaves out popes of short or unremarkable reigns, which may leave us with quite a few popes yet to go.

Q. Is there any truth at all in the basis of astrology?

Catholics are not allowed to believe in or take note of modern astrology, under pain of sin. But could there be any truth in the fact that one's temperament is perhaps influenced even in a small way by the date of one's birth in relation to the universe, albeit that one has free will? Or is astrology total rubbish?

A. Catholics have always been forbidden to take astrology seriously in the sense that the position of the stars and planets was used as a means to attempt to predict the future. In what concerns star signs, there is no evidence that the time of year when one is born will influence the kind of character one will have. To be stereotyped as having a particular personality--Leo, or Cancer or whatever--can induce a kind of fatalism on the one hand, and pride on the other: star sign books sell because they flatter the reader with the out-of-the-ordinary qualities that his star sign possesses. Catholics are advised not to take it seriously.

Q. Is it true that without engaging in regular spiritual reading, it is impossible to save one's soul?

I seem to recall one of the saints saying that spiritual reading on a regular basis was absolutely vital to one's salvation (although, of course, there are people who are illiterate and others who cannot see to read). Most Catholics I have known over the years do almost no spiritual reading at all. If spiritual reading is essential for salvation, why do most of our priests not emphasise this regularly, perhaps in their sermons?

A. This one does! Spiritual reading is not an indispensable means of salvation; it is possible to save one's soul without it, however, in the times in which we live we are in especial need of all the means available to preserve our Faith and persevere in the practice of it, and this makes spiritual reading increasingly necessary.

Thanks to modern technology, we receive far more information—printed, auditory, visual—than in previous times. The vast majority of that information concerns things that have little or nothing to do with the Faith. If one makes no effort to counterbalance this constant worldly input with some spiritual input, one then risks losing sight of the great truths. There is such a thing as bliss in ignorance, but failing that, we at least need to keep the reality of the spiritual world fresh in our minds by spiritual reading. Half an hour, or even just a quarter of an hour each day, can make all the difference between someone who still has a Catholic outlook, and someone for whom the Faith is just a collection of empty formulae. Someone in the latter category can be sure of nothing, least of all of perseverance.

The sin of greed, "health eating" as an obstruction to vocations,
homosexuality as being in-born, SSPX ruling on shorts worn privately and
practising the seven Corporal Works of Mercy under local circumstances

Q. Does the sin of greed encompass more than eating and drinking too much?

Is it true that the sin of greed involves not only eating and drinking too much, but being fussy, i.e. eating only what one likes, e.g. insisting on butter and refusing margarine, turning down certain vegetables, indulging daily in an assortment of expensive condiments which are unnecessary, etc., etc., or is all this only an imperfection, and not part of the sin of greed?

A. To prevent acts necessary for the well-being of our nature—like eating and drinking—from becoming onerous and perhaps neglected, God has attached a certain pleasure to them. In the case of food and drink, one may enjoy the pleasure, but one must keep in mind, at least implicitly, the purpose of eating and drinking, which is the maintenance of health. To eat and drink too much, or too much of what is not good for health, or with too much avidity, is to sin by gluttony. But it is also a sin to eat for pleasure alone. To quote an assertion condemned lay Pope Innocent XI: "To eat and drink to repletion for pleasure alone is not a sin, provided no harm is done to health, for one may lawfully enjoy the acts of natural appetite." One may enjoy one's food and drink, but always with at least a vague consciousness that food and drink are for the well-being of the body, and must be used as such. Hence excessive fussiness over food is wrong since it places undue emphasis on the pleasure food gives. In itself it is venially sinful, unless some serious harm is done in consequence, e.g. spending too much money on food, sinning against charity by one's fussy demands, and so on.

Q. Can earnest "health eating" be an obstruction to vocations?

Is it not right (or at least very unwise) for Catholics to involve their families in the question of "health diets", e.g. not eating, say, white bread/ refined flour products/ white sugar/ fried foods! tinned goods, taking lots of vitamin pills every day, etc., etc.? I heard a priest once say that this is a plan of the devil to obstruct vocations because girls, for example, who were fussy about what they ate and whether it was cooked in, a really healthy way would never last in a convent where the budget and time factor could not encompass special diets.

A. Although reasonable care should be taken over one's health, this should never become an obsession to the point where bodily health becomes an end in life rather than just a means to a life more useful in

God's service. And if it detracts from more important things?such as a vocation?then it can become sinful.

There is, in any case, a lot of futility in the kind of "health diets" many people practise. Fundamentally, it is enough to pay attention to getting a balanced diet of normal food: meat, vegetables, fruit, etc., to not eat too much, and to get enough exercise. All this is catered for in the religious life.

Q. Can one be born with homosexual or bisexual tendencies?

Is it true that many male homosexuals are born with an excess of female hormones, and so cannot help their orientation? Or is it always caused by sin in the first place? If it is not a person's own fault, is it perhaps a cross and what could be God's plan for such abnormal people?

A. A very disputed question! Without being able to give a definitive response, since medical research in this field is not yet conclusive, it would seem, nevertheless, that a homosexual orientation is something that to a certain extent—even a large extent—is biological in origin. Homosexuals do not become homosexuals purely by immoral behaviour, although this can certainly aggravate it, but by a lack (it seems) of male hormones in the first few formative weeks after conception. The cause of this lack can be genetic at least to some degree.

What matters, however, is that the subsequent homosexual tendency is a natural aberration, one way in which our human nature has malfunctioned since the Fall. Hence, simply because it is 'natural' does not mean that it must be accepted as good. There are other aberrations that we can be born with, e.g. an excessively aggressive or ill-tempered nature, laziness, gluttony, etc., all which we have to strive to overcome.

It is possible for a homosexual tendency to be so pronounced as to make marriage with a person of the opposite sex morally impossible. In this case the individual in question has only one option—celibacy. It is a real cross but not an unbearable one if he has sufficient faith and trust in God to persevere in a very difficult but potentially very meritorious path.

Q. What is the SSPX ruling on shorts worn privately, and trousers under skirts?

Is it a sin for Catholic girls or women to wear shorts, even long ones, anywhere except in their own homes (if indeed that)? With regard to the SSPX ruling that females may not wear trousers to church, is it all right during winter for trousers to be worn with a normal length skirt over the top?

A. The problem with shorts or longs is not so much that they are immodest (longs at least need not be) but that they are—still—identified as being a male form of clothing, and hence should not be worn in public where men and women must be clearly seen to be what they are. Equating the male and female appearance is one step towards confusing the male and female roles, God-given and built into human nature.

It is possible, however, that in private it may be practical for certain jobs to wear long pants (although as a priest I have been amazed by what I can do in a cassock). Wearing them is then acceptable, provided it is strictly for a necessary job and does not become habitual.

Q. How can Catholics practise the seven Corporal Works of Mercy under local circumstances?

Please explain in practical terms how Catholics can practise the seven Corporal Works of Mercy in these modern times in Africa? Is it sufficient to try to practise the seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, or will we be judged on having glossed over the Corporal ones?

A. As a reminder (or as news), the seven Corporal Works of mercy are:

- to feed the hungry;
- to give drink to the thirsty;
- to clothe the naked;

- to harbour the harbourless;
- to visit the sick;
- to visit the imprisoned;
- to bury the dead

To difficulty in helping people who have these needs is that they come in two kinds: those who genuinely need help and are grateful for it, and those who take advantage of the generous to the point where they can sometimes even make themselves an intolerable burden to them. At the outset it is not always easy to tell the difference, so what attitude should one adopt towards those who come for help?

In the case of the first three—the hungry, the (nonalcoholic) thirsty and the naked (or insufficiently clothed)—one cannot turn them away with the excuse that they should work for a living. With the African economy in the state it is, there are many who through no fault of their own simply cannot find work. People whom you know to have a genuine need you should help within your means, bearing in mind that your obligations towards your kin must come first.

If you are not certain of the genuineness of the charity case who comes knocking at the door, it is better to give him something small to tide him over until you know him better. Usually not money.

Harbouring the harbourless can also present problems. In concrete, this usually means someone you know who can no longer afford the rent for their own accommodation. If they are near relations they should be taken in, unless there is some clear reason for not doing so, e.g. scandalous behaviour on their part. By the fourth Commandment one has the obligation to do what one can for one's family.

One is not obliged to take in acquaintances or strangers, although, depending on the circumstances, it can be a real act of charity to do so. One case that comes up not infrequently is that of someone who is in trouble (not with the Law) and needs a bed for the night. If you can confirm that his story is genuine then it is an act of charity to take him in. If he tries to outstay his welcome, however, then he can be made to leave.

Visiting the sick, or the elderly in old-age homes is a work of mercy that is very necessary and very much neglected in our times. We live in a busy world, nonetheless it is important to make time for those we know, especially friends and family. It can be an onerous task, but one which God will not fail to reward. The same applies to the imprisoned. Even more than the sick, prisoners feel cut off from their fellow men and have very much need of the charity and consolation that a visitor can bring. It can make all the difference to his/her spiritual and moral wellbeing too.

Burying the dead in practice today means making provision for a decent funeral for oneself and those near to oneself, and not resorting to cremation because it happens to be cheaper. Cremation remains an act of irreverence for the dead and is wrong.

Finally, don't forget the Spiritual Works of Mercy which are more important, and perhaps more neglected:

- to convert the sinner;
- instruct the ignorant;
- to counsel the doubtful;
- to comfort the sorrowful;
- to bear wrongs patiently;
- to forgive injuries;
- to pray for the living and the dead.

Correction

Last month in response to the question regarding the ruling of the Church regarding annual Confession it was stated that there is an obligation to go to Confession at least once a year even if one is conscious only of venial sins. This needs to be corrected.

In fact, the obligation applies only if one is conscious of having committed mortal sin. The principle that a law must be narrowly applied if it carries a grave obligation applies here. Mortal sin must be confessed but there is no obligation to confess venial sins, as these can be removed by other means, e.g. an act of contrition, a prayer, an act of charity, etc. Hence, if one is not aware of having committed any mortal sins one is not held under pain of grave sin to go to Confession.

However, it remains that one has need of the benefits of Confession, at least from time to time, and it is imprudent to forego it for too long. Usually, a Catholic who is serious about practising his/her Faith is advised to go at least every month. In the times we live, we need all the graces we can get and Confession is a powerful source of these. Take advantage of it!

Regaining supernatural merit, the extent of the Sunday obligation and the obligation of annual Confession, as well as the problems posed by modern usury form the subject matter of this month's questions. How about a few questions of your own!

Q. Is all supernatural merit which is lost in a period of mortal sin lost forever?

We are taught that when one is in mortal sin, one cannot gain any supernatural merit for heaven. However, when one has received absolution in Confession for mortal sin, is all that merit lost during the time of mortal sin regained?

A. There is no formal decision of the Church on this question, but it is the common teaching of theologians (*sententia communis*) that the merits due to good works performed in the state of grace which have been rendered null by grievous sins, revive. The Church Fathers are almost unanimous on this point: "He that has laboured for the faith of Christ and has subsequently fallen into sin, of him it is said that he has suffered the foregoing in vain, so long as he sins; but he will not lose it, if he returns to the former faith and the old zeal." ? St. Jerome.

St. Thomas Aquinas raises the question: if someone rises from mortal sin to a state of grace or charity less than what he had before, will all, or only part, of his former merits revive? He answers: "He who, through Penance, arises to a lesser charity, will receive the essential reward according to the degree of charity in which he is found. Yet he will have greater joy for the works he had done in his former charity, than for those which he did in his subsequent charity: and this joy belongs to the accidental reward." - *Summa Theologiae*, III, Q. 89, Art. 5 ad 3. By "essential reward" he means the joy of God Himself in the Beatific Vision; "accidental reward" refers to the others joys of Heaven.

Q. What is the definitive ruling on replacing Sunday Mass with prayer?

If one is away, say, on holiday (over a Sunday or Sundays) at a place where there is no traditional Mass, is one obliged under pain of mortal sin to replace one's normal Mass attendance with prayers? If so, would a rosary suffice, or does the time one is obliged to spend in prayer have to equate to the time one normally spends at Mass, i.e. 45 minutes - the equivalent of 3 rosaries, for example?

A. To the Six Commandments of the Church is added the grave obligation, under pain of mortal sin, of keeping them. However, it is a principle of law that the application of a specific law must always be

done narrowly when there is a question of a grave penalty. The commandment to sanctify the Sunday - as far as a grave obligation is concerned - applies only to the attendance of Mass and the abstinence from servile work. If one cannot, for a good reason, attend Mass on that day then one is not, under pain of mortal sin, held to anything further.

However, in as far as one can, one is held, under pain of venial sin, to sanctify the Sunday by some prayers or devotions. It remains the Lord's day. To fulfil this obligation satisfactorily, the faithful are advised to spend the time of a Mass without Communion, i.e. half an hour, in prayer, be it by reading through the Missal, or by praying the rosary with some additional prayers (eg a spiritual Communion) to make up the time.

Q. What is the definitive ruling on the obligation of annual Confession?

With regard to the Precept of the Church that one should receive Confession and Communion at least once a year, a Jesuit priest once explained, that the Confession obligation only applies if one is in mortal sin, because one was not obliged to go to Confession for only venial sin, and if was possible to go for a year without committing mortal sin. Is this true?

A. Afraid not. The Commandment of the Church regarding annual Confession is absolute, not conditional. Confession is not there just to remove mortal sins. It is also the occasion for the removal of venial sins (which, if allowed to build up, can paralyse the work of grace in the soul and make it ripe for mortal sin), for the reception of some very important graces that strengthen one against sin, as well as an occasion for very necessary advice and encouragement in one's spiritual life by the priest. All this one has absolute need of, at least from time to time, which is why the Church has made the obligation of annual Confession a grave one.

Q. Is it a sin for a Catholic to seek strenuously after high interest earnings to enhance one's income? With regard to the sin of usury, is it wrong for Catholics to endeavour earnestly to invest their savings at the highest possible interest rates, and also to dabble in the stocks and shares market to make as much money as possible, bearing in mind that, from the Scriptures, man should really earn his bread by the sweat of his brow?

A. A tricky question. Hilaire Belloc in his essay *On Usury*, makes a distinction between the productive loan, which is morally justifiable, and the unproductive loan, which is not.

A productive loan is one in which the money borrowed is used to found some enterprise that will produce wealth. The interest required on the loan comes out of the profits of the enterprise. An unproductive loan is one used for something that does not produce any wealth itself. For such a loan one cannot in conscience demand interest, just repayment. Belloc gives an example of such a loan: "Now let us suppose that [a] man comes to you and says: "I know the case of a man in middle age who has been suddenly stricken with a terrible ailment. Medical aid costing £ 1,000 will save his life, but he will never be able to do any more work. He has an annuity of £100 a year to keep him alive after the operation and subsequent treatment. Will you lend the £1,000? It will be paid back to you on his death, for his life has been insured in a lump payment for the amount .of £1,000." You answer: "I will lend £1,000 to save his life, but I shall require of him half his annuity, that is £50 a year, for every year he may live henceforward, and he must scrape along as best he can on the remaining £50 of his annuity:" That answer would make you feel a cad if you have any susceptibilities left..." Unproductive loans requiring interest repayments generally put a heavy and even intolerable financial burden on the borrower, and hence have always been condemned by the Church.

In our world however, it is generally impossible to tell whether loans are productive or unproductive. To quote Belloc: "...in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand the distinction is impossible. A man is at pains to save. He must use his savings under a system where interest without examination is normal and all the infinite details of a world-wide system of production, distribution, and exchange have so long been based on the acceptance of Usury—as well as on the much larger calculation of legitimate profit—that the two can no more be divided in practice to-day than can the mixed colours of a dyer's vat."

In principle, then, it is permitted to invest one's money or use it on the Stock Market, provided one does so prudently and without avarice, if for no other reason than to keep up the value of one's money against inflation.

The mysteries of the rosary have their mysterious aspects, as the following questions show. The knowledge of the devil as regards the true nature of Christ has been a source of puzzlement for many besides the person who posed the question here about him.

Q. What were Our Lady's thoughts at the Annunciation?

Why did Our Lady ask the angel at the Annunciation: How can that be for I know not man? Was it because she was unaware of the prophecies that the Mother of the Saviour would not need to "know man" but would remain a virgin, or was it because she was testing the apparition to know if it came from God?

A. In Pars III, Q. 30, Art. 4 of his Summa, St. Thomas Aquinas gives the answer: "Ambrose says explicitly on Luke I, 34, that the Blessed Virgin did not doubt the angel's words. For he says: *Mary's answer is more temperate than the words of the priest [Zachary]. She says: How shall this be? He replies: Whereby shall I know this? He denies that he knows this [the conception of John the Baptist]. She does not doubt fulfilment when she asks how it shall be done.*

Augustine, however, seems to assert that she doubted. For he says: *To Mary, in doubt about the conception, the angel declares the possibility thereof.* But such doubt is one of wonder rather than of unbelief. And so the angel adduces a proof [that her cousin is with child], not as a cure for unbelief, but in order to remove her astonishment."

From this answer it is clear that:

- a) Our Lady knew the angel was a genuine messenger of God, and
- b) she did not doubt his words. Her question was one of marvelling astonishment, accompanied with a perfectly legitimate desire of knowing *how* exactly she was to become the mother of the Messiah, since she had made a vow of perpetual virginity.

Q. When did the three Kings actually reach the Holy Family?

How long did the Holy Family live in the stable at Bethlehem, because the three Kings apparently arrived months (perhaps a year) after Christmas? Did they then visit Baby Jesus when the Holy Family had already returned to Nazareth?

A. From Herod's instruction to his soldiers to kill every child under two years of age, it is clear that Our Lord was at least a year old or thereabouts when the three Kings visited him. It makes sense that St. Joseph would have found some more permanent accommodation and employment in Bethlehem, with the intention of staying there indefinitely, since he knew of the prophecy that stated that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. There is no indication that the three Kings ever returned to Palestine after their first visit.

Q. Please explain God's reasons in the Fifth Joyful Mystery.

At the finding of the child Jesus in the Temple, He said: "Did you not know that I had to be about my Father's business?" What in this "business" was so vitally important to necessitate such concern and sorrow in respect of Our Lady that:

- the "business" took only three days and never needed to be repeated, and
- it could not be done with the knowledge of Our Lady and St. Joseph.

I understand the Fathers of the Church say that Jesus was preparing His Mother for being without Him for three days from Good Friday to Easter Sunday. Is three days such a long time? Our Lady did surely know that Jesus would rise from the dead!

A. In what I have read on this subject, there were two reasons for Our Lord remaining in Jerusalem as He did.

Firstly, He gave the religious authorities of the Jews the occasion to understand the true nature of the mission of the Messiah. Through a misreading of the Old Testament, the Jews expected a political redeemer, rather on the lines of Judas Maccabee, who would free the Jews from their subjection to the Romans and make Israel a powerful, independent nation. Jesus joined the instruction class habitually given in Temple colonnades, where the Old Testament was explained and the students could ask questions. Christ, a young boy with no scholarly background, must have created a great stir by posing questions that showed a profound knowledge of the Scriptures and which, by citing the relevant passages, pointed out the true redemptive mission of the Messiah. Something like this would stick in the minds of those attending and would not be forgotten by them when Christ began His public preaching twenty years later. In other words, the Jews would not have been able to claim invincible ignorance as an excuse for their misunderstanding of Christ's mission.

By not telling Our Lady and St. Joseph what He was doing Christ put their Faith to the test. It is something that sooner or later God does with every rational creature, to ask acceptance of something that does not make sense. The test of the angels involved an act of obedience over something that they could not understand. The test of Adam and Eve was similar: God put a fruit tree (meant for eating) in a garden full of fruit trees (all available for eating), and then told them not to eat of it. It is because they refused to accept what they could not understand that they fell. The Finding in the Temple was a similar test for Mary and Joseph, and a much more meritorious test since it involved something not only incomprehensible for them, but also painful. Their joy in this Mystery came from their passing the test and being given a great increase in God's grace. If we can trust God in the same way in His dealings with us, we can count on having the same joy they had.

Q. Did the devil know that Jesus was the promised Messiah?

In the 54th day Novena, it says that the devil showed Jesus in the Agony of the Garden all the souls who would go to Hell. Is this correct? If so, did the devil then know that Jesus was the Messiah? If so, at what point did he find out?

A. There is no definitive statement by the Church as to what extent the devil knew just who Christ was. However, from the Scriptures one can make some surmises.

Firstly, the devil did not know that Christ was, in the strict sense, the Son of God. If he had, he would not have bothered trying to tempt Him in the desert (why try to make God sin?).

Secondly, the devil had a perfect knowledge of the Old Testament, shown by his quoting it to Christ, and he knew the passages relating to the redemption: "by his strokes we are healed", "he has carried the sins of us all", etc. However, there is no reason to believe he had a perfect knowledge of just what the redemption entailed, for example that it would open heaven to the souls of the just.

My personal impression is that he hesitated between preventing the redemptive work of the Messiah which involved the Messiah's death on the one hand, and removing Christ from the scene by death before he performed any more cures and exorcisms and converted any more people, on the other. According to some writers, the penny finally dropped for him at the last moment, at which point he tried to use Pilate's wife to stop Pilate condemning Jesus to death, but by then it was too late. The hatred the devil had incited in the Jews was too strong and carried the day, and the redemption was achieved.

The efficacy of non-catholic sacraments, the do's and don'ts of the Billings method and the problems with annulments is the subject-matter of this month's questions. Don't hesitate to send in a few of your own that have worried you!

Q. Do the valid sacraments of other Churches confer grace?

Do the people attending the Greek Orthodox and one or two other churches who have valid sacraments receive the sacramental effects and grace from those sacraments if they are in the state of grace and in culpable ignorance of the schism they are patronising?

A. Certainly. The efficacy of a sacrament depends on the rite of the sacrament being validly and fittingly performed on the one hand, and upon the dispositions of the person receiving the sacrament being appropriate, on the other. In the Greek Orthodox Church the sacraments are valid and fitting—by the latter I mean that the prayers and ceremonies that clothe the sacraments are reverential and prayerful, and give honour and glory to God. A Greek Orthodox layman will, normally-speaking, have received enough catechetical formation to benefit spiritually from the sacraments.

However, the Greek Orthodox Church is in schism, and schism, being an objective evil, brings harm upon those involved in it, even if they are in good faith. Comparing Greek Orthodoxy with Catholicism, one can see two defects in the former.

Firstly, the Greek Orthodox faith is less developed than the Catholic Faith, since it holds only to the teaching of the first seven Ecumenical Councils. Later Catholic Councils brought in developments and provisions which were an enrichment to the Faith; these Greek Orthodoxy lack, which in practice makes for a poorer Faith—and hence poorer disposition for the sacraments—amongst Greek Orthodox members.

Secondly, the Greek Orthodox faith contains an admixture of error, and error retards spiritual development. These errors concern the nature of Church government with a denial of papal primacy, the status of Our Lady (the definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are not accepted by them), and others which one need not go into here. Although none of these errors bear directly on the sacraments, their cumulative effect is the weaken their efficacy in the recipient.

Q. What is the absolute ruling on the Billings method?

In marriage, a couple is permitted to practise complete abstinence by mutual agreement, as opposed to the Natural Family Planning method (the Billings method) for a very grave reason (such as serious health problems or dire poverty) which then has to be authorised by a priest. However, SSPX priests differ in their rulings, and cause confusion amongst Catholics of even the same Parish.

Bishop Fellay said if one could not educate one's children, that was a good reason for practising the Billings method

Being able to have only about 6 Caesarians means that a woman who cannot space them out puts herself in serious risk of making a seventh mistake if she has the six too quickly, because she might have about ten years of fertility still in front of her. Yet it is apparently a sin to practise the Billings method for more than two years even with permission. Is this with or without a grave reason?

A. The absolute ruling on the Billings method permits its use in four specific situations: first, if there is a real danger to the mother-to-be's life or the life of her child should she conceive; secondly, if there is a moral certitude that any child she conceives will be gravely handicapped; thirdly, if here and now the parents cannot provide for the minimum necessary requirements of another child; and fourthly, if there is a psychological imbalance or inadequacy in the couple making them unfit to be parents. It is for the priest to judge whether one of these situations applies to a specific couple.

In the case of child spacing, there is not an absolute ruling. It is permissible depending on the case, i.e. on whether there is a real need for it or not. Again, the final decision as to whether there is a real need depends upon the priest who may say yes or no.

Q. Is the Billings method allowed to be used for any reason whatsoever when a couple first get married?

Is a couple, under any circumstances, permitted to practise the Billings method as soon as they get married (for a couple of years)?

A. No. The primary purpose of marriage is the procreation and rearing of children. The secondary purpose, which is founded on the primary and derives much of its strength from it, is the mutual love and support of the spouses. To enter into marriage with the intention of frustrating the primary purpose (without being obliged to out of necessity), even if only for a time, is to denature marriage.

Q. Is pregnancy at the time of marriage a valid reason for annulment?

Does the Society consider a girl getting married because she is pregnant to be a reason for annulment later on if she asks for it? The Conciliar Church says that a girl in this state could be frightened of her parents, fearful of shame, and emotionally pressured into marriage.

A. Such a girl may feel pressured into making an unfortunate marriage, but that still would not invalidate it. A marriage made under the impetus of fear would be invalid only if the fear were strong enough to completely override free will, i.e. if the girl was coerced into acting against her will out of fear, say, of her life. However, if such a girl marries, under moral pressure and with misgivings, but still of her own free will, then the marriage is valid and cannot be annulled.

One of the great difficulties of the Conciliar Church is the undeniable fact that many annulments are granted on insufficient grounds and cannot be accepted by the Society. This can and does create a real problem for Catholics whose previous marriages were "annulled" and have remarried, and who come to Tradition. The problem, however, is not of our making.

Q. Does the pre-decision to use the Billings method to cut down births invalidate a marriage?

Does the intention before marriage by both partners of having only a few children by using the Billings method invalidate that marriage?

A. No, but such a decision, taken without a sufficient grave reason and without the Church's consent, would be seriously sinful. If both partners decided before marriage to have no children at all, then their marriage would be invalid, since to reject any of the ends and necessary conditions of marriage (e.g. that marriage lasts as long as both spouses are alive) renders null and void the marriage contract. To limit without rejecting outright the first end of marriage, namely having children, does not nullify the contract, is still wrong.

Q. Was Mother Teresa's campaign on natural family planning wrong?

To help the poor in India, Mother Teresa was advocating and teaching the Billings method. Was that wrong?

A. I do not know enough about the details' of Mother Teresa's work in India to be able to comment on her advocacy of the Billings method. However the question is important in that many Pro Life groups, Catholic and otherwise, promote the Billings method in acceptance of the modern idea that the average couple should have one or two, or at the most three, children. What should one think of this idea?

As a Catholic, one is bound to reject it, since it is, built on fallacious arguments. Let's look at them.

The first argument is population control. This argument is based on the assumption that material miseries like hunger, disease, inadequate housing, etc., are caused by there being too many people. A glance at a demographic world map, however, shows that this is not the case. The regions in the world of highest population density are in some cases the richest, e.g. western Europe. China, a Communist country with all the economic inefficiency that that entails, is still able to feed its 1100 000 000 people. Countries where starvation is widespread can be sparsely populated, like Ethiopia. The material ills of the world are caused by corrupt and brutal governments, economic inefficiency and civil strife, not by large populations.

Closer to home, the second argument in favour of small families is that with salaries and expenses being what they are, one cannot afford to raise many children. This argument is not born out in practice. In all the large families I know (6 children or more) everyone has enough food to eat, clothes to wear, toys to play with, a roof and a bed and an adequate (yes! adequate!) education. People are influenced by this argument one the one hand because they consider to be necessities what are ready superfluities, and on the other because they have learned not to trust Divine Providence, but rather the

current economic structure, which caters for a two-child family with both parents working. A large family may have to be less complacent and more resourceful than a small one, nevertheless it will not starve.

The advantages of having a large family, especially today, are inestimable, but need a separate article to adequately describe. Perhaps some mother or father out there could send me something?...

Here is the first in a series of articles answering questions posed by faithful on topics that give pause for thought. Send in your own questions on any aspect of the Faith that causes difficulty. You might be surprised, by the answer.

Q. Why aren't good Catholics in the modern Church now in Tradition?

The modern Catholic Church is no longer Catholic. Can people in the modern Church save their souls? In any case, how then can Our Lord and Our Lady leave fervent Catholics with devotion to Jesus and Mary within the modern Church and not steer them to Tradition? There even some good bishops, good priests and sisters still in this situation. Why? Look how Bishop Lazo was fooled all those years! That was surely not his fault.

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A very good question! The best way to answer it is to compare the situation of good Catholics in the modern Church with that of good Protestants in Protestant churches. Protestants can save their souls - the Church has never said otherwise - but with greater difficulty than Catholics. Those who have grown up in the modern Church are by and large in the same position as contemporary Protestants; their salvation is possible but not as easy as it would have been forty years ago.

The question arises concerning those Catholics who grew up in the preconciliar Church, were fervent in their Faith, and now find its supports removed in the post-Vatican II Church. What will become of them? In answering the question it is important first to make clear the role of Tradition. Tradition is not a universal umbrella under which any and every Catholic disillusioned by the crisis in the Church will, guided by God, find refuge. Rather, it is a beacon, a group within the Church that serves as reminder that the Faith has not changed and can never change. By God's grace it will be the platform from which a genuine reform of the Church will take place, rather like Cluny in the 10th century, but for the moment it is fated, as Cluny was, to be a small minority.

Those Catholics who do not, for various reasons, find their way to Tradition, are in a very difficult position, but not one in which they are obliged to abandon or dilute their Faith. If they are sincere in their desire to serve Our Lord, then sooner or later the light will dawn: what is going on around them is simply not right. Then road then consists of hanging on to their Faith, finding like-minded Catholics from whom they can draw encouragement, and by God's grace seeing clearly enough through all the dangerous confusion around them to persevere in their Catholicism. With that they will save their souls.

Q. Will God make special allowances for souls living in these very evil times?

So few people around us (apart from a few practising Catholics) seem to have a Faith of any description, and very little hope of salvation, humanly-speaking. I know God gives everyone enough grace to save their souls, but surely God will make allowances in the modern world for their situation, as most are not exposed at all to God. It is not the fault of children who are brought up godless.

A. The minimum requirement for salvation is that one believe that there is a God, that He, is the Rewarder of good and the Punisher of evil, that one be in a state of grace at death, and that one make a

supernatural act of Faith, Hope and Charity during one's life. One can enter into a state of grace through sacramental Baptism or through Baptism of Desire. The latter occurs when someone has sufficient good dispositions for God to raise his natural faith in God to a supernatural Faith by the infusion of grace accompanied by the removal of Original sin.

With all this in mind what is the case with the average modern pagan? It is important to keep in mind that most people still have some belief in a God, however vague or confused it might be. This belief, by itself, is not enough for their salvation, or even for the Baptism of Desire, presuming they are not baptised, but God can use circumstances to raise this belief to a supernatural level.

Typical circumstances would be contact with a Christian acquaintance, some bereavement or failure in life, or even just a direct illumination from God. The person is free to accept or reject the offer of grace, and many do reject it, going no further in their deist faith or even losing that altogether. Their damnation is then likely, but it is through their fault.

Others who accept God's grace will, if they persevere in their good will, shake off their indifference and find a group or church - possibly even the Catholic Church - where their newly found supernatural Faith will receive enough nourishment to endure.

A final word about Baptism of Desire. Sacramental Baptism is the ordinary means instituted by divine Providence for, the removal of Original sin and the infusion of grace. Consequently, Baptism of Desire is an extraordinary means, which by implication means it is an exception and not a rule. Hence, one can infer that it is the minority and not the majority of the unbaptised who receive it.

Q. Do the majority of people go to Hell?

In the Scriptures, it says that the way (to Heaven) is narrow and few there are that find it. That surely means that the majority of souls (even if it be at least 51% because "few" cannot be the majority) go to Hell.

A. The exact text of the Scriptural quote is as follows: "Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to perdition is wide and spacious, and many take it; but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Mt 7:13&14)

A golden rule in interpreting Holy Scripture is always to take the first and most obvious interpretation of a passage unless there is a clear reason for discounting it, in which case look for another interpretation, perhaps a symbolic one. The six days of creation in Genesis is a good example. It is clear that Moses was not speaking of six literal, 24-hour days, since he speaks of evening and morning on the first three days whereas the sun was created only on the fourth day. The six days could be six periods of time of unknown length or simply a literary device that shows how God created everything systematically and with order.

How does one apply this rule to the passage in Matthew?

It must be asked: does one have any good reason for discounting the obvious meaning of the passage, i.e. that most people go to Hell? The answer is no. Nothing in the rest of Holy Scripture or in the definitive teaching of the Church affirms or implies that most people save their souls. There is one argument that is brought forward for Christ to succeed in His work of Redemption it would be necessary for most of humanity to be saved, otherwise the devil, in taking most souls to Hell with him, could claim the victory. However, nothing says that Christ's victory depends on the salvation of the majority. The devil thought he had conquered Adam and Eve and their descendants because they could not go to Heaven, whatever they did. Since the Redemption, it is possible for men of good-will to do so; they are not bound by the devil, they can break free of his influence if they wish. If most do not wish to it is not a defeat for Christ: they have only themselves to blame; not the inefficacy of the graces offered by Our Lord

How big the majority is today is unknown to us, but common sense would dictate that it is larger now than in the past. The moral of the tale: be wholehearted in the practice of the Faith!

Q. Is it possible that the many seemingly "pious" non-catholics will save their souls?

Outside the Catholic Church, there is no salvation. Bishop Williamson once said that if "pious"

Protestants, far example, are saved, it is by the Catholicism still left in their religion that they are saved, as opposed to the errors. There seem to be many such "pious" Protestants out there who clearly believe that they are on the right path to Heaven. Is it possible that most of them will be saved in their "religions"? One could extend that to many Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc. It is not their fault they were not born into and raised in a practising Catholic family.

A. Let us start by defining "pious". Piety in the traditional and religious sense of the word is a virtue whereby one is zealous and faithful in one's duties towards God. It can be a natural or supernatural virtue, in the latter case assisted by corresponding Gift of the Holy Ghost. If it is just a natural virtue, founded on a natural belief in God, then by itself it will not be enough for salvation. The Pharisees were pious. If the piety in question is supernatural (which I think is what Bishop Williamson means) then there is great hope for that person's salvation, since it carries with it the seeds of perseverance. It is possible for anyone in a state of grace to possess this piety, be he Protestant, Jew, Muslim or Hindu, although his degree of piety is certainly going to be affected by the religion he is in. The more a religion enables someone to render effective homage to God the greater that person's piety will be and the greater his hope of salvation. "Effective homage" includes a spirit of adoration and reverence for God, some knowledge of and respect for His Commandments, some degree of prayer and an avoidance or at least diminution of evil practices, such as various forms of religious fanaticism, that undermine true piety.

Q. How can some of the Protestant evangelisation seemingly bear such good fruit?

On a television programme called the "600 Club", hundreds of people have "given witness of how they have turned away from their evil lives by this Protestant evangelisation. The fruits are obviously there after several years. How is this possible How can error bear such fruit?

A. Error does not bear fruit, but truncated Truth can. Even in the Church there are Catholics who have extremely inaccurate ideas about certain aspects of the Faith and yet lead good and holy lives. Their goodness and holiness comes from the truths they hold, not from the errors they have mixed in with them. This can be applied *mutatis mutandis* to Protestants. Working through the truths they hold, God is able to build up in these Protestants a Faith that is sufficient to enable them to reform their lives, helped by His grace. The only part their errors play in this process is to retard and limit it. If they were Catholics they could have gone much further: there are thousands of saints in Catholicism, but none in the Protestant religions.

Keep in mind that God does not work through the Protestant religions themselves, as He does through Catholicism, but only through the truths that are still preserved in them, and through the one or two sacraments they may have retained. One can compare a Protestant religion to a ship foundering in a storm. The ship itself is of no use to anyone, but there are pieces of the ship that can float, and by clinging to them one can save oneself from drowning. The Catholic ship, although badly battered, is not foundering just yet!