

Reflections

Volume 71

International
Catholic Family Newsletter
July 2021

What is the Promise in Genesis 3:15?

Mystical City of God & The Happy Death of Saint Joseph

My Journey From Buddhist to Catholic

You Can Save A Dying Soul from Damnation

Blessing to All:

By: Richard Pickard

Nowhere in Christian history, do we find a more appropriate response from God to Satan, than in Genesis 3:15. **"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; They will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel.**

The word "enmity" means intense hostility. This is a hostility expressly established



by God, which has a unique importance, due to Our Blessed Mothers Immaculate Holiness. Mary was given the privilege of being conceived without sin in order to be the irreconcilable enemy of the serpent and his offspring. This fits perfectly into the true meaning of Genesis 3:15. She has no sin in her and is therefore Immaculate before God. She is the New Eve, and her offspring is Jesus, the New Adam. From her very conception to her birth and until her Assumption, she was never under Satan's power.

One of the early Church Fathers picked up on Mary being the **New Eve**. Around the year 155 A.D. St. Justin Martyr wrote that the Holy Scriptures teaches us

concerning Christ: "that He became Man by the Virgin so that the course which was taken by disobedience in the beginning through the agency of the serpent, might be also the **very course by which it would be put down**. For Eve, a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent, and bore disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and she would conceive a Son. And her son would be called the Son of God. And she replied: 'Be it done unto me according to thy word.'"

St. Justin Martyr therefore parallels the Virgin Mary with the Virgin Eve. **Just as the word of the serpent bore fruit through the Virgin Eve, so the 'Word' of God came into the world through the Virgin Mary.** Eve believed the word of an evil angel and death was brought into the world, while **Mary believed the word of a good angel and Life Himself was brought into the world.**



Our Protestant friends grant that Mary was given a special purpose to be the mother of Jesus. but somehow miss the true meaning of Genesis 3:15. God was **very direct** in his words to the Serpent. Jesus would be born through a sinless woman, **Full of Grace**, as pronounced by the angel Gabriel. **Never under Satan's power, not even from conception.** This was assured by God's own words in Genesis 3:15. Jesus would come to the world through the sinless womb of Mary. A perfect New Eve, without sin and obedient to God, from the instant of her conception. Therefore, the Church acknowledges this in her title as the Immaculate Conception.

The following excerpts are from **James Akin** concerning the Perpetual Virginity of Mary. James Akin (born in 1965, Corpus Christi, Texas) is an American Catholic apologist and podcast host. He is director of apologetics and evangelism in the Catholic Answers and is a Catholic convert. He has appeared on EWTN TV many times. A Presbyterian who became a Catholic apologist

You will also see in the article below, the answer to the question about the brothers and sisters of Jesus.

Perpetual Virginity of Mary from EWTN

by James Akin

¹Mary's role as the second Eve also explains the doctrine of her perpetual virginity. The first Adam and the first Eve did not remain virgins but populated the earth, yet the second Adam and the second Eve remained virgins all their lives, in order to consecrate themselves to serving God full-time. Thus, Jesus never married or had children. He did this so he could consecrate himself to serving God full-time.



In the same way, Mary was consecrated to the full-time service of God. The documents of the early Church, such as the ***Protoevangelium of James*** record that she was one of the women who, like the ***prophetess Anna*** (Luke 2:36-37), lived celibate lives in the Temple in Jerusalem, serving as full-time prayer warriors—the Old

Testament equivalent of contemplative nuns.

¹ <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/key-to-understanding-mary-1067>

This document was written no later than A.D. 120, less than sixty years after the conclusion of Mary's earthly life and when memories of that life were still vivid in the minds of many.

According to world-renowned patristics scholar, Johannes Quasten: "The principal aim of the whole writing is to prove the perpetual and inviolate virginity of Mary before, in, and after the birth of Christ" (Patrology, 1:120-1).

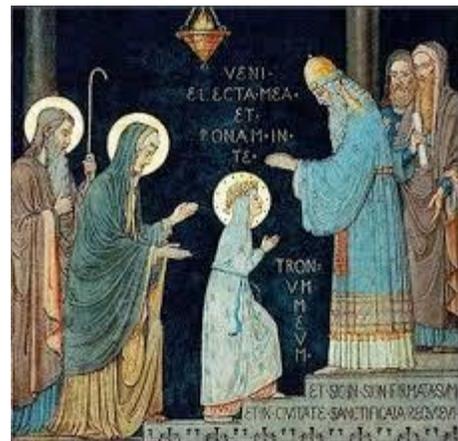
"This document records that Mary's birth was prophesied [and], her mother, St. Anne, vowed that she would devote the child to the service of the Lord, like Samuel had been by his mother (1 Sam. 1:11). Mary would thus serve the Lord at the Temple, as women had for centuries (1 Sam. 2:22), and as Anna the prophetess did at the time of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:36-37). A life of continual, devoted service to the Lord at the Temple meant that Mary was not able to live the ordinary life of a child-rearing mother, and so she was vowed to perpetual virginity. It records:

"And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by [St. Anne], saying, 'Anne! Anne! The Lord has heard your prayer, and you shall conceive and shall bring forth, and your **seed** shall be spoken of in all the world.' And Anne said, 'As the Lord my God lives, if I beget either male or female, I will bring it as a gift to the Lord my God, and it shall minister to him in the holy things all the days of its life.' . . . And [from the time she was three] Mary was in the temple of the Lord as if she were a dove that dwelt there" (Protoevangelium of James 4, 7 [A.D. 120]).

But because of considerations of ceremonial cleanliness, it was eventually necessary for Mary, a consecrated 'virgin of the Lord' to have a guardian or protector who would respect her vow of virginity. Thus, according to the document

Joseph, an elderly widower who already had children, was chosen (this also explains why Joseph was apparently dead by the time of Jesus' adult ministry, since he does not appear during it in the gospels and since Mary is entrusted to John at the crucifixion rather than to her husband Joseph). The document records:

"And when she was twelve years old there was held a council of priests, saying, 'Behold, Mary has reached the age of twelve years in the temple of the Lord. What then shall we do with her, lest perchance she defile the sanctuary of the Lord?' And they said



to the high priest, 'You stand by the altar of the Lord; go in and pray concerning her, and whatever the Lord shall manifest to you, that also will we do.' . . . [A]nd he prayed concerning her, and behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him saying, 'Zechariah! Zechariah! Go out and assemble the widowers of the people and let



them bring each his rod, and to whomsoever the Lord shall show a sign, his wife shall she be. . . And Joseph [was chosen] . . . And the priest said to Joseph, 'You have been chosen by lot to take into your keeping the Virgin of the Lord.' But Joseph refused, saying, 'I have children, and I am an old man, and she is a young girl'" (ibid. 8-9).

Joseph was required to respect Mary's vow of virginity, and just how seriously he was required to respect it is indicated by the fact that when she was discovered to be with child, he got in trouble with the Temple authorities, who thought he had defiled a virgin of the Lord.

"And Annas the scribe came to him [Joseph] . . . and saw that Mary was with child. And he ran away to the priest and said to him, 'Joseph, whom you did vouch for, has committed a grievous crime.' And the priest said, 'How so?' And he said, 'He has defiled the virgin whom he received out of the temple of the Lord and has married her by stealth'" (ibid. 15).

Mary was also accused of having forsaken the Lord by breaking her vow: "And the priest said, 'Mary, why have you done this? And why have you brought your soul low and forgotten the Lord your God?' . . . And she wept bitterly saying, 'As the Lord my God lives, I am pure before him, and know not man'" (ibid.)

The understanding of this document that the brethren of the Lord were Jesus' stepbrothers (children of Joseph) rather than half-brothers (children of Mary) was the most common one until the time of Jerome, who popularized the idea that they might have been cousins instead, since in Jewish idiom cousins were also referred to as "brethren."

Most Protestants are unaware of all this, but the Protestant Reformers themselves—Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli—honored the perpetual virginity of Mary and recognized it as the teaching of the Bible, as have more modern Protestants, such as the biblical and patristics scholar J. B. Lightfoot.

And so again we see the doctrine of Mary's role as the second Eve explaining her perpetual virginity. Just as the first Adam and Eve devoted themselves to procreation for the multiplication of mankind, the second Adam and Eve devoted themselves to virginity for the sake of ministry, so that God's spiritual blessings might be brought to mankind." AMEN!

THE HAPPY DEATH OF SAINT JOSEPH

Author: Ven. Mary of Agreda

From "The Mystical City of God" by Venerable Mary of Agreda

Imprimatur: Edwin V. Byrne, D.D., Archbishop of Santa Fe, February 9, 1949.

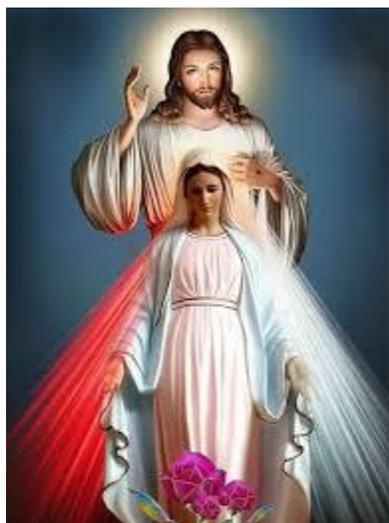


The "*Mystical City of God*" by Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda (1602-1665) is a monumental four-volume history of the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as revealed by Our Lady to a 17th-century Spanish nun. The work has been acclaimed by Popes, cardinals and theologians and has inspired readers for over 300 years. Included in this work is the following account of the holy death of St. Joseph, given to this holy nun by Our Lady herself. The account is very inspiring and

shows why the Church has acclaimed St. Joseph as the patron of a happy death. The English translation of this work has the imprimatur of the former Archbishop of Santa Fe.

Already eight years Saint Joseph had been exercised by his infirmities and sufferings, and his noble soul had been purified more and more each day in the crucible of affliction and of divine love. As the time passed, his bodily strength gradually diminished and he approached the unavoidable end, in which the stipend of death is paid by all of us children of Adam (Heb. 9, 27). In like manner also increased the care and solicitude of his heavenly Spouse, our Queen, assisting and serving him with unbroken punctuality. Perceiving, in her exalted wisdom, that the day and hour for his departure from this cumbrous earth was very near, the loving Lady betook Herself to her blessed Son and said to Him: "Lord God Most High, Son of the eternal Father and Savior of the world, by thy divine light I see the hour approaching which thou hast decreed for the death of thy servant Joseph. I

beseech Thee, by thy ancient mercies and by thy infinite bounty, to assist him in that hour by thy almighty power. Let his death be as precious in the eyes, as the uprightness of his life was pleasing to Thee, so that he may depart in peace and in the certain hope of the eternal reward to be given to him on the day in which Thou shalt open the gates of heaven for all the faithful. Be mindful, my Son, of the humility and love of thy servant; of his exceeding great merits and virtues; of the fidelity and solicitude by which this just man has supported Thee and me, thy humble handmaid, in the sweat of his brow."



Our Savior answered: "My Mother, thy request is pleasing to me, and the merits of Joseph are acceptable in my eyes. I will now assist him and will assign him a place among the princes of my people (Ps. 115, 15), so high that he will be the admiration of the angels and will cause them and all men to break forth in highest praise. With none of the human born shall I do as with thy spouse." The great Lady gave thanks to her sweetest Son for this promise; and, for nine days and nights before the death of Saint Joseph he uninterruptedly enjoyed the company and attendance of Mary or her divine Son. By command of the Lord the holy angels, three times on each of the nine days, furnished celestial music, mixing their hymns of praise with the benedictions of the sick man. Moreover, their humble but most precious dwelling was filled with the sweetest fragrance and odors so wonderful that they comforted not only Saint Joseph but invigorated all the numerous persons who happened to come near the house.

One day before he died, being wholly inflamed with divine love on account of these blessings, he was wrapped in an ecstasy which lasted twenty-four hours. The Lord himself supplied strength for this miraculous intercourse. In this ecstasy he saw clearly the divine Essence, and, manifested therein, all that he had believed by faith: the incomprehensible Divinity, the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption, the militant Church with all its Sacraments and mysteries. The blessed Trinity commissioned and assigned him as the messenger of our Savior to the holy Patriarchs and Prophets of limbo; and commanded him to prepare them for their issuing forth from this bosom of Abraham to eternal rest and happiness. All this most holy Mary saw reflected in the soul of her divine Son together with all

the other mysteries, just as they had been made known to her beloved spouse, and She offered her sincerest thanks for all this to her Lord.

When Saint Joseph issued from this ecstasy his face shone with wonderful splendor and his soul was entirely transformed by his vision of the essence of God. He asked his blessed Spouse to give him her benediction; but She requested her divine Son to bless him in her stead, which He did. Then the great Queen of humility, falling on her knees, besought Saint Joseph to bless her, as being her husband and head.



Not without divine impulse the man of God fulfilled this request for the consolation of his most prudent Spouse. She kissed the hand with which he blessed Her and asked him to salute the just ones of limbo in her name. The most humble Joseph, sealing his life with an act of self-abasement, asked pardon of his heavenly Spouse for all his deficiencies in her service and love and begged her to grant him her assistance and intercession in this hour of his passing away. The holy man also rendered humblest thanks to her Son for all the blessings of his life and especially for those received during this sickness. The last words which Saint Joseph spoke to his Spouse were: "Blessed art Thou among all women and elect of all the creatures. Let angels and men praise Thee; let all the generations know, praise and exalt thy dignity; and may in Thee be known, adored and exalted the name of the Most High, through all the coming ages; may He be eternally praised for having created Thee so pleasing in his eyes and in the sight of all the blessed spirits. I hope to enjoy thy sight in the heavenly fatherland."



Then this man of God, turning toward Christ, our Lord, in profoundest reverence, wished to kneel before Him. But the sweetest Jesus, coming near, received him in his arms, where, reclining his head upon them, Joseph said: "My highest Lord and God, Son of the eternal Father, Creator and Redeemer of the World, give thy blessing to thy servant and the works of thy hand; pardon, O most merciful King, the faults which I have committed in thy service and intercourse.

I extol and magnify Thee and render eternal and heartfelt thanks to Thee for having, in thy ineffable condescension, chosen me to be the spouse of thy true Mother; let thy greatness and glory be my thanksgiving for all eternity."



The Redeemer of the world gave him his benediction, saying: "My father, rest in peace and in the grace of my eternal Father and mine; and to the Prophets and Saints, who await thee in limbo, bring the joyful news of the approach of their redemption." At these words of Jesus, and reclining in his arms, the most fortunate Saint Joseph expired and the Lord himself closed his eyes. At the same time the multitude of the angels, who attended upon their King and Queen, intoned hymns of praise in loud and harmonious voices. By command of the Lord, they carried his most holy soul to the gathering-place of the Patriarchs and Prophets, where it was immediately recognized by all as clothed in the splendors of incomparable grace, as the putative father and intimate friend of the Redeemer, worthy of highest veneration. Conformably to the will and mandate of the Lord, his arrival spread unutterable joy in this countless gathering of the saints by the announcement of their speedy rescue.

It is necessary to mention that the long sickness and sufferings which preceded the death of Saint Joseph was not the sole cause and occasion of his passing away; for with all his infirmities he could have extended the term of his life, if to them he had not joined the fire of the intense love within his bosom. In order that his death might be more the triumph of his love than of the effects of original sin, the Lord suspended the special and miraculous assistance by which his natural forces were enabled to withstand the violence of his love during his lifetime. As soon as this divine assistance was withdrawn, nature was overcome by his love and the bonds and chains, by which this most holy soul was detained in its mortal body, were at once dissolved and the separation of the soul from the body in which death consists, took place. Love was then the real cause of the death of Saint Joseph, as I have said above. This was at the same time the greatest and most glorious of all his infirmities, for in it, death is but a sleep of the body and the beginning of real life.

The most fortunate of men, Saint Joseph reached an age of sixty years and a few days. For at the age of thirty-three he espoused the blessed Virgin and he lived with Her a little longer than twenty-seven years as her husband. When Saint Joseph died, She had completed the half of her forty-second year; for She was espoused to Saint Joseph at the age of fourteen (as stated in the first part, book second, chapter twenty-second). The twenty-seven years of her married life completed her forty-first year, to which must be added the time from the eighth of September until the death of her blessed spouse. The Queen of heaven still remained in the same disposition of natural perfection as in her thirty-third year; for, as already stated in the thirteenth chapter of this book, She showed no signs of decline, or of more advanced age, or of weakness, but always remained in that same most perfect state of womanhood. She felt the natural sorrow due to the death of Saint Joseph: for She loved him as her spouse, as a man preeminent in perfection and holiness, as her protector and benefactor.



I perceive a certain difference in the graces given to this great Patriarch and those vouchsafed to other saints; for many saints were endowed with graces and gifts that are intended not for the increase of their own sanctity, but for the advance of the service of the Most High in other souls; they were, so to say, gifts and graces freely given and not dependent upon the holiness of the receiver. But in our blessed Patriarch all the divine favors were productive of personal virtue and perfection; for the mysterious purpose, toward which they tended and helped along, was closely connected with the holiness of his own life. The more angelic and holy he grew to be, so much the more worthy was he to be the spouse of most holy Mary, the depository and treasure-house of heavenly sacraments. He was to be a miracle of holiness, as he really was.



From Buddhist to Catholic

**By: Paul Williams, OP
Professor of Indian and Tibetan Philosophy
University of Bristol, UK**

I am a Catholic, a convert. Indeed, I am now a lay member of the Dominican Order. But I was a Buddhist for over twenty years, and what I want to concentrate on here is Buddhism and rebirth. In talking about Buddhism and rebirth, I shall really be telling you a little about my own conversion story, a conversion story that is of course one of change, wonderful welcome change, and I shall argue it was a change from very real hope-lessness to hope.

My journey to Buddhism

I wasn't always a Buddhist. As far as I recall our immediate family was not particularly religious, although on our father's side there were practicing Anglicans and relatives had been Anglican vicars. On our mother's side I do not remember any especial interest in religion. I heard once that our maternal grandmother had said she would be a Buddhist if she were anything at all. I discovered fairly recently that in fact our maternal grandfather's family was traditionally Catholic, although he had abandoned the faith. I am not sure now why, but for some reason when I was really quite young, I joined the local Anglican church choir. I loved singing church music. Unfortunately, my voice broke rather early and, since I was thought to be too young to be a bass, as far as I recall I spent my entire time as Head Chorister miming. This perhaps gave me an early taste of the bluff necessary for an academic career.

At the appropriate age early in the 1960s I was confirmed in the Anglican Church by the Bishop of Dover. I became a server at Holy Communion. As the 60s wore on I became involved in the lifestyle and all the normal things that teenage boys get up to. As public examinations loomed larger, I left the choir, ceased to be a server, and lost contact with the Church. I grew long hair and dressed strangely.

I went to the University of Sussex to read Philosophy. By that time, in common with many in the late 1960s, I had developed an interest in meditation and things Indian. I channeled this interest particularly into Indian philosophy. I subsequently took my doctorate in Buddhist philosophy at the University of Oxford.

By about 1973-ish I was already beginning to think of myself as a Buddhist. I finally 'Took Refuge', formally becoming a Buddhist, in the Dalai Lama's tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. When I found myself teaching at the University of Bristol in the early 1980s, I set up with others a group in Bristol that also now has its own Buddhist Centre. I became involved in occasional teaching within the context of practicing Buddhism at Buddhist Centres. As well as my academic work in Buddhist philosophy I wrote and spoke as a Tibetan Buddhist on television, the radio, and at conferences. I took part in public and private dialogue with Christians, including Hans Küng and Raimundo Pannikar.



I was interested in philosophy, but also, I was interested in **meditation** and the exotic East. Many of us found Buddhism attractive originally because among other things it seemed so much more *rational* than the alternatives (but also much, much more exotic). In particular Buddhism seemed much more sensible (and exotic) than a theistic religion like Christianity. Buddhists do not believe in God. Well, (we

thought) there seemed no reason to believe in God, and the existence of evil presented for us a positive argument against the existence of God. Those of us who were brought up as Christians were fed up with defending the existence of God in an unsympathetic world against its detractors. When we stood back and

tried to be as objective as possible God looked less and less *likely*. In Buddhism one has an immensely sophisticated (and exotic) system of morality, spirituality and philosophy which does not require God at all. At a stroke, difficulties involved in accepting the existence of God were bypassed. Instead, in becoming a Buddhist, (we thought) one could be a meditator with Buddhists, the ones who really *know* about meditation.

Rebirth

However, over many, many years as a Buddhist I became more and more uneasy about my Buddhism. Absolutely central to my growing unease with Buddhist affiliation were worries about rebirth and associated worries about the doctrine of *karma*. Buddhists believe in rebirth, that is, as it is broadly understood, reincarnation. And, Buddhists claim, there is no chronological first beginning to the series of past lives. We have all of us been reborn an infinite number of times. No God is needed to start the series off – for there simply was no first beginning. Things have been around (somewhere) for all eternity.



Now, belief in rebirth (and indeed karma – I'll come that) seems to be quite common nowadays even among those who would not claim to be Buddhists or Hindus. One even finds Christians who say they believe in rebirth. But rebirth was well-known in ancient Greece and Rome, and it has never been part of Christian orthodoxy. And there are good reasons for this. Rebirth is incompatible with certain absolutely central Christian doctrines, including the inestimable value of each and every individual person, and the justice of God. If rebirth is true, realistically we really have no hope. It is a hope-less doctrine. As a Buddhist, it dawned on me that I had no hope. Let me explain.

Hands up who wants to be reborn as a cockroach?

I want you to imagine that you are told you are to be painlessly executed at dawn. You are terrified. You are not terrified because it will hurt, since it will be painless. So why are you terrified? Perhaps your fear lies in it being the end of all your projects for the future – the story is over. Or maybe you do not want to leave

forever your friends and family. Or perhaps you fear just a great empty void, a nothingness. What is it, exactly, that frightens you?

Now I want you to imagine that your executioner gently puts his arm round you and tells you not to worry. It really isn't so bad. Although you are to be executed, it has been discovered without a shadow of a doubt that the Buddhists and Hindus were right after all. You are to be instantly reborn. In fact, you are to be reborn as a cockroach in South America.

Can you imagine being a cockroach? Can you imagine living that cockroachy life? Surely you cannot.

Rebirth means the end of Me...

What is my point here? My point is this: What is so terrifying about my being executed at dawn and reborn as a cockroach is that it is simply, quite straightforwardly, the end of *me*. I cannot imagine being reborn as a cockroach because there is nothing to imagine. I quite simply would not be there at all. If rebirth is true, neither I nor any of my loved ones survive death. With rebirth, for me – the actual person I am – the story really is over. There may be another being living its life in some sort of causal connection with the life that was me (influenced by my karma), but for me there is no more. That is it – end of it. There is no more to be said about me.

I began to see that if Buddhism were correct, then unless I attained enlightenment (nirvana) or something like it in this life, where the whole cycle of rebirth would finally come to a complete end, I would have no hope.



Clearly, I was not going to attain enlightenment in this life. All Buddhists would be inclined to accept that as true concerning just about everyone. Enlightenment is a supreme and extremely rare achievement for spiritual heroes, not the likes of us – certainly not the likes of me. So, I (and all my friends and family)

have in themselves no hope. Not only that. Actually, from a Buddhist perspective in the scale of infinite time the significance of each of us as such, as the person we

are, converges on nothing. For each of us lives our life and perishes. Each one of us – the person we are - is lost forever. Buddhism for me was hope-less. But was I absolutely sure Buddhism was true? As St Paul knew so well, Christianity at least offers *hope*.

Karma



Let me say something now about the theory that usually goes along with that of rebirth, the theory of **Karma**. This is the theory, broadly, that our virtuous and vicious actions have respectively pleasant and painful results for us. Thus, if I stub and break my little toe, that painful experience is as such the result of a vicious deed done by me in the past.

If what I have said so far is correct then the principles of karma when applied over lifetimes must mean that some persons escape altogether at least some of the results of their vicious deeds, and others receive unpleasant experiences that result from vicious deeds they did not do.

For consider the following: Supposing a horrible dictator gives orders on his deathbed for painfully executing a thousand people. That dictator dies, so that person – the dictator – never receives the nasty results due to him through karma. There no doubt will be another being, 'his rebirth' who will receive those horrible results. But, first, what is that to our dictator? And second, clearly that other being (the rebirth) will be horribly hurt as a result of something he, she, or it, did not do.



The idea that a baby, for example, suffers from a painful illness because of something another person did, even if the baby is in some sense a rebirth of that person, can scarcely be portrayed as satisfactory or just.

It could certainly not be, as some have claimed, the most acceptable answer to the problem of evil. The baby simply is not that person who did the wicked deed, no more than a baby cockroach is me after my execution.

Buddhists do not hold that God exists, but if there were a God certainly the theory of karma would be quite incompatible with His justice. So, too, would be the throwing away of persons on the rubbish heap of history, that is entailed by rebirth.

The Christian has Hope.



Christianity is the religion of the infinite value of the person. The person we are, or can become, is not accidental to us, and is not unimportant. **Each person is an individual creation of God, as such infinitely loved and valued by God.** On this is based the whole of Christian morality, from the value of the family to the altruism and self-denial of the saints.



Because we are infinitely valuable to God, **Jesus died to save each one of us.** He did not die to save chains of rebirths, or reincarnating Selves. He died to save us.

And we are the persons we are, as embodied individuals with our stories, families and friends. Contrary to the myth

of the Christian hatred of the physical and the body, actually Christianity is also the religion of embodiment and the essential goodness of all physical creation.

It follows from all this that rebirth would be diametrically opposed to the whole direction of Christianity. If there is survival of death - and the faith of the Christian, originating in Christ's own resurrection, is based on that - it cannot be in terms of rebirth.

Rebirth and the infinite value of the person are incompatible. The Christian view of death is one of hope, indeed of triumph, for (apart from anything else) it sees death not as an empty void, a nothingness. The story is not over for the persons we are, and we can hope that we do not part forever from our friends and family. But much, much more, our faith is that in God our deaths will be meaningful for

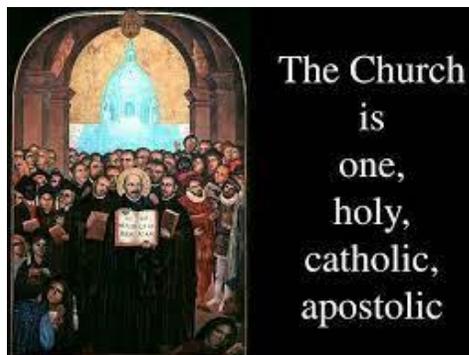
each and every one of us – each individual person – in ways that exceed our imaginations but that even now excite our hope and draw-on our lives.

Conclusion

Well – it was thoughts like this that gradually led me away from Buddhism. Buddhism was for me hope-less. Christians have hope. I so wanted to be able to be a Christian. I returned, to look again at the things that I had rejected in my earlier Christian faith.

Through grace I came again to God. I convinced myself that it was rational to believe in God, as rational – indeed I now think more rational – than to believe with the Buddhists that there is no God. Coming to believe in God, I could no longer be a Buddhist. I had to be a theist. I looked carefully at the evidence and was astonished to find that the literal resurrection of Our Lord from the dead after

His crucifixion was the most rational explanation of what must have happened. That, I felt, made Christianity the most rational option out of theistic religions. And, as a Christian, I argued that priority has to be given to the Roman Catholic Church. I needed a good reason not to be received into the Catholic Church. I now live in gratitude and hope. And I have never, ever, for one moment regretted my decision.



You Can Save A Dying Soul from Damnation

Praying for the Sick and Dying

²The Divine Mercy Chaplet for the Sick and Dying



The Divine Mercy Chaplet originated from a vision that St. Faustina had of an Angel, the executor of divine wrath, on the evening of September 13, 1935. She wrote: "He was clothed in a dazzling robe, his face gloriously bright, a cloud beneath his feet. From the cloud, bolts of thunder and flashes of lightning were springing into his hands; and from his hand they were going

forth, and only then were they striking the earth. When I saw this sign of divine wrath which was about to strike the earth, and in particular a certain place, which for good reasons I cannot name, I began to implore the angel to hold off for a few moments, and the world would do penance.

But my plea was a mere nothing in the face of the divine anger. Just then I saw the Most Holy Trinity. The greatness of Its majesty pierced me deeply, and I did not dare to repeat my entreaties. At that very moment I felt in my soul the power of Jesus' grace, which dwells in my soul. When I became conscious of this grace, I was instantly snatched up before the Throne of God. Oh, how great is our Lord and God and how incomprehensible His holiness! I will make no attempt to describe this greatness, because before long we shall all see Him as He is. I found myself pleading with God for the world with words heard interiorly.

As I was praying in this manner, I saw the Angel's helplessness: he could not carry out the just punishment which was rightly due for sins. Never before had I prayed with such inner power as I did then. The words with which I entreated God are these: Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your

² <https://www.thedivinemercy.org/eadm/praying>

dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world; for the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us.



The next morning, when I entered chapel, I heard these words interiorly: "**Every time you enter the chapel, immediately recite the prayer which I taught you yesterday.**" When I had said the prayer, in my soul I heard these words: **'This prayer will serve to appease My wrath.**

You will recite it for nine days, on the beads of the rosary, in the following manner: First of all, you will say one OUR FATHER and HAIL MARY and the I BELIEVE IN GOD. Then on the OUR FATHER beads you will say the following words: Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world. On the HAIL MARY beads you will say the following words: For the sake of His sorrowful Passion have mercy on us and on the whole world. In conclusion, three times you will recite these words: Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world" (*Diary, 474-476*).

Praying for the Sick and Dying. Help Them With Your Prayers



An ancient Christian writer wrote that, **"of all divine things, the most divine is to share with God in the saving of souls."** GOD AND SOULS was the motto of St. Faustina.

Our Lord asked her to pray and offer the Chaplet for sinners and the dying, saying:

"Pray as much as you can for the dying. By your entreaties [that is, insistent prayers] obtain for them trust in My mercy, because they have most need of trust, and have it the least. Be assured that the grace of eternal salvation for certain souls in their final moment depends on your prayer. You know the whole abyss of My mercy, so draw upon it for yourself and especially for poor sinners. Sooner would heaven and earth turn into nothingness than would My mercy not embrace a trusting soul" (*Diary*, 1777).



Saint Faustina was often given the grace to know when a certain dying person desired or needed prayer; she would be alerted to the moment, by her Guardian Angel or by Our Lord Himself. At those times she would pray until she no longer felt the need to pray, or a sense of peace came upon her, or she learned that the person had died, or heard the soul say, "Thank You!"

She wrote: "Oh, dying souls are in such great need of prayer! O Jesus, inspire souls to pray often for the dying" (*Diary*, 1015).

One of the best means of assisting the dying is the one that Jesus revealed to St. Faustina and insisted that she use often — even continuously:



The Divine Mercy Chaplet. Jesus said: **"My daughter, encourage souls to say the chaplet which I have given to you. It pleases Me to grant everything they ask of Me by saying the chaplet. ... Write that when they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the merciful Savior"** (*Diary*, 1541).

Earlier, Our Lord said to her, **"At the hour of their death, I defend as My own glory every soul that will say this chaplet; or when others say it for a dying person, the indulgence is the same"** (*Diary*, 811).



What if the person prays from a distance? Saint Faustina had a love for the sick and dying and prayed for them with great fervor. The following experiences recorded in her *Diary* make it clear that one does not have to be at the bedside physically. She wrote, "It sometimes happens that the dying person is in the second or third building away, yet for the spirit, space does not exist.

It sometimes happens that I know about a death occurring several hundred kilometers away. This has happened several times with regard to my family and relatives and also sisters in religion, and even souls whom I have not known during their lifetime" (*Diary*, 835).

"My daughter, help Me to save a certain dying sinner. Say the chaplet that I have taught you for him." When I began to say the chaplet, I saw the man dying in the midst of terrible torment and struggle. His Guardian Angel was defending him, but he was, as it were, powerless against the enormity of the soul's misery. A multitude of devils was waiting for the soul. But while I was saying the chaplet, I saw Jesus just as He is depicted in the image. The rays which issued from Jesus' Heart enveloped the sick man, and the powers of darkness fled in panic. The sick man peacefully breathed his last. When I came to myself, I understood how very important the chaplet was for the dying. It appeases the anger of God" (*Diary*, 1565).



These words are particularly relevant for members of the ministry and all Eucharistic adorers. In chapels throughout the world, they are reciting or praying the Chaplet for the sick and dying and are part of an International Registry established by the ministry. Moreover, on the occasion of the Great Jubilee of the year 2000, the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, by a personally signed parchment, imparted a *Special Apostolic Blessing* **"to all the faithful, who during Adoration of Our Most Merciful Savior in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar will be praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet for the sick and for those throughout the world who will be dying in that hour.**

Here is how to say **The Divine Mercy Chaplet**

Recite on ordinary rosary beads (*Diary*, 476).

The Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

The Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Then on the "Our Father" beads (before each decade):

Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

On the "Hail Mary" beads (of each decade):

For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

Concluding Doxology (after five decades):

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world (Three times).

Optional Conclusion

Eternal God, in whom mercy is endless and the treasury of compassion inexhaustible, look kindly upon us and increase Your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might not despair nor become despondent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to Your holy will, which is Love and Mercy itself (*Diary*, 950).

**Hear my voice when I call, LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me. Psalms 27:7**

**The International Catholic Family Newsletter
Is Published Monthly**

Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to be Christian examples in their work, home and with others, for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.

<https://www.catholicfamilynewsletter.com>

**I am watching over you. Pray my children,
Pray, Pray, Pray My Rosary For The Salvation of Sinners**

