

Are We Ready to Embrace God!

As we approach the end of the Church's liturgical year the question is put before us both collectively and personally. What is the meaning of my life? What is the purpose of my life?

We see terrible things happening in our world especially what we witnessed in France this weekend. What the future may bring - you and I do not know.

Pope Francis said this weekend "I don't understand, but these things are difficult to understand, how human beings can do this. That is why I am shaken, pained and I am praying."

It is important for us to remember that God did not create evil - Evil is simply the absence of God in our world.

In the Gospel Jesus tells us to stand firm. "Heaven and earth will pass away," He says - but His words will not pass away. Trust Jesus. Trust His words. He wants to give you the gift of confidence.

You and I are living between the first and second coming of Jesus as we profess in one of our Eucharistic Acclamations:

"Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again."

In the Creed which we pray every Sunday we proclaim:

"He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end."

For me, the best explanation of this judgment comes from the revelations of St. Catherine of Genoa.

Catherine believed that "God reaches out to the rational soul of man with Pure Love..."

We can all enter into paradise, God stands there with open arms, pulling and tugging at us to choose Him. Choose Him each day in the way we live our daily lives.

Catherine says we can be purified here on earth or in Purgatory. In the first moments after death, we see God in a bright vision and we become aware of our imperfections.

It is like a bright light touches our soul, and all of our past is reflected back as a mirror, so we clearly see our sins, and choose the proper place we belong.

For example: If you or I were wearing very dirty clothes, we would not want to embrace somebody wearing immaculately clean clothes without first being cleaned.

It is something like that for souls who have seen God and realize they are not yet fit for God's embrace.

It is not God who sends us to Purgatory, we choose Purgatory so that we can be purified. The word "Purgatory" means "cleansing."

The souls not in Purgatory or Heaven suffer because they have denied God. And seeing God, know it will never see Him again. Aware of perfection, that soul suffers for the loss of perfection that will last forever.

In Purgatory the souls are madly in love with God because they have already seen God, and it is this burning desire and longing for God that cleanses.

St. Catherine continues this thought by saying that day-by-day happiness increases in the soul as God flows into them and the imperfections of human love are burned away by His divine love.

Story: A woman made an appointment with a silversmith to watch the refining of silver.

As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest as to burn away all the impurities.

She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined.

The man answered that, yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?" He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy - when I see my image in it."

So that is the question for us today.

When we stand before God in His light, will His Love be reflected back to Him, or will we see that we are not quite ready to embrace Him?

With her life St Catherine teaches us that the more we love God and enter into intimacy with Him in prayer, the more He makes Himself known to us, setting our hearts on fire with His love.

Remember, our Prayers and God's Love in our daily lives is very powerful in changing the world.

Praise Be Jesus Christ, Now and Forever, Amen!