

3/1/15-3/13/15

- **“In what ways can we use Christ as therapy w/ mental issues like anxiety & depression?”**
  - The more we learn to trust in God, the less we worry; the less we worry, the less we suffer. It is no surprise that religious people describe themselves as happier, live longer, and recover from illness more frequently than those who are not religious.  
<http://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/articles.cfm?id=176>
  - “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day.” (Mt. 6:34)
  - The writings of St. Francis de Sales are superb for these troubles. Try Consoling Thoughts on Trials of an Interior Life.
  - Also see Searching for and Maintaining Peace by Jacques Philippe.
  - Serenity Prayer (**Reinhold Niebuhr**) God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the Wisdom to distinguish the one from the other. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, accepting hardship as a pathway to peace, taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it, trusting that You will make all things right, if I surrender to Your will, so that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.
  - As for depression, I can speak from experience. The way that I coped with it was through keeping a journal and writing poetry. Now I realize that those are not necessarily means that everyone could benefit from, but I assure you that praying in those ways definitely helped me through my time of depression. Adoration for me is the most effective way to cope because you can speak directly to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and tell Him your troubles.
  
- **“If God never changes (& presumably never changes His mind), why pray? And why would Abraham, Moses, etc. need to beg him not to destroy [insert group here]. Is God just using the Socratic Method on us?”**
  - St. Thomas Aquinas explains that what God has eternally decided is to do or not do some things based on whether or not we pray for them. So, when God responds to our prayers, He is not changing His mind but simply doing what He’s always intended, in which process our prayers play a critical role.
  - Whatever the actual reason is, Bible repeatedly tells us to pray. [E.g., 1 Thes 5:17, among many others.] Clearly God does want us to and asks us to pray. The probable primary reason God wants us to pray is that God wants have a relationship with us and prayer is the primary way of creating and keeping a relationship with God. If you don’t pray to God, you don’t really have much of a relationship with God.
    - Just because God knows what you want, that doesn’t mean you have a much of relationship with God.
    - In addition, the experience of many people is that God usually does not (seem to) work through our lives unless we have some sort of relationship with him, and the stronger of a relationship we have with him, the more God works through our lives. You may have noticed this in your life yourself: that when you are more centered around God, life seems to come together better.
  - Some possible other reasons that God may want us to pray is that it encourages us to place our trust in him, grants us graces, calms us and various other physical benefits.
  - As God does not change, in kinds of those situations with Moses and Abraham- if they actually happened anywhere near to how they happened in the Bible- it wasn’t that his mind was changed, rather likely it was what would happen if steps were not taken to alleviate the reason for it, render it unnecessary. In short he knew all along that in those situations he would not actually carry out what he said but he would have had people failed to respond properly. Alternately, he was simply testing them to teach them to respond properly like he did with Abraham and Isaac.

- **“Are Protestants part of the Mystical Body of Christ, and if so, can they be fully united to it (or are they always slightly separated, much like a Catholic who needs to go to Confession)?”**
  - Pius XII, in *Mystici Corporis Christi*, says that the “true Church of Jesus Christ - which is the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church” is the Mystical Body of Christ. *Unitatis Reintegratio*, Vatican II’s decree on ecumenism, says this about the relation of Protestants to the Church: “But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions made their appearance and quite large communities came to be separated from full communion with the Catholic Church - for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame. The children who are born into these Communities and who grow up believing in Christ cannot be accused of the sin involved in the separation, and the Catholic Church embraces upon them as brothers, with respect and affection. For men who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect. The differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church - whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church - do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion. The ecumenical movement is striving to overcome these obstacles. But even in spite of them it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ's body,(21) and have a right to be called Christian, and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church.(22)”

Looking at these statements, we can say that by virtue of their baptism, Protestants are a part of the Mystical Body, but their union with this Body has been compromised by their differences in belief and practice. As for being fully united to it, like a Catholic in mortal sin can be reunited by receiving Confession, they can be fully united by becoming Catholics. (Sources: *Mystici Corporis Christi*, *Unitatis Reintegratio*)

- **“Is everyone in Heaven Catholic (even if they were, say, atheist or Hindu on earth)? What does it mean ‘to be catholic’?”**
  - The Church is what Christ established to bring salvation to humanity, so it would stand to reason that all of those who have attained that salvation i.e. those in Heaven and those who are in Purgatory (people being purified before entering into Heaven) are in fact members of Christ’s Church. As for people who were not Catholic in name during their time on Earth, if they were following Christ’s Commandments without explicitly knowing of the Church, or in the name of another religion, we would say that those people are living a life in accordance with the Truth that the Church has set forth, and are therefore members of the Church in spirit. Those in Heaven would be fully revealed to God and thereby the Truth, and because the Catholic Church has a special claim to the most complete fullness of the Truth, because Christ promised her the Spirit to guide her, we would say that those in Heaven are living the completeness of the Catholic Truth.
  - In response to the second question, ‘to be catholic’ (catholic with a lowercase ‘c’), means to be universal or applicable to everyone. This is one of the four marks of the Catholic Church (all four being one, holy, catholic and apostolic), and it is meant to describe to whom the Church is open, and that is everyone. Everyone is called to be a part of Christ’s Church, and take part in His mission to spread the salvation that He won to all the ends of the Earth and to future generations.
  - If the second question was asking more along the lines of, what does it mean to be a member of the Catholic Church, then the answer is a little different. To be a member of the Catholic Church means many things, but most simply it is doing ones best to continue the mission of Christ allowing oneself to be guided by the Catholic Church, her teachings, and her members in order to spread the good news.

- **“Why do we believe in the Trinity, if it’s not found in the Bible? (via a friend who’s a Jehovah’s Witness)”**
  - We believe in the Trinity, because, for one, it can indeed be found in the Bible. For example, the Trinity is mentioned in Matthew 28:19. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Also, the parallelism of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is not unique to solely to Matthew’s Gospel, however, but appears elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g., 2 Cor. 13:14, Heb. 9:14), as well as in the writings of the earliest Christians, who clearly understood them in the sense that we do today—that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three divine persons who are one divine being (God). (Source: <http://www.catholic.com/tracts/the-trinity>)<sup>7</sup>
  - Additionally, John’s Gospel in particular is *replete* with Jesus giving profound testimony to His relation with His Father, such that it is entirely impossible to understand Who the Son is without knowing that He came from the Father.
  - Or, see Luke 10:22 - “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.
  
- **“How does Purgatory work in terms of time? Is it possible to know when a dead loved one is ‘out’ of Purgatory & in Heaven? (i.e ‘oh, it’s been a year, so-and-so must have been purified by now, he was a good person’) (via a friend who’s Lutheran)”**
  - Purgatory is limited in time; that is, everything that happens there is of limited duration, so people there leave after a certain time to go to Heaven. Also, being limited in time, it is believed that Purgatory will end at the Last Judgment, since that will be the End of Time. However, while we know that Purgatory is limited in time, we do not know anything about how long a particular person will be there for, except that our prayers for them can help to reduce that time. (Source: Catholic Encyclopedia: Purgatory)
  
- **“If God seeks to draw all people to Himself, why does he grant some people the gift of faith & not others?”**
  - The gift of faith, that is the supernatural gift of God that causes us to become assured in our faith, is not the human, reasonable, fallible faith. Rather it is a divine gift that allows you to [believe firmly] even though you would otherwise doubt or even recant your beliefs. It cannot be given if someone does not even intellectually assent to the tenets of our (Catholic) faith. It is only withdrawn when someone leaves him. Other than possibly being related to your relationship with God, there is no immediately obvious reason (understandable by our limited intelligence) why some should receive this and not others.
  - If what is meant instead is ‘why does God seem to help some people come to believe at all and not others,’ we know this: everyone receives sufficient grace to be saved. That is, no one can say at the end of their life, “I never had a chance.” If someone is lost, it is not because God failed to offer them grace but rather because they, through their own fault, spurned the grace they were offered. When, conversely, someone does accept the grace to be saved, this acceptance is in fact a grace that God has mercifully given. This mystery is well summed up in the enigmatic saying of Jesus: “Many are called; few are chosen.” Matt 22:14 For a more thorough and very enlightening treatment of this complex topic, see St. Augustine *On the Predestination of the Saints* and *On the Perseverance of the Saints*.