

God desires all of us to be with Him!

A visitor that came to **Birmingham** last weekend created quite a stir. Mayor Bell had dinner with him and **security** and **media coverage** were heightened for him.

The visitor was ... **the Dalai Lama**.

He is regarded as **the top person in Buddhism** ...

the **14th Dalai Lama** of **Tibet China** ... and he was here in **the Magic City**.

How did he become **the Dalai Lama**?

Well, when he was **two years old**, and they put objects belonging to the **13th Dalai Lama** in front of him and he repeatedly exclaimed "*It's mine. It's mine.*"

So the people took this to mean that he was **the reincarnation of the 13 previous Dalai Lamas**. And **3 years later**, when he was **5 years old**, they **shaved his head**, **clothed him in a monks robe** and officially installed him as **the 14th Dalai Lama!**

The question that I have for you parents is ... **Did your 2 yr-olds**

ever cry out "*Mine, Mine*" when you put something in front of them?

Somehow I don't see this as being a rare and unique **response!**

Buddhism is not considered so much a **religion** as it is a **way of life**.

Buddhism was started in the **6th Century BC**, when a man named **Siddartha**, the **original Buddha** promoted his view of life as **basically a journey** to escape suffering.

Buddhism neither affirms nor rejects **the existence of God** ... it teaches that man should be able to achieve **Nirvana** (which means the extinction of **all desire, hatred and ignorance**) over a period of several lifetimes.

When the **Dalai Lama** was asked about **the meaning of life**, he said,

*"I believe **the purpose of life** is to be happy. I don't know whether the universe, and its countless **galaxies, stars and planets**, has a deeper meaning or not, but at the very least, it is clear that we humans who live on this earth face the task of making a happy life for ourselves."*

No wonder he has **so many followers** ... who doesn't want to be **happy?**

But as **the spiritual leader** of a **very large group of people** ... is that all you can say with regard to **our purpose** ... to make a happy life **for yourself?**

He went on to say, "*We do not need to become **religious** ... all that is necessary is for each of us to develop **our good human qualities**.*" Kind of sounds like **Joel Osteen** down in **Texas** with all his self-help insights on becoming a better person.

How far they both are from understanding our purpose as **human persons.**

Where's God in all of this?

With **great clarity**, the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** describes our purpose.

Here it is:

*“**The dignity of man** rests above all on the fact that he is called to **communion with God**. This invitation **to converse with God** is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists, it is because **God has created him through love**, and **through love** continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.”*

In other words,

Man is created by God, for God, and God never ceases to draw man to himself!

We hear this in today's **Gospel** when **Jesus** says,

“This is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day.”

Wow, God's desire is for us to be with Him. **He created us to be with him**.

And so, as we learned in 2nd Grade our **purpose** is ...

to come to know and love God in this life ... to be with Him in Eternal Life.

So, it's not about having happiness here ... it's not about avoiding suffering here ...

It's about experiencing the Love of God here ...

and sharing the love of God here ...

and then rejoicing in the love of God forever in Heaven

which will be at the end of our life ... not after countless re-incarnations.

The Catechism describes two Judgments that **each person will experience ...**

the Particular Judgment at the **moment** of their death, and

the Final Judgment at the **end of Time**.

In the Particular Judgment, a **soul** can go one of three ways ...

to **Heaven ... to Hell ... or to Purgatory**.

Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are **perfectly purified** go directly to Heaven, which is **the state of supreme and definitive happiness**.

Those who die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love go directly to Hell, which is **the state of eternal separation, suffering and torment**.

Now **for those** who die in God's grace and friendship **but** are **imperfectly purified** they are indeed assured of their eternal salvation, but after death, they must undergo a purification so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of Heaven.

This **place and process** is called ... **Purgatory**.

Purgatory is **the place** where **souls** go that die in God's grace and friendship **but need more purification to attain the holiness necessary to enter the joy of God**.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI once said, "*I would go so far as to say that if there was no purgatory, then we would have to invent it, for who would dare to say of himself that he was able to stand directly before God.*"

In presenting the teaching on Purgatory in the RCIA class 2 weeks ago, I asked the class,

If all 60 of us in this room were to die right now, which of you would be free of all pride, selfishness, self-love, hardness of heart & sin ... to go right to heaven?

No one raised their hand!

You see, we know that we are less than perfect in many ways ... including our love for God and our love for our Neighbor.

And that has to be brought to perfection in order to be with God in Heaven.

We are less than perfect ... but we were made to be with God who is perfect!

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI says this,

"We don't want to be, to use an image from Scripture, 'a pot that turned out wrong,' that has to be thrown away; we want to be able to be put right."

Well thank goodness for Purgatory ... that is where we are brought to perfection.

Pope Benedict says,

*"**Purgatory** basically means that **God** can put the pieces back together again ... that he can cleanse us in such a way that we are able to be with him and can stand there in the fullness of life. Purgatory strips off from one person what is unbearable ... and from another person the inability to bear certain things, so that in each of them a pure heart is revealed, and we can see that we all belong together in one enormous symphony of being."*

So you see, **if we don't get the work fully completed here ...**

God, in his great mercy, completes our purification in Purgatory.

Purgatory will not exist forever.

When **Jesus** comes in glory at the end of time, he will make **The Final Judgment** and souls will go either to Heaven or Hell.

On that day **all souls** will be reunited with their bodies and they will be separated into just two groups, the **evil** will go away into **eternal punishment** and the **righteous** into **Eternal life**.

When we as **Church** celebrate the **Feast of All Saints** as we did yesterday on **Nov. 1st** our focus is on **Heaven** ... where we celebrate all the souls that have made it safely there ... and we ask for their prayers ... so that we make it too.

When we as **Church** celebrate the **Feast of All Souls** as we do today on **Nov. 2nd**, our focus is on **Purgatory** ... where we pray for all the **souls undergoing purification** ... for their **speedy release** and entry into Heaven.

Since those in Purgatory can't pray for themselves, we assist them with **our prayers!** We pray to alleviate their **suffering** ... and shorten their **duration** of purification.

We should pray every day for the **holy souls in Purgatory** ... **all** of them ... especially the souls who have no one left on earth to pray for them.

You know, it's **our tradition** to pray in a **more formal way** for the **Souls in Purgatory** during the **Month of November**, we call it **the Month of All Souls**.

If you choose, you can submit an Envelope listing the names of **family and friends** to be lifted up in prayer at **Daily Mass** throughout the month of **November**.

People ask, "*How much to put in the envelope?*"

Consider **the typical mass stipend** during the year is **\$10 for one Mass** ...so simply consider what it means to have your loved one prayed for every day for a month. You can drop them in the collection basket any time during the month.

Remember the **Communion of Saints** ... well, we are united with the **souls in Heaven** and the **souls in Purgatory** ... and we help one another.

As we go forward, remember ... we **human beings** were made for God.

Yes, **God** makes human souls for **one reason** ... so that they will live with Him forever. God creates out of **love** with **the purpose** of **each person** living a life of love so that they can return to be with Him, who is **Love** ... forever!

Jesus said **very clearly** in **today's Gospel**,
"I will not reject anyone who comes to me."

Jesus desires **all souls** to be saved.

Jesus reassures **us** of this when **He** says,
"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life and I will raise him on the last day."

So you see, unlike **Buddhists**, **we Catholics** believe **there is a God** ...
a very good and merciful God ... who made us ... and calls us to Himself!

So, our purpose in life is not to be happy ...
that may be **our desire** ... but it's not **our purpose**.

Our purpose is to get to Him in Heaven!

And we don't get there by **countless reincarnations**.
We get there by **taking up our cross daily** and **following God's Divine Son Jesus**.

Let's strive every day to grow toward **perfect love** for **God** and our **Neighbor**.

And **let's** never cease praying for the **dead**.

God's Love is **big enough** to contain the **whole world**. We were **all** made for Him.

So by our prayers, let's aid all the Holy Souls that have gone before us, so that **they** quickly enter into their **Heaven Home** where they will live with God forever.