**Symbolon: The Catholic Faith Explained**

**Part 1: Knowing The Faith**

*Episode 10: The Last Things*

**Part 1**

The Catacombs of St. Callixtus, Rome

The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd carrying the sheep.

* What happens when we die?
* The Romans had various beliefs on the afterlife. They believe that the spirits live underground near their burial sites while others believed the spirits passed onto a shadowy existence.
* It is important to note that that pagans themselves believed that the soul lived on after the body had died.
* Romans called a burial site an “acropolis” meaning city of the dead while Christians gave their burial places a hope filled name. They called them cemeteries which means resting place. The term cemetery reflected the belief in the afterlife.
* For Christians death was not an end but an entry way into eternal life.
* An inscription found on many Roman tomb stones read*: “I was not: I was; I am not; I do not care”*. This inscription sums up the pagan view of death.
* Conversely the Christian view of death was a birth into new life.
* Death as an end vs. Death as a birth into new life.
* Jesus revealed that death is not an end. Jesus said, ***“I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,”***. *(Lk 11:25)*

Curtis Martin

* St. Thomas Aquinas: “Begin with the end in mind.” As we make everyday decisions we need to ask where is this decision going to take me?
* In our hectic and busy life there will be distractions that will take our focus off God as our end. It is important to note that this life is temporary while the next life is permanent. ***This life is in preparation for the next life.***
* The resurrection of Jesus foreshadows our own resurrection.
* When we go before Jesus upon our death, he will judge us as to whether we responded to the grace and mercy we experienced in this life or if we choose to ignore that grace and mercy.
* Judgement after death is called the *“particular judgement”*. If in the particular judgement, we are found to be out of relationship with God and in rebellion to Him we will be separated from Him and cast into Hell.
* Hell is for the people who have spurned and rejected the love and mercy of God. God does not choose to send people to hell but rather people have chosen hell for themselves.
* God gave us *“free-will”* and He acknowledges and respects our decision to reject and spurn His love and mercy.
* There are two groups of people who are in right relations with God when they die.
* There are those who have lived their life in reckless abandon for God giving up the lesser loves or distraction making Jesus the center of their lives.
* For many of us we are in relationship with Jesus, but the relationship is imperfect. We do not love God with a pure heart but have other loves that we pursue.
* For those who are not pure hearted in their love of God there is the need of a purification. Their hearts are ordered towards God and they are united with God, but they are filled with imperfections.
* *Purgatory* – People who die in a state of grace but who are filled with imperfections are healed and purified so that they can be with God forever.
* An example in Scripture is that gold is tested in fire. When gold is being heated in fire is turns to a liquid and the impurities in the gold floats to the surface and is removed.
* In 1st Corinthians Chapter 3 St Paul talks about being saved as through fire. Paul indicates that in the end of our life we will be tested. Our works with be tested.

**Part 2**

“Just as it is appointed that human beings die once, and after this the judgement,” (Heb. 9:27)

* Particular judgement occurs at the moment of death when we will go before Jesus.
* If we are found to be friends of Christ, we are worthy of heaven. If we have rejected Jesus than we are found worthy of hell.
* Hell is the absence of God. Just as a judge finds a person guilty or innocent God finds us worthy of heaven or hell.
* What is heaven? We can not conceive the joys of heaven. We will be like God in heaven in that we will see Him as He is. The Beatific Vision.
* Heaven is perfect love. If we die in a right relationship with God but have a lot of imperfections, we are not ready for the perfect love of heaven.
* If we decide that we want to run a marathon we are not able to run a marathon at that moment and time for our physical bodies are not prepared for a marathon.
* Just as our physical bodies need to be prepared to run a marathon our soul needs to be prepared to enter the perfect love of heaven.
* The saints yielded themselves entirely to God’s grace and held nothing back. Most of us resist God’s grace in that we selfishly hold onto our sins or a disordered attachment.

***“Nothing unclean shall enter it.”*** *(Rev. 21:27)*

* If we have unclean attachments, we need to be purified.

***“The fire will test what sort of work each one has done... Though he himself will be saved, but only as through a fire.”*** *(*1 Cor. 3:13,15)

* Purgatory is the fire of God’s love.
* God wants to forgive our sins, but those sins have consequences.
* The souls who are not ready for the perfect love of heaven are purged of the residue of sin (their attachments and selfishness). It is God’s love that purifies them.
* We can add to those fires of love through our prayers and sacrifices for those who are in purgatory. Prayers for the Dead.
* The prayers of the Church can aid them in this work of purification and hasten their arrival in heaven. We pray for the dead as a participation in God’s love.

***2 Maccabees 12:45 – In Jewish culture there was a practice of praying for the dead. A belief that their prayers could help those who have died.***

*Indulgences* – To offer acts of love (prayers and penances) for those who are being purified in purgatory.

* Indulgences are acts of love and conversion that bring about our purification here and now on Earth so that we won’t have need of purification when we go before Jesus at the particular judgement.
* Indulgences include reading the Bible every day for a set time, reciting a set of prayers, going on pilgrimage to a holy site.

*General Judgement*

* At the end of time there will be a general judgement. In the general judgement all of those who have passed through the particular judgement are gathered to receive God’s summary of the whole of the story.
* We will all see how God has brought all the threads of history together. All our actions, good and ill, will be shown to us and we will see that out of them God has drawn love.

*“At the evening of life, we will be judges by love.”*  St. John of the Cross

* We will see the whole plan and the way in which we fit in it.

Johnette Benkovik

* Why did God make me?
* God made me to know Him, love Him, and to serve Him in this life and to spend all eternity with Him in Heaven.
* What is our ultimate value?
* That we should know God, love God and serve God.
* We come to know God in having a personal relationship with Jesus in prayer and reading the Bible.
* We love God when we live out our ultimate purpose which is to be holy and blameless in life. We image God to the fullest extent that we can.
* We serve God in serving others. Jesus is the King of kings. He was not born in a palace and was not attended to by servants. Jesus was a servant king.