



*Living for the One who waits for us in*


# ETERNITY

Eye has not seen,  
and ear has not heard,  
and it has not  
entered the heart of man,  
**what God has prepared  
for those who love Him.**

*1 Cor 2:9*

# IMPRINT

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# JESUS' HUMAN HEART IS BEATING IN HEAVEN, RIGHT NOW, FOR YOU.

**The heart of God is our ultimate rest.**

One of the first sounds a baby hears as he grows in his mother's womb is the constant beating of her heart. This steady cadence communicates security and love to the child, and even after birth, becomes a source of comfort for a little one in distress. When resting against the heart he knows so well, a baby is reminded that all is right with the world, because he is safe in these protecting, loving arms.

Why would God design us to rest in our mother's heart-beat? Perhaps He wanted to prepare us to understand a deeper reality — that the heart of God is our ultimate rest, our surest peace.

Jesus' human heart is beating in heaven, right now, for you. The Lord set His heart on you before you were conceived in your mother's womb — not because of anything you could do or might one day achieve, but simply for who you would be. He dreamed of you and loved you into being, and from that moment destined you to live with Him forever.

You belong to a Great Love, an Eternal Love. And this Love took on a human heart, so that *your* human heart could abide in *His*.

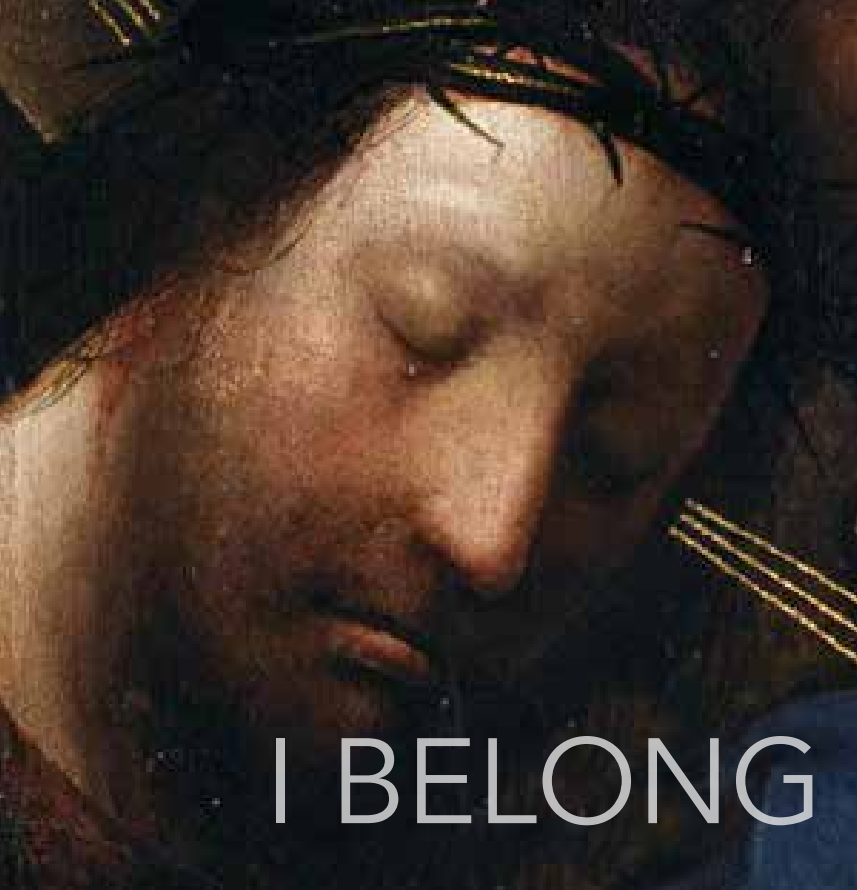
It is His love alone which satisfies our hearts and gives meaning to our lives; and yet, we can so easily let it become mere background noise. We can be caught up in the here and now, in the immediacy of daily life, and forget the sound of the heart of Jesus, pouring out His love for us in every beat. He longs to remind us of the promises He made to us: "I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of My hands I have engraved you" (*Is* 49:15-16); "I will never take back My love" (*Ps* 89:33). He desires to reawaken our hearts to the truth that we were made for Eternal Love, made to see God face to face.

So, let us come to rest in the Love that awaits us, and even now surrounds us at every moment, whispering to our souls the promises of heaven. If we find ourselves discouraged during this difficult time in our nation and our world, let us learn from St. John, the beloved disciple, to lean our heads and our hearts against the heart of Jesus and remember that the God who loves us is with us always.

May we open our hearts to His healing and redeeming love, now and for all eternity. Know of our prayers for you and your loved ones.

*Mother Agnes Mary, SV*

In Christ, Our Life,  
Mother Agnes Mary, SV



# I BELONG TO LOVE

-by Sr. Maris Stella, SV

*"Personally, I am perfectly calm, steadfastly facing what is to come. When one has really achieved complete surrender to the will of God, there is a marvelous feeling of peace and a sense of absolute security. I am in a joyous mood and filled with great anticipation."*

- Hermann Lange, *Dying We Live*

These are the words written by a man from his prison cell, shortly before he was executed by the Nazis for an unknown crime. He had lost everything — family, friends, reputation, status, and his very life. Yet, in the midst of this profound experience of poverty, he discovered that he actually possessed everything that was essential. He was completely convinced of the absolute and unconditional love of God as he approached what he called the greatest hour of his life. Just before he was executed, he said, "I rejoice...because everything that till now I have done, struggled, and accomplished has, at bottom, been directed to this one goal, whose barrier I shall penetrate today. 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him' (1 Cor 2:9)." This man experienced the profound peace and joy that comes with a total reliance on God and living from the truth that the poorer we become, the more we can experience His love.

*[We are invited]  
to hold everything  
in this life a little  
more loosely, and  
to cling to what  
is eternal.*

Because ultimately, life isn't about what we acquire or possess, but it's about the One to whom we belong. Life is about letting ourselves be loved by and belong to Love Himself — Jesus Christ. In recognizing our absolute need for God, for a Savior, we are freed from self-reliance. This

is the poverty of spirit that Jesus calls "blessed." Jesus invites us into His own spirit of poverty when He says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29). This posture of heart allows us to hold everything in this life a little more loosely and to cling to what is eternal.

If we insulate ourselves from our need for God, numb the pain of living in a fallen world, or get distracted by status, success, and possessions, we deprive ourselves of being held by Jesus in our weakness. As

Cardinal O'Connor often repeated, "Whatever you own, owns you." We might imagine that we best experience God's love in the place of our strengths and talents. Rather, His love is most secure and profound in the place of our emptiness, brokenness, and weakness. There, His mercy overflows, and His power and love are made perfect. If we allow ourselves to be loved by God, we realize we have been created, and everything we have has been given to us. In letting ourselves belong to Him, we find the love and fulfillment for which our hearts were made.



An interview with  
Sr. Mariae Agnus Dei, SV

God never stops running after us with his love. This is the story of someone whom God pursued to the end. This is a story of a man who ran to win and found the ultimate victory in the gift of faith, the grace of redemption, and the freedom of a son of God the Father. This is the story of my dad, Dr. William T. Yates.



## HIS LAST RACE

**Can you tell us about your parents?**

**How did they meet?**

He was a Navy doctor and self-proclaimed “humanistic existential agnostic,” ready to pioneer his own path and believe what experience revealed. She was a Navy nurse and cradle Catholic, waiting for an adventure. He wheeled in a new patient to her unit and glibly told her to give the patient some Aspirin. She, a dutiful nurse, politely demanded, “And who is ordering this?” Rather than an affront, he saw this as a golden opportunity. He answered with a smile, “I am.” Cutting through the attempt at charm, she replied, “And who are you?” Undeterred, his smile broadened even more as he asserted, “The

doctor.” While it may not have been love at first sight, it was definitely a first spark. Eight months later, they were married and began a 43 year adventure in love, faith, and family.

**You said your dad was always seeking to discover truth through his experience. Was there a particular moment that sparked his conversion to the Catholic faith?**

I remember driving home from an afternoon hike with my dad when I was a senior in high school. He had worked as a doctor in obstetrics and gynecology (OB/GYN) at that point for over thirty years, and was musing about his experience. At some point in the conversation, I found myself asking if he had ever performed abortions. He

answered, “Yes.” I swallowed hard. “How many?” “At least a dozen in residency...” he answered. “Something happened, though, that made me stop. After performing an abortion one day, I went out to tell the sister of the patient that the surgery was over. Before I could walk away, the sister asked me, ‘Was it alive?’ I didn’t know how to respond to her. I knew that if I said ‘no’, I would be lying, and if I said ‘yes’, I had just killed someone. That was the last abortion I ever performed.” This experience confronted him with the reality that there was truth, and that the truth mattered. It drew him into deeper discernment about the decisions he made, and why he made them. Ultimately, it provoked a deeper honesty with questions of both life and faith, and was the spark that led him down the road towards conversion.



### **How did he come deeper into the Catholic faith? Was your mom a part of his faith journey?**

Growing up, I remember my parents often engaging in deep conversation. They both had strong personalities and helped each other ask hard questions. They were a good match for each other. My mom had a deep reverence for the sacredness of life and loved her faith. My dad was his own man, but on an honest search for truth. While someone who lived all things with great energy and innovation, he also loved the turtle’s approach to life: “Slow and steady wins the race,” he would say. This was especially true when it came to his faith journey. One day, 18 years into the marriage, my dad told my mom he was going to enter the Catholic Church. He had signed up for RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) classes on his own initiative. She was shocked. While she had prayed for it, it was never something she pushed. Years later, I asked him why he converted. He said, “I wanted a place to stand in life, and I knew the Catholic faith was the most true.”

### **How did his conversion affect his profession as a physician?**

Three years after entering the Church, my father decided he wanted more training in his field. He moved our family of ten from Maine to Nebraska to begin a year-long fellowship

at the Paul VI Institute in Fertility Care and NaPro Technology. My mother also trained to become certified in Natural Family Planning. It was a big move that came as a surprise to many — fellow doctors, family ... even the IRS investigated him because such a drastic drop in income with so many dependents just didn’t make sense. We returned to Maine a year later, and my parents worked side-by-side in my father’s practice, offering women’s health-care in line with the teachings of the faith. While a first courageous step in bringing faith into his professional life, he still grappled with many questions of his new faith, especially when not just one, but two of his daughters (Sr. Mary Louise Concepta and I), entered the convent.

### **What happened when he received his diagnosis of cancer?**

His faith was drawn into new depths when he faced a diagnosis of terminal cancer shortly after retirement. It came as a shock to all of us. He was a life-long runner and hiker. He put olive oil on his toast every morning. To celebrate his retirement, he biked from St. Louis to Maine. He was the last person you would expect to get cancer. One day, he noticed his eyes were a bit yellow. Two days later, he had emergency surgery. A week later, he was diagnosed. Four short months after that, he passed away. While these were some of the most difficult days we ever faced as a family, they were also some of the most beautiful.

### **How did you live this time of illness together as a family?**

My dad had been a runner his whole life and shared this passion with all of us. He was always at our races ready to coach and cheer us on. In a way, we all came to look at this diagnosis as his last race. He was going to run it, and run it well. And we were going to run it with him, all the way to the end.

Our first weeks adjusting to the realities of the diagnosis were tough. My father had always successfully overcome challenges in life through hard work and self-reliance. We quickly learned the vulnerabilities brought about by the cancer would require a different approach, as attempts to control the situation were only giving way to frustration and anger. We were going to have to learn a new way.



### **How did your father approach his illness?**

Dad decided to go for a huge surgery, hopeful to buy more time. Two hours after he went in, we got a call. The surgeon told us what we feared most, “The cancer is everywhere; there is nothing we can do. We are closing him back up.” We immediately called the Sisters of Life to pray. This news was going to be crushing. We went to the recovery area to be with him. As he came to, the surgeon gave him the update, “Sorry, Dr. Yates — the cancer is everywhere. There is nothing we can do.” My dad looked at him, peaceful as a lamb, and said, “That’s ok. Thank you, doctor.” The surgeon was concerned my dad wasn’t getting the point, and said, “No, it’s not ok. It really stinks.” But my father was now looking at my mom, my sister, and I, and said with a meekness I had never before seen in him, “It’s God’s will. I’m sorry. I tried.” We had prayed for a miracle of healing, and we knew in that moment that we had got one — not one physical, but spiritual. My father’s heart was filled with a new and radiant faith. He was going to live this illness with hope in God and in love for us. And that is exactly what he did.

### **How did you see the power of love at work?**

At the outset, we were confident we had the strength and skills to manage a journey with terminal cancer — just in our immediate family, we had two doctors, three nurses, two public health masters, a financial advisor, a marine, and two nuns. Well, we quickly learned we were wrong. There was one power alone that was going to hold us through the ups and downs, the unknowns, the riddle of suffering — and that was the power of love. We all took turns being with Dad in a relay of support. Every day we lost ground. Every day he got sicker. Every day evoked varying degrees of helplessness and heartbreak as we watched someone we loved so much suffer. And yet, as we held onto love, a profound hope and peace held us. Every moment took on new depth and meaning. Reconciliation and healing poured like oil over our hearts. With everything stripped away but the task of love, we gathered together as a family in new unity and grace.

### **How were you, personally, affected by these days of your dad’s illness?**

I think one moment really illustrates it. My father had always cared well and creatively for our home. He had big gardens that yielded everything from tomatoes to rhubarb; he developed various systems to cleverly protect the wear of the house; he built what was needed for fun as we grew — a tree house, a giant swing ... whatever we could dream up, he loved trying to invent. But, because of his illness, the lawn had become a jungle, so, one beautiful fall day, when I was at home caring for him, I decided to rev up the old lawn mower. Before too many steps, I had tears rolling down my face and joy flooding my heart. As a kid, mowing the lawn

was a chore I did out of fear of punishment. As I got older, I did it for money. Now, as I mowed the lawn, every motivation of my heart gave way to deep love for my father. I glanced up towards the house and saw my dad in the bay windows, watching me. Throughout the years, our relationship had its struggles. This, however, was one of those special moments when all that fell away. Our hearts freely rested in the peace between us and the treasured gift we had in each other. We were discovering together the profound gift of living not in our own



strength, but in the Father’s Love. We were learning this was a love more powerful than anything. In it, we found the peace of placing our full trust in the Risen Savior, the beautiful potential of vulnerability and suffering to open our hearts to love and communion, and the freedom and strength to be found depending on the Father for everything. I watched my dad learn a new way to live, and, in effect, I did too.

### **What were the last days of your father’s life like?**

My father moved into the active dying stages on Christmas Day. The whole family gathered and took turns keeping vigil with him. Meanwhile, throughout the house, his grandchildren played gleefully, and the rest of us went to work bringing to life all the familiar tastes and traditions of Christmas. It was a time of such deep contrasts: life and death, joy and sorrow, gratitude and grief.

When the priest came to anoint Dad, my brother-in-law mentioned in passing how they had postponed getting their baby baptized because of everything happening with my dad’s sickness. “Why don’t we just baptize him at your dad’s bedside today?” offered the priest. Preparations were made, and everyone rallied for one last family event. Of course, Mom had

saved everyone's baptismal candles. They were lit and distributed. My father also rallied. Though weak and barely conscious, he participated as best he could in each part of the rite. He tried to bless himself, dutifully mouthed the words of the Our Father, and when it came time to renew our baptismal promises — "Do you reject Satan?... Do you believe in God?... etc." he raised what voice he had left to proclaim his faith one last time: "I do." The spiritual battles of the years and those of his last days were laid to rest. A new peace filled my father's heart. He was ready.

Just a day later, Dad's breathing changed, and we knew it was time. Mom, all of us eight kids, and a number of grandchildren gathered around his bed. At first, it was silent. I wondered if I had the courage to stay with Dad in this final stretch and love him through to the finish line. My heart was broken in that moment by two great loves — the love of a daughter for her father that wanted to hold on to the gift, and conversely, a love desiring to reverence God the Father calling His son home. I silently prayed. Then I heard the voice of one of my sisters say, "We are all here now, Dad. You can go. The Father is waiting for you." And then another sister echoed, "You are almost to the finish line, Dad! Just a few more breaths!" And then another sibling, "We love you, Dad! You are almost there!" We all took turns encouraging our father as he ran to cross the finish line.

And as soon as it began, it was over. He breathed his last. He made it. Peace flooded the room, and I immediately felt prompted to ask my mother, "What is the feast day today?"



Sr. Mary Louise Concepta, SV and Sr. Mariae Agnus Dei, SV

"It's the feast of the Holy Innocents\*," she replied. Grace pierced my heart. It seemed clear to me that God's merciful love wanted to have the final word on my father's life. In His designs, the little ones that my father had once acted against were the very ones to welcome him into eternal life.

\* *The Holy Innocents were those children whom King Herod killed when he was searching for the Baby Jesus. (cf. Mt 2:16-18) They have been declared saints and martyrs by the Church; their feast day is December 28th.*

**Note:**

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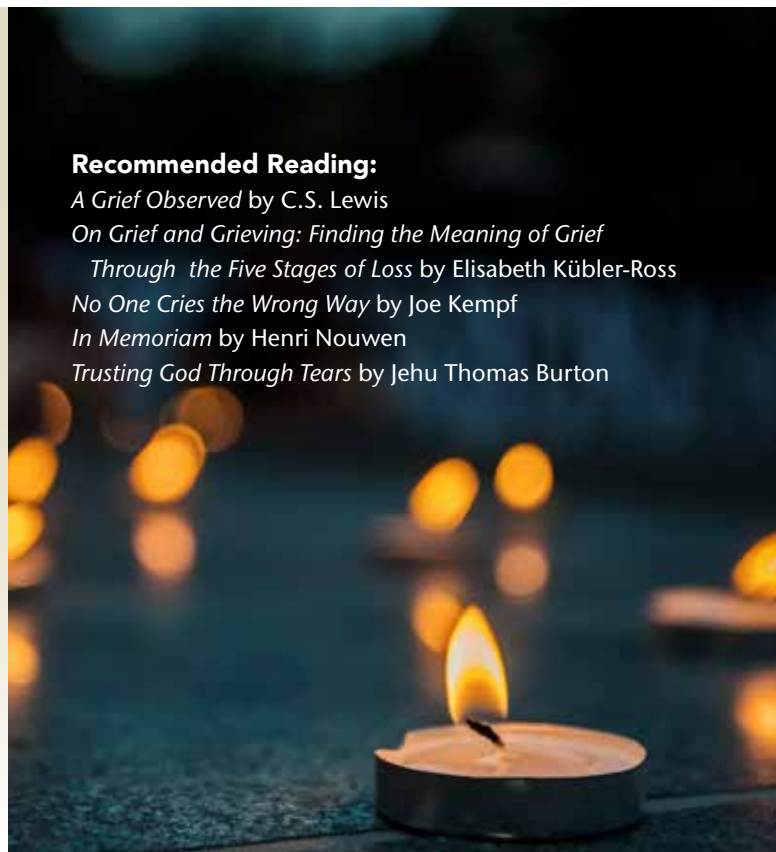
## *Love does not end at death.*

*Jesus' death and Resurrection open for us the possibility of reunion with our deceased loved ones. But even this consolation doesn't take away the sorrow we naturally feel when someone dies.*

*Jesus knows this, and so He never leaves us alone in times of sorrow. He weeps with us and invites us to take refuge in the tender abode of His heart. Of all of the many experiences of suffering, Jesus chose to speak a promise of comfort particularly to those who mourn: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Mt 5:4). He beckons us to come to Him and receive the comfort that only He can give.*

## **Recommended Reading:**

*A Grief Observed* by C.S. Lewis  
*On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss* by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross  
*No One Cries the Wrong Way* by Joe Kempf  
*In Memoriam* by Henri Nouwen  
*Trusting God Through Tears* by Jehu Thomas Burton



# What happens when we die?

- by Sr. Fidelity Grace, SV and Sr. Marie Veritas, SV

## MEETING GOD

*"Death is the most important act of earthly existence. All life is made to explode, to go farther, to merge with life, with God."*

- Robert Cardinal Sarah

In His infinite mercy, Jesus turned death upside down and made it the path to life. At the very moment of death — when our souls separate from our bodies — we will each receive our particular, unique judgment from God. Our whole life is a preparation for this moment. Now, we will not be arbitrarily assigned a passing or failing grade by a harsh master; we will receive from our merciful Savior Himself the destiny we choose. And we will not stand before Christ with our report cards and résumés and trophies in tow. As St. John of the Cross put it simply: "In the evening of life, we will be judged on our love."

**Jesus the gentleman:** Philosopher Edward Feser describes judgement as being like wet clay in a furnace: a moment that locks into place our basic posture — either toward God, or not. Even though He constantly works at every turn for our good, and always gives each soul enough grace for salvation, Jesus is a gentleman. In His mercy and justice, He will not force heaven upon us if we don't want it. How we've let ourselves be formed in love, and what or whom we seek at the moment of our death, will be, in itself, our judgement.

**Immediately after death, the soul goes either to heaven, hell, or purgatory.**



*"It is not death that will come to fetch me; it is the good God."*

- St. Thérèse of Lisieux



## Heaven • Hell • Purgatory

### H EAVEN

**Eternal bliss:** Jesus died and rose to make heaven possible for us who were stuck in sin; *that's why He came*. To arrive in heaven is to be submerged in the unending embrace and praise of the Infinite Love who made us. It is to have all life's thirsts quenched, questions answered, and desires fulfilled. For when we see God as He is — Father, Son, and Spirit unveiled — we come to know ourselves as we truly are, as He sees us.

**Made for you:** While perpetually new and exciting, heaven is ever familiar. There we can authentically say, with a smile as wide as the horizon, "I belong here. I was made for this." It is a true reunion with God's earthly family. Free from any trace of rivalry or contention, all those in heaven are saints, transformed by glory to the degree that they loved God on earth.

#### **C.S. Lewis masterfully imagines it:**

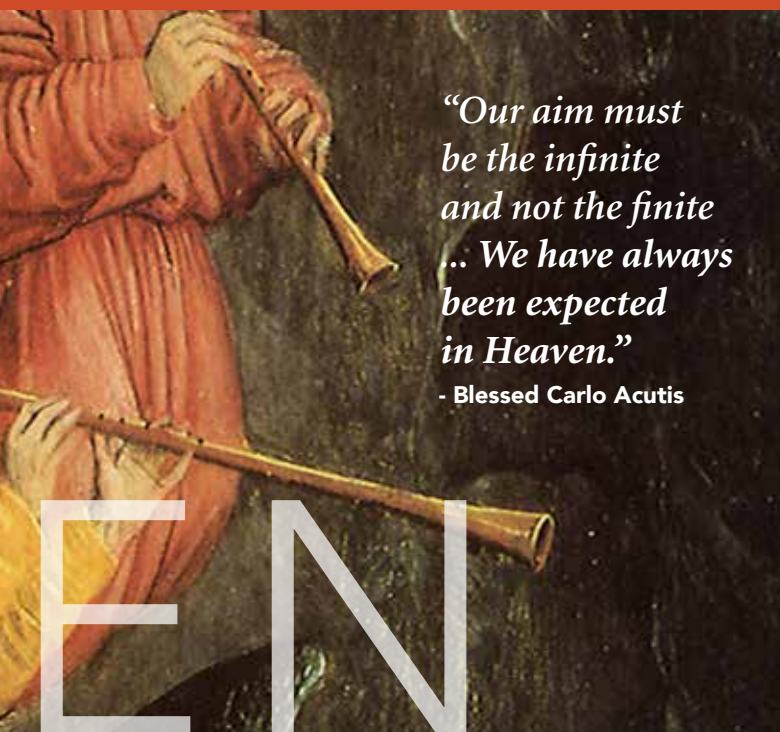
"Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you, and you alone, because you were made for it ... stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand."



*"Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal."*

-St. Thomas More





*“Our aim must  
be the infinite  
and not the finite  
... We have always  
been expected  
in Heaven.”*

- Blessed Carlo Acutis

EN



#### TOTAL ISOLATION AND EXCLUSION:

*“To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love means remaining separated from Him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called ‘hell.’”*

*(Catechism of the Catholic Church #1033)*

**It doesn’t end there:** At the end of time, when Christ comes again, the bodies of all the dead will rise (some to eternal life, and some to eternal death), and the entire cosmos will be transformed. But we will not morph into angels or “reincarnate” as new personalities. Instead, our own body and soul will be united again. Those who rise to life will become like the Risen Christ – still themselves, but glorified and perfected! (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #988-1004) Indeed, “we look forward to the resurrection of the dead...” (Nicene Creed). It’s the happiness we’re made for.

## H ELL

**The reality of hell:** Today, the devil is often lumped into the same category as mermaids and fairies — the realm of make-believe. But Scripture and Christian tradition are clear that Satan, an angel created good by God, definitively chose against God and now dwells with his minions in the place of perpetual death known as hell. Christ Himself often referred to Gehenna (a garbage dump where fires continually burned) as an image of hell — the destiny of those who ultimately choose against love. “For I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, a stranger and you gave Me no welcome, naked and you gave Me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for Me...what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for Me.... truly I say to you, I do not know you” (Mt 25: 42-45; Mt 25:12).

**Like a fish out of water:** A fish out of water isn’t merely uncomfortable; it is cut off from its very life-source. Likewise, hell is complete separation from the love of God. Hell’s greatest pain is isolation from the Creator and all other creatures — from the communion for which we were made. It is a place devoid of truth, goodness, and beauty; a realm of chaos and unspeakable agony.

St. Ignatius of Loyola once said, “Imagine the worst you can, and then say, ‘All this is nothing compared to hell.’” It is an everlasting abode of darkness, death, and fire.

**The choice against God:** God desires no one’s eternal unhappiness, let alone a person’s destruction or non-existence. He desires our free return to His love. In our final hour, however, if we refuse to receive His mercy, or refuse to repent of any mortal sins, then we ultimately refuse to live with God. To be damned to hell is to have knowingly said “no” to the arms that were always open to embrace us and the voice that had always called our name.



*“O my Jesus,  
forgive us our sins;  
save us from the  
fires of hell. Lead  
all souls to heaven,  
especially those  
who are most  
in need of  
your mercy.”*

-The Fatima Prayer

**Reflection question:** God made us to be with Him forever in heaven. Is that our goal in life?



*"As we enter heaven, we will see them, so many of them, coming towards us and thanking us. We will ask who they are, and they will say, 'A poor soul whom you prayed for in purgatory.'"*

*- Fulton Sheen*

## PURGATORY

**Preparation for heaven:** Now, if the door of a heart is open even a sliver to God, God's mercy will welcome him. Even death-bed converts, like the good thief on Calvary, have a place in paradise. But for one still attached to less serious sins at the time of death, the dazzling brilliance of heaven would be unbearable. The God who is Mercy thus gives us an intermediate state of preparation for heaven. Purgatory is not a punishment. Like the fire that refines silver or the surgery that fixes a heart problem, purgatory cleanses souls of everything that is not of God. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI explains, "Before [Christ's] gaze all falsehood melts away. This encounter with Him, as it burns us, transforms and frees us, allowing us to become truly ourselves" (*Spe Salvi*, #47).

**Bittersweet longing:** A soul's greatest longing is to be with God in heaven. St. Catherine of Genoa tells us that the souls in purgatory suffer deeply from the awareness that "... they have deliberately gone against His great goodness." The more they are attached to sin, the more it will hurt to remove it. However, as each impediment to love is burned away, the joy of the souls in purgatory increases. Everyone who goes to purgatory eventually goes to heaven.

*"Let us empty purgatory with our prayers." -St. Padre Pio*

## 5 things you might not know about purgatory

### 1. Can we help the souls in purgatory?

Yes! Souls in purgatory really are "poor" because they can do nothing to speed up their purification; they completely depend on the prayers and sacrifices of those on earth and the saints in heaven.

*St. John Vianney had a vision in which he heard souls cry out: "Tell our loved ones, tell our children, tell all our relatives ... We throw ourselves at their feet to implore the help of their prayers!"*

### 2. Is praying for the dead in the Bible?

Yes! We read of Judas Maccabeus having temple offerings made on behalf of his brothers, who were guilty of wrongdoing before they died (cf. 2 Macc 12:38-45). This conviction has been part of Christian practice for centuries.

### 3. How can I help the poor souls?

Offering Mass, the rosary, fasting, and any other prayers and sacrifices made on their behalf are powerful ways of helping our departed relatives and friends reach heaven more quickly.

*The Lord promised St. Gertrude the release of many souls from purgatory through this prayer: Eternal Father, I offer You the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the holy souls in purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the universal Church, for those in my own home, and in my family. Amen.*

### 4. Does the Blessed Mother help the poor souls?

Many saints have testified to Mary's intercession.

*St. Faustina had a vision in which her guardian angel took her to purgatory. She says, "I saw Our Lady visiting the souls in purgatory. The souls call her 'The Star of the Sea.' She brings them refreshment."*

### 5. Can the souls in purgatory help us?

Many saints have testified, from experience, to the tremendous power of the poor souls' prayers for us. Although it is not an official teaching of the Church, it is supported by some Doctors of the Church, such as St. Robert Bellarmine and St. Alphonsus Ligouri.

*"If it were but known how great is the power of the good souls in purgatory with the heart of God, and if we knew all the graces we can obtain through their intercession, they would not be so much forgotten." - St. John Vianney*



## MAKING IMPORTANT DECISIONS *IN ADVANCE* by Sr. Charity, SV

**Part of God's plan for you is the care you are to receive at the end of your life.** While the end of life is a sacred time of preparation for eternal life, it can also be a time of trial. The need to make difficult medical decisions can lead to a lack of peace. The Church has much wisdom to offer in these decisions. Taking time now to learn about the Church's teachings and to make necessary preparations can alleviate fear and confusion in the face of future illness.

### The pitfalls of living wills

Half of those over the age of 65 who are admitted to a hospital are unable to make decisions for themselves due to sickness. Many people choose to prepare by making "advance directives:" medical decisions made ahead of time in the event you become unable to speak for yourself. The most common forms of advance directives are the *living will* and the *health care proxy*. A *living will* (e.g. Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment [MOLST]) is a legal document that details which treatments you would and would not like to receive if you are unable to speak for yourself in a time of illness. The *living will* can be dangerous because it requires you to make decisions about your care without the ability to foresee particular circumstances. For example, dialysis is sometimes necessary as a short-term treatment in a medical emergency. However, if you have ordered in your *living will* that you not be put on dialysis, health care providers will be unable to give you the proper care since they are bound by law to follow the *living will*.

### Resources:

Looking for a health care proxy form?

[lifeofficenyc.org/advance-directives](http://lifeofficenyc.org/advance-directives)

Need guidance in making an ethical medical decision?

(215)877-2660 or [ncbcenter.org/ask-a-question](http://ncbcenter.org/ask-a-question)

Interested in learning more about Catholic end-of-life ethics?

[catholicendoflife.org](http://catholicendoflife.org)

Considering the best type of care for yourself or a loved one?

[chausa.org/palliative/palliative-care](http://chausa.org/palliative/palliative-care)

### A health care proxy / The better option

Catholic ethicists strongly recommend avoiding the *living will* and, instead, designating a *health care proxy*. A *health care proxy* is a person who will speak for you in health care decisions if you cannot speak for yourself. Since they are able to assess the circumstances in real time, they are better able to advocate for your care according to Church teachings. It is recommended that everyone over the age of 18 — healthy or sick — appoint a *health care proxy*, as you no longer have a legal guardian. This is done by filling out a simple form which can be found online. If you do not designate a *health care proxy* and you become incapacitated, the state will appoint a surrogate decision-maker from a prioritized list of relationships (spouse, adult children, sibling, etc.). Choosing a proxy for yourself ensures that someone who shares your Catholic values will be able to advocate for you. Having a conversation with your proxy while you are well will enable you to communicate your desire to be treated according to Church teaching.

You are worthy of profound reverence. The beauty and wisdom of the Church's teachings on end-of-life care ring with this truth. You are not a burden. You are made for love. God desires that you be treated with particular care as you prepare to meet Him face-to-face in heaven.







## WEDDED TO GOD

*forever*



*On August 6th, 2020, Sr. Virginia Joy, SV and Sr. Naomi Maria Magnificat, SV professed their final vows as Sisters of Life.*

**The profession of vows** of a religious Sister – poverty, chastity, obedience, and, in our community, to protect and enhance the sacredness of human life – points to something beyond even the best things this world has to offer. That “something” is the Incarnate Son of God, “the goal towards which all things tend, the splendor before which every other light pales, and the infinite beauty which alone can fully satisfy the human heart” (*Vita Consecrata*, #16). When a religious Sister makes her vows to God, she is, in a real way, wedded to Jesus. Though veiled and imperfect in this world, religious life is a glimpse into the mystery that every member of the Church is destined to live forever in heaven – union with Jesus Christ.



**Sr. Virginia Joy, SV**

*"There is great good in this world – yet every promise of pleasure or joy in this world falls short. We are made for more, infinitely more, eternally more, and I hope my life as a religious raises a question in the hearts of all who encounter me. In being totally His, I want everything about me to point to Christ, the One who knows us, understands us, loves us and fulfills all of our joy."*



**Sr. Naomi Maria Magnificat, SV**

*"To be forever professed as a Sister of Life – the spouse of Him who is Life – is, in many ways, truly incomprehensible. It is a pure gift, and a gift which is eternal, because He is eternal life. In becoming His spouse I have entered into a relationship which continues "straight on into heaven uninterrupted.\*"*

*\*Archbishop Samuel Aquila*



## First Profession of Vows

August 4th, 2020

(L to R)

Sr. Léonie Thérèse, SV

Sr. Beata Victoria, SV

Sr. Chiara Madonna, SV

Sr. Maria Augustine, SV

Sr. Anima Christi Rose, SV





# Saints Alive!

A saint is anyone who is in heaven. Some saints are canonized — like St. Rita, St. Anthony, and St. Thérèse — which means that the Church has officially recognized their holiness, and their presence in heaven has been confirmed by miracles occurring through their intercession, after their death. But there are countless people in heaven whom we don't know — and although they are not officially canonized, they, too, are saints! We can have real friendships with the saints, because they are very much alive.



## Aida

In 2017, Aida was diagnosed with cancer, and surgery was quickly scheduled. Two days before the surgery, she stepped inside an antique shop to wait for some rain to let up, and asked the owners if they had any medals for sale. They brought out various kinds of war medals, religious medals, and, sitting among the pile, she found a special medal of St. Anthony. She wondered, "Why St. Anthony?", but bought it anyway, and prayed to him, though she wasn't sure why.

Days later, she had a successful operation, and looked forward to the next time she was able to go to Mass. It turned out to be June 13th, St. Anthony's feast day. While she was at her parish, she discovered that the saint beside the statue of Our Lady of Fatima where she always prayed was none other

than ... St. Anthony. "The saints are God's friends," she said gratefully, "and it is good to have God's friends!"



## Kelly

Kelly found St. Olga during a trip to the Holy Land and was drawn to her striking and rather sensational conversion story. Called the "Viking Saint Queen of Russia" and "Warrior Princess," she first lived a life of vengeance upon the tribe who murdered her husband, until she met some Christians and had a profound conversion. She began living a life of virtue and used her influence as queen to send missionaries to modern-day Ukraine, set up hospitals, and spread the faith. Kelly was given an icon of St. Olga and brought it to the hospital for the birth of both of her children, asking her motherly intercession. "Though at first she was known more for her faults than her virtue, she experienced a moment of mercy in her life and then turned it all around," Kelly noted. She asks for St. Olga's prayers especially for seemingly impossible moments, because of St. Olga's radical conversion.



## Sr. Zelig Maria Louis, SV

"Growing up, I hadn't heard much about the saints, but when I went to college and started to learn more about the faith, saints were often the topic of discussion. 'Who's your favorite saint?' was thought to be a perfect icebreaker in Catholic circles, and my friends prized their saint collages that covered their dorm room walls. Eventually, I began to feel dejected about my lack of saint friends, but people told me all you had to do was ask the saints and they would come. So, one night, thinking 'here goes nothing', I made this simple prayer: 'Dear Saints ... I'm available ... for intercession.'

Days later, a friend gave me the book *The Story of a Soul*, and there began a lifetime friendship with St. Thérèse and her whole family. Thérèse's love of Jesus was my first exposure to the beauty of religious life and she, along with Louis, Zélie, and all the Martins, continue to be loyal, encouraging friends along the journey."





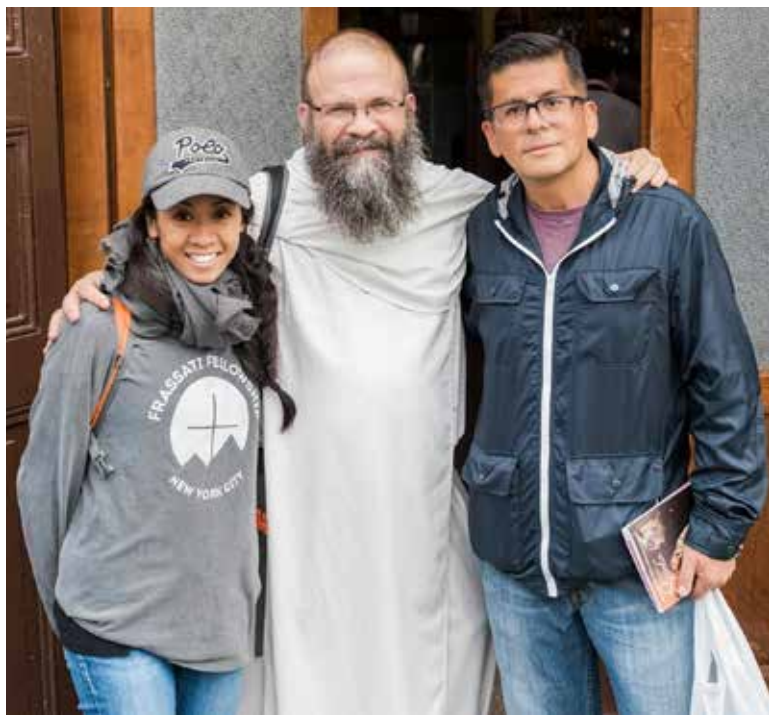
## Caroline

Caroline was searching the internet for a new saint. She was hoping she could find someone to pray to for her chronic back pain, and she soon began reading about Bl. Margaret of Castello, an Italian saint from the late 1200s who suffered various physical disabilities. She found a beautiful novena to her and started to pray. Not only did Caroline receive a cure for her back pain, but her husband's diagnosis of cancer, eyesight troubles, and blood pressure have all improved since praying to Bl. Margaret. Most precious to Caroline, though, was a spiritual healing she received through Bl. Margaret, as she more deeply experienced God's forgiveness and a new depth in relationship with the child she had lost to abortion years ago.

## Martin

A mother in Peru gave birth to a sickly child, a boy. Upon examination of the newborn, the doctor turned to the mother and said, "You should get a priest." His mother knew what that meant: his life was in danger, and he should be baptized right away. His mother went to search for a priest and found a Dominican parish. While waiting for the priest to come, she saw a statue of St. Martin de Porres and knelt before him, asking his intercession to save her son's life.

The priest came, and they rushed back to the hospital. The baby was given the name Martin and was baptized, with the doctor as his godfather and the emergency room nurse as his godmother. The doctor took him away and then, hours later, came out to his mother and said, "He's alive. I think he's going to be ok." Today Martin is married with their first child on the way, and he organizes Frassati fellowship, a group of Catholic young adults in NYC ([frassati.nyc](http://frassati.nyc)). Of St. Martin, he says, "He has always been with me."



## What are angels?

To think of angels might bring to mind chubby cherubs that decorate Christmas cards, all vying with one another to get closest to the sleeping Infant or play Him their best violin solo.

But these mighty creatures are likely far from such depictions. So awesome is their appearance, that when angels appear in Scripture, their first words are usually "Do not be afraid!" Angels are immortal spirits, without bodies, and with perfect intellect. All of the angels had a choice of whether to obey God or rebel. One angel, Lucifer, overcome by pride, responded, "I will not serve." He fell from heaven, taking a third of the angels (now demons) with him, and St. Michael and the good angels cast them all into hell. (cf. Rev 12:7-9)

### Fun Facts:

1. "The angels surround Christ their Lord. They serve Him especially in the accomplishment of His saving mission to men" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC]*, #351).
2. Every person has a guardian angel whose goal is to help the person get to heaven. (cf. CCC, #336) Guardian angels are not recycled.
3. Angel is the name of their office, or what they do. They are spirit by nature. (cf. CCC, #329)

### Resources:

**Book:** *Angels and Demons: What Do We Really Know about Them?* by Dr. Peter J. Kreeft

**Audio:** "Angels Explained" by Dr. Mark Miravalle  
[lighthousecatholicmedia.org](http://lighthousecatholicmedia.org)

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