

tempests in a teapot.; a lot of to-do about nothing in the long run. All the tv news stories will fade out in a few days, or months, or years. What we hear here tonight will be exciting news a million years from now. That's because it concerns things of eternal importance. It's about the master plan of the Creator of all the universe.

So, la de da, Dan Rather, & Tom Brokaw, or Ted Kopel, Barbara Walters----- I have a more important news than you do.

I'd like to set the tone tonight with a thoughtful question; If you should die tonight, and St. Peter asked you why he should allow you to enter heaven...What would you tell him? Think about that for a minute.

Over the years, I've asked that question often, to CCD classes, adult groups, other seminars, and various occasions.

You know, most American Catholics do not know the right answer. The central question of Christianity, and most Catholics are more worried about the condition of the parking lot.

In these parishes we are fortunate to have a pastor who lays it on the line, Fr. Ray is bubbling over with the Good News of Salvation through Jesus. We heard him last week. I was afraid for a minute he was accidentally giving the second seminar. Praise the Lord.. but in my personal experience I've had 23 different pastors, and thinking back I can remember only two who ever even tried to preach the basic Good News of Salvation. 2 or now 3, that leaves 20 preaching about the parking lot. Fortunately for me I met other priests, and nuns and lay people who did share the Good News of Jesus with me. but not all Catholics seem to have been that fortunate.

The reason God gave us a Church, and the reason for us to be Christian is to get us on track for heaven. and to help us help others get on track. and the only way God provided to get us on track for heaven is His only Son Jesus. Any Baptist knows that, so why is it so hard for us Catholics to get it through our heads.

Why is it, so many Catholics do not know what our Holy Church teaches about getting to heaven? Many of us have only a vague notion, often even wrong ideas.

When St. Pete asks, "Why should I let you in?" most, in my experience answer in terms of how they think they deserve heaven. or in how they certainly do not deserve hell. That's the wrong answer! Mother Theresa cannot deserve heaven. Non of us can ever deserve heaven. We can never be good enough for God to owe us anything. We always owe God.

People say, "I've been a good person. I was not such a bad neighbor. I went to mass on Sunday religiously. I didn't kill anybody. About these, pardon me, we could say, "to hell with them answers." by themselves they fail the test.

I once read a sermon by Pope St. Leo the Great from the early years of Church history and he sounded a lot more like Billy Graham than like some modern priests. Pope St. Leo knew how to preach the good news.

St Paul in Galatians 2:21 tells us; If you could save yourself by being good, than the death of Jesus on the cross was an entirely unnecessary joke.

What a shame! that stupid Jesus went through all that pain and suffering for nothing, when all He need to do was tell us to mind our own business and be a good neighbor. Is that the way it is, or did God know what He was doing??

Yes! Yes! God always know what He is doing, and He did send His only Son to become one of us, and to soak up all the misery and sin we could heap upon Him. He did this, because..Only Jesus, the God-man can ever be good enough to deserve heaven. We can never get into the position where God owes us anything , much less eternal happiness in His divine presence. Nothing imperfect can be part of perfect paradise. Jesus gets to heaven and we get there by being part of Him. Part of His mystical Body. We do this by His free gift , accepted by our active faith. I stress here, active faith, living faith. Faith that is not lived out in our day to day lives is no faith at all. The Epistle of James makes this very clear.

So then.., How do we become part of Jesus, and begin to live our faith life?

St. John in the 'Bible tells us, unless we are Born again of Water and the Holy Spirit, we cannot enter God's Kingdom.

Water Baptism is the outward sign of initiation into the Body of Jesus. Baptism in the Holy Spirit makes us alive in that Body. A body without a Spirit is dead.

We are not called to be part of the cadaver of Christ but of the living Body. That means we need the life giving Spirit.

Christianity is not a, do-it-yourself project.

If we could learn to do it ourselves, God could have sent a great prophet and lawgiver like Moses. There would have been no need for His Son to die on the cross. Dianou, dianeu, it would have been enough. Yet proud people still like to think they can do it themselves.

A false teaching is called a heresy. In the early Church there was a heresy called Pelagianism that taught we could get to heaven without God's help by developing our will power and being super good persons. In the year 431 the Bishops of the Church met in a great council at Ephesus, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, discerned that this was a false teaching.

The only way we can get to heaven is to connect with Jesus by active faith. that comes from the Holy Spirit. The living Church is the main way God provided to help us do that.

In these seminars we will be getting to the true foundations of our living faith.

**Another question:: How many here are always happy and live perfectly happy and fulfilling lives in a perfect world?
How many do have some problems?**

**In this second seminar about Salvation,
we begin to realize the momentous, earth shaking importance of Christianity.
Christianity is not to be simply numbered among the great religions of the world.
Christianity is the personal intervention of the Creator of all there is, into the affairs
of His creation.**

No other religion even dares to make that claim.

**Mohamed only claims to be a prophet who tries to make sense supposedly once and
for all of the various old religions as He understood them.**

**Budah only claims to be a teacher who wants to help other people cope with the
difficulties of life.**

**Jesus is not only a prophet and teacher, but , more important, He is the one and
only Creator God who became one of us to be the one and only Savior of the World.**

**Jesus is the designer and Creator of all reality who comes in person to rescue His
creation and restore it to His original plan.**

**Do you have the guts to believe that? Well , this too takes more than just our
human guts . Wouldn't you know it; it takes the Grace of God to have that kind
of faith. That divine faith is here in this room tonight. We need to open our hearts
and accept it.**

**Personal salvation is for everyone, but it is not automatic. Scripture makes it clear,
horrible as it may be, an untold number of our fellow humans will eternally reject
the grace of God. Pride makes us prefer human do it yourself systems, even if they
don't work.**

**In Christianity, Jesus gives us an empowered system designed to ultimately solve
every problem in the world. Now that's a big order and it doesn't happen
overnight.**

**but this is the faith of our religion. We believe not only in the availability of
personal salvation for anyone who puts his faith for life in Jesus and His way, but
also in the certainty of salvation for the world systems when Jesus comes back in
glory.. To be included in this new paradise system we need to make a personal
commitment now, in this life.**

**We read in Genesis 2:8-9 & 1:31 that God planted a beautiful garden with
everything we need or could ever even want.**

**We learn one thing from reading this and we learn another thing just thinking
about it.**

**We can read about how God created Paradise for us and created us for paradise....
We are supposed to have everything we need to be happy all the time..**

But when we think about it, it's not hard to figure out that we are not in Paradise. we are not happy all the time like God intended. We don't have all the goods God originally provided for us. Somewhere along the line we've lost much of this.. We are not where God plans for us to be. None of us are.

So, the first principle of Salvation is that we need to realize our need for salvation. We need to see there is something wrong with our world and with our personal lives... There is an essential ingredient for our fulfillment , happiness and success missing somewhere.

As long as we think we are OK the way we are and don't really need God's salvation, there is no way revealed to man that we can plug into God's plan for our fulfillment.

Unless we first realize our need for grace, there is no way to access the salvation Jesus died to give us.

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**** There is something wrong in our personal lives. for example;;; Even in our large cities in the midsts of millions of people there is still so much loneliness and isolation.**

We all know people who suffer from depression. We all suffer from various anxieties, fears, hostility for our neighbor, hostility from our neighbor, insecurities, mistrust,, the list goes on..

We suffer from a lack of vision and direction;;; from meaninglessness and when carried far enough, even from thoughts of suicide.

We hear sometimes,of young people, with most of there gift of life ahead of them, who despair of God's love even to the point of seeing suicide as an option.

By the way, It's good to remember , from an eternal perspective there is no such possibility of ending it all. ever.. Life capable of contemplating time, by it's very nature must be eternal. Entering eternity in despair, only multiplies our troubles by infinite millions. It's not my intention here to judge anyone you may know who committed suicide. but hell itself is one everlasting unsuccessful suicide attempt. | When people die for any reason, who reject God, and see the reality of there unalterable mistake,;; of how they missed the mark in choosing their destiny, they become so despondent they try to annihilate there very existence by casting themselves into the terrible eternal lake of fire.....but to no use. we are created indestructible and the damned in hell spend forever cursing God and banging their heads in the pool of fire , futilely trying to suicide, heaping miserable failure upon failure. That's a mild picture of hell no matter how you get there.

If only all people would accept the fact that God does love each of us and He does have a good and happy solution to even our worst problems.

Salvation is trusting in God for the solutions to our problems, both day to day and for eternity. Sin is always a rejection of God's solution and a step towards self destruction.

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Isiah Chapter 2:1-5 tells us, God made the world as a peaceful and happy place for His people. He still wants it that way, but it's not just individuals who are messed up. God wants all nations; all human society and cultures to come to His salvation. ;; to quit fighting and to beat there swords into useful tools of peace and prosperity.

There is something wrong, not just with us as individuals, but with our human society and with the world itself. Our social, economic, and political systems, our education and popular values simply don't work right. they fail to deliver the results they promise.

Wars , poverty, crime, exploitation of one nation by another, one group by another.... all these problems are getting worse. We think we've found a system that improves things for a while, but then something goes wrong. Sounds pessimistic, doom and gloom, and it certainly would be, except for our sure hope in the eventual intervention of our Creator for the benefit of His People. Isiah knew this, didn't he? We are confident Jesus will come again. We need you Lord Jesus; our world need you soon. Come Lord Jesus.

Human efforts and human experts are not good enough to solve our problems.. Well intended secular efforts are simply not working. Our best doctors get sick themselves. Political parties generally mess up more than they clean up. Marriage counselors get divorces themselves. Our most educated still make mistakes. The most famous celebrities often lead unhappy, unfulfilled lives. The super rich never get what they really want. The suicide rate for the rich and famous is about the same as for the poor and homeless.

We all have a built in fault that insists on looking in the wrong place for happiness.

The Science and technology we put so much faith in also brings pollution, bigger bombs, and all kinds of other problems. Science can be God's instrument for good , to be sure, but only when operating in the grace and revealed plan of God. Outside of God's grace everything we do is dangerous; counterproductive for humankind in the long run.

So called miracle drugs eventually cause stronger strains of disease.

for every disease seemingly conquered, three new and worse ones pop up. W thought aids was so bad and now there's a more scary sickness coming out of Africa. I think it's call , Ebola. and what about mad cow disease in England?

Godless people use science to devise atomic and chemical weapons of mass destruction. a TV report lately said, germ warfare is so simple a high school biology student working in her basement could make a weapon to kill millions. Imagine what a dedicated terrorist could do.

The only hopeful response to all this is the Jesus system. Humans alone cannot build a safe and happy society. unsolvable problems have been with us since the fall of Adam.

Everyone is looking for solutions, and we tend to look in the darnedest places. For one little example , witness the popularity of talk shows and the solutions they present. TV is the Bible of the humanist systems. but let me tell you a shocking secret.... neither Dr Joyce Brothers nor Tom Snider, nor even St. Oprah Winfrey , are the Savior of the world. Neither are the popular music groups. The lyrics of popular songs on the whole, create many more sexual problems than they solve.

So Called experts holler at us that condoms are needed to solve the aides problem and teen pregnancy too, but they shout down the politically incorrect evidence that condoms often fail and , more important, actually encourage more sexual involvement that in the longer run make these problems worse.

You can never solve the world's problems by violating God's plans. It never works. All such are simplistic short term solutions that , by there very nature, worsen the long term problem.

Human Religions is another way we try to solve problems. Human religions are built on human desires. Worldly religious wisdom is out of step with God's wisdom.

Isaiah 55:8-9 God tells us, "MY THOUGHTS AFE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS, AND YOUR WAYS ARE NOT MY WAYS. AS THE HEAVENS ARE HIGHER THAT THE EARTH , SO ARE MY THOUGHTS AND WAYS HIGHER THAN YOURS."