

Imprimatur

Let it Be Printed



What's Up?

Sundays - Adult Faith Formation, 5pm, in Church and Parish Hall:
2/24: A Catholic Approach to Voting (w/Justin); 3/2 Parish mission, no AFF; 3/9 Lessons from the Passion of Christ According to the Four Evangelists (w/Ted); 3/16 and 3/23 no AFF.

Wed/Thurs - Living Your Catholic Faith, 7:30pm (Th) and 9:15am (Wed).
2/27-28 Lessons from St. Paul on the Cross of Christ; 3/5-6 Lessons from the Passion of Christ According to the Synoptic Gospels; 3/5-6 Lessons from the Passion of Christ According to the Gospel of John.

Parish Lenten Mission - Week of March 2nd. Led by special guest, Fr. John Cihak. He received a doctorate in theology from the *Gregorianum* in Rome, is a Hans Urs von Balthasar scholar and adjunct professor at Mt. Angel Seminary. Call office for more information.

Talk on the Modern Papacy at Mt. Angel Abbey - Definitely save the date: March 8th, Dr. and Deacon Owen F. Cummings continue his four part lecture series on the "Modern Papacy". The lection on the 8th will cover John XXIII and Paul VI. I went to the last one and it was *very* good! Call me for info.

Imprimatur is a publication of St. Thomas and is Edited by Justin Nickelsen, Assistant for Religious Education.

Theology Small Group



Small group starting for Catholics at St. Thomas and the surrounding area that are interested in being challenged a little more theologically, and simultaneously getting to know the thought of the present pope, Benedict XVI—Joseph Ratzinger. Informational meeting will be on Saturday, **March 1st at 9:30am**. Goals to determine how often the group would like to meet, what books they would be interested in reading, etc. See bulletin insert this week for more information or go online: www.TheologyGroup.blogspot.com

Lent Early, Not as Early as it Could Be

For us in the Western Church, Easter has not fallen on its earliest of thirty-five possible dates (March 22nd), since 1818, and it will not fall on that date again until 2285.

This year we are one day removed from the earliest possible date: March 23rd will be Easter. Right when we were getting used to Christ's birth, He is on His way to the cross and resurrection. I got the Christmas tree out of the house just before Ash Wednesday—it is still sitting in my yard!

The latest that Easter will call on the calendar year is April 25th, which last happened in 1943. It will happen again in 2038. Yet in just a couple years it will fall one day before this: April 24th, 2011.

Purgatory, Lattes, Evangelicals

Branches Bookstore and Café Divine used to be one of my favorite hang out spots. An extension of Crossroads Community Church in Vancouver, I would spend my afternoon and evenings studying there during my senior year of high school and first couple years at Clark College. Not only did I appreciate the ambiance, but it gave me the opportunity to evangelize. I would spread out my "Catholic" books on the table—including my Bible that had a glued-on picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe on it—and wait. Many Evangelical Protestants aren't afraid to approach a stranger with a discussion of religion, and I knew it. Time after time again this simple display of Our Lady would incite good conversations. Not only did they learn a lot, but I did too.



On one occasion I was perusing the bookstore area and took a look at the "Cult Section". There, next to the tracks concerning Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons, were titles on Catholicism. Yet, venture to other sections of the store and you would find books written by Catholics: Thomas A. Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* (the forth part of which is on the Blessed Eucharist); Saint Augustine's *Confessions*; Peter Kreeft and Fr. Ronald K. Tacelli's *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, etc. While I was happy to see them selling at least a couple books by Catholics, I thought it rather inconsistent that they would also be telling their customers that Catholicism was a "cult".

Interested, I decided to see what one of the employees had to say. She was walking my way at that precise moment:

"Excuse me, but could I ask you a question?"

"Sure."

"I noticed that you had these books written by Catholics, and yet you have books on Catholicism in your 'cult' section. Don't you think that is an inconsistent message?"

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Holy Quotes

"God shows his love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:8

Purgatory, Continued...

"Oh... yeah...", she says in a sort of secretive voice, "we were going to take those Catholic books and put them in the back. If a Catholic comes in and asks for the *Imitation* then we will just get it for them."

"Oh", I said with a smile, "I am Catholic."

Then, without *any* hesitation she awkwardly announces: "You believe in purgatory!"

So I, without *any* hesitation, said, "And so do you!"

Obviously caught off guard, she said, "I do?!"

"Yes! Let me explain. Have you ever sinned since you 'Accepted Jesus Christ as your Personal Lord and Savior'?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Would you say that you, even as a Christian, have some sort of an attachment or tendency towards sin?"

"Yes."

"Ok. Now, you agree that in heaven you will neither sin, nor will have any tendency to sin. We have to be *truly* holy to be in the presence of God, as it says in Revelation 21:27 and Hebrews 12:14. Isn't that correct?"

"Well... yeah," she said—this time with hesitancy—wondering where I was going.

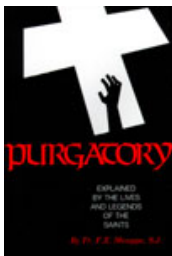
"Great," I replied. "Then we agree that God must remove any attachment that we have towards sin—any residual affects of sin—before we enter into His presence. Catholics call this 'Purgatory', which comes from the Latin *purgatorio*, which means 'to cleanse'. God does it. We don't know much about it, except that it necessarily happens, as you obviously agree!"

She didn't know what to say. She thought for a second, then said, "I need to get back to work."

What I should have done was follow up with her at another time, but I didn't. I guess I was content with having planted the seed of *doubt*. Yes, doubt. Doubt that what she had always been taught about the unreasonable and unbiblical nature of Catholicism *might* not be true after all.

Of course more could be said (and is said!) concerning the Church's teaching on purgatory. But consider this: *there are only three short paragraphs in the entire Catechism of the Catholic Church that touches upon the subject* (cf. CCC 1030-1032). There you will find the nucleus of the doctrine. Really, how much more *could* be said? We could talk about prayer for the dead (cf. 2 Maccabees 12:46) which shows the necessity of a cleansing for those who aren't going to hell and aren't quite "dressed for the occasion" of heaven. But we really don't know how *time* works in *eternity*—even mentioning the two words in the same sentence is confusing, provided that "eternity" is defined as "time-less-ness". Similar things could be said about indulgences. We don't really know how God uses our prayers, fasting, and indulgences to affect the process; only that they *do* in some way affect it *for the good* (plenary indulgences remove the process of purgatory, but that is another point of wonder, and I already mentioned the difficulty of using measurements of "time" to speak of the after-life). So really, how much more is there to be said, particularly in a spontaneous discussion with a Protestant?

Some of you may be thinking now of familiar books on the subject. Many may have read the 427 (!) page publication by TAN, aptly titled *Purgatory*—you know, the one that has the hand of a suffering man rising in pain towards a white cross with the backdrop of blackness and the title written in blood red...



For much of a millennia books like this have succeeded in frightening many-a-Catholic into repentance—not *necessarily* a bad thing. Wouldn't you agree that if we used to have too much fear over the ramifications of our sins that the pendulum has now swung in the opposite direction towards "Buddy Jesus"? We seem to (collectively) not take sin that seriously anymore and we would do well to remember that God is both merciful *and* just.

On the other hand, from where do you think that Protestants get their view of purgatory? Well, they get it from 427 page books that look... dreadful. And while the stories which fill the pages of some books may be edifying to some,

they scare the *hades*, if you will, out of Protestants—not to mention many Catholics. Is this not part of the reason why the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* thankfully lays the doctrine out in simple format? This *isn't* watered down Catholicism; it is the Faith for what it *is*, inviting us to belief and participation. And then, inviting us to defend it and share it with Evangelical bookstore employees... Perhaps.

For Fun

A Priest went out one Saturday to visit some parishioners. At one house it was obvious that someone was home, but nobody came to the door even though the Priest had knocked several times. Finally, he took out his card and wrote "Revelation 3:20" on the back of it, and stuck it in the door. *{Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and him with me.}*

The next day, the card turned up in the collection plate. Below the Priest's message was the notation "Genesis 3:10". *{I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.}*

Book Shelf

George Weigel's book *The Truth of Catholicism—Inside the Essential Teachings and Controversies of the Church Today*, would be an excellent choice for

those of you are looking for something that is readable, engaging and deals with many of the contemporary issues facing the Church. Chapters are arranged in the form of questions: 1. "Is Jesus the Only Savior"; 3. "Liberal Church? Conservative Church?"; 8. "Why do We Suffer?". Don't let the question format confuse you: this isn't the *Baltimore Catechism*. Check it out!

