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Bishop of Orlando
August 22, 2006

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2014 OUR Reason for Hope

WHAT'S the ISSUE?

Where do people go when they die?

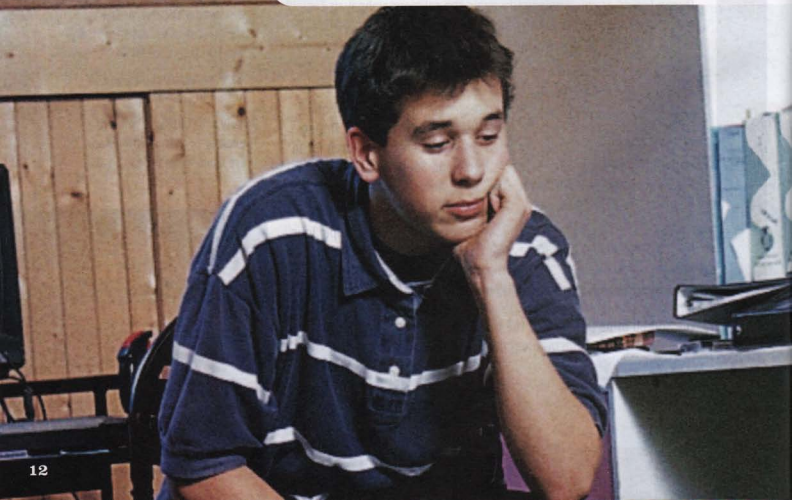
Will I ever see that person again?

What do I need to do to go to heaven?

"Lock the door behind me, Jimmy. I'll be home soon."

"Mom, please call me James. I'm not a little kid. And don't worry so much."

"Sorry, honey," his mom said, giving him a squeeze and looking into his face through sad, swollen eyes. "It's been a long day. I'm so sorry about your birthday. This just isn't fair for you." Her voice caught in her throat.



"Don't sweat it," James said. "It's been rough for everyone, and a party would just feel wrong with everything that's happening. Hug Grandma for me."

James flipped the deadbolt and flopped on the couch. Tonight he felt numb after his uncle's funeral.

Even though he was named after Uncle Jim, they had never been really close. When James was little, his uncle would come to their home every Christmas and would call every year to shout "Happy B-day, Jimbo!" But then he got busy.

Lately, Uncle Jim visited whenever he drove through town on business. Last week, he watched James play baseball. They had plans to go to a game next month. Then, just like that, he was gone. It all seemed unreal.

James wondered if he would see Uncle Jim in heaven. Grandma said Uncle Jim had just started coming back to church. He'd even gone to confession.

Where was Uncle Jim now? What wouldn't he give to hear Uncle Jim's voice again! Even that corny name, "Jimbo . . ."

James flipped through the mail and held up an envelope. He couldn't believe it. It was from Uncle Jim. He opened it cautiously and found a picture of himself pitching last week. On the back was scrawled, "Great game! You're growing up fast. But isn't 'James' a bit *too* formal? Love, Uncle Jim.

"P.S. Happy B-day, Jimbo! See ya' at the ball game next month!"



WHAT ABOUT IT?

- ▶ What were some of the feelings James was having about Uncle Jim's death?
- ▶ James didn't understand his uncle's death. What do you think some of his questions would be?

WHAT about YOU?

- ▶ Do you know anyone who has died? What were some of the feelings you had about the experience? What questions did it bring up for you?



Lord, may I have hope in your eternal love.

WHAT^{does} FAITH SAY?

CONNECT

When someone we love dies, we are reminded that someday we too will die. What will happen to us when we die? What is heaven like? How do we live so that we can be with God in heaven? These are big questions and thinking about them can make us afraid. Our faith reminds us that we do not have to fear death. We have hope because Jesus defeated death through his Resurrection. He promises eternal life to all who follow him.



SCRIPTURE

GO TO THE SOURCE

Read **John 11:1–44** and think about Jesus' love for his friends.

JESUS GIVES US HOPE

What does Jesus promise about eternal life?

We always worry about death when someone is seriously ill. But it's also natural to wonder about what will come after. We might think about how things will be different when someone we love is no longer with us. Our concern for a relative or friend who is very sick would send us running to be with that person and help however we could.

Lazarus



SCRIPTURE One day while traveling with his disciples, Jesus heard that his friend Lazarus was ill. Then Lazarus died. When Jesus arrived at their home, Lazarus's sister Martha said "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him."

Jesus told her:

"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live . . ."

Martha told Jesus that she believed he is the Messiah. Because of her belief, and because Jesus wants people to believe in him and give glory to his Father who sent him, Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb. Lazarus did not rise under his own power, but under the power of God. Jesus showed that he had power over humanity's greatest fear, death.

—John 11:1–44

Is There Hope for Us?

Lazarus and his sisters were great friends with Jesus. Because of this, Jesus came for Lazarus. Because of Martha's belief, he raised Lazarus. Like so many people back



▲ *Resurrection of Lazarus*, by
Fra Angelico (c. 1387–1455)

then, they hoped for a messiah. And because of their hope and belief, Jesus gave them even more reason to hope.

Lazarus' return to earthly life is very different from what happened at Jesus' Resurrection. Jesus rose to new life, a glorified life in which he returned to the Father. Jesus' Resurrection gives hope to those who believe.

As you know, hope is one of the three **theological virtues**. The other two are faith and charity (which can also be called "love"). The theological virtues are gifts from God that help you live your life in ways that strengthen your relationship with the Holy Trinity: God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Christian hope puts things into this perspective—that happiness comes from life with God. It helps you put your trust in Jesus' promises and the strength of the Holy Spirit. This hope keeps you motivated and going even during difficult times. It helps you put the right emphasis on the things that really matter, the things that relate to loving God and others.



✓ CHECK THIS OUT!

For hope, look to Paul, who wrote to the Colossians that Jesus is "the beginning, the first-born from the dead" (*Colossians 1:18*). There will be more to come. Because of Jesus' Resurrection to new life, we, too, hope to rise again.

Paul wrote to the Romans that if the Spirit of God is in us, it will give life to our bodies, even though they are dead. (See *Romans 8:11*.) Our Baptism joins us with Christ; we die with him to sin, and we live a full and new life in God.

Faith Walk

Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you.

Isaiah 41:10

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

Isaiah 43:1

Having hope is not always easy, especially when we are thinking about death! Here's the secret about hope, it is not just a feeling. Sometimes we have to decide to have hope even when we are afraid and feeling hopeless. During these times, spend time in prayer and turn to Scripture to read about our God who loves us and is always with us.

When do you find it hard to have hope?

Where do you find hope and encouragement?

Next Step

LIFE AFTER DEATH

How will we be judged by God?

No one can be sure what heaven will be like, but our tradition tells us that **heaven** is the state, or experience, of being happy with God forever.

Jesus warns us about judgment at our death in a parable he tells about a rich man who ignored a beggar. They both eventually die; the beggar is carried away by angels, and the rich man winds up in the netherworld, which we know as **hell**. There he suffers in flames.

Jesus also describes a great chasm—a gap that would probably make the Grand Canyon look like a gopher hole—between the rich man and heaven. (See *Luke 16:19–31*.) Hell is being apart from God forever. God is the source of our life and happiness. Imagine being without life or happiness forever.

▼ *Paradise*, by Jacopo Robusti Tintoretto (1518–1594)



How Late Is Too Late?

When we die, we'll be out of time to accept or to reject the love and grace Jesus offers us. We can take it or leave it today, but at the moment we die our destiny for eternity will be based on whether we have accepted God's love. At the moment of death, each person's soul is rewarded with the blessings of heaven, given a time of purification in purgatory, or condemned to eternal separation from God in hell. We call this the **particular judgment**.

God's willingness to accept our repentance, forgive us, and bring us to eternal happiness is available to us as long as we live. Jesus proves this on the cross. One of the criminals crucified with Jesus admits that he has sinned and asks, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus tells him "... today you will be with me in Paradise." (See *Luke 23:42–43*.) But think about this: Isn't it much more satisfying to go through life with the inner peace that comes

with knowing that you are living as God asks? God's way is not just about happiness later in heaven; living in his love and guidance is the surest way to peace and joy in this lifetime, too.

What's Purgatory

We receive God's grace through Baptism and accept God's loving friendship. If we live our lives and have repented for our sins, die in God's grace, and are perfectly purified, we are welcomed into heaven. However, if we have remained in God's friendship but are in need of forgiveness or satisfaction for temporal punishment for sins already forgiven, we will enter a condition called **purgatory**. Purgatory is not a place but a state of being in which we are purified before we enter heaven. This cleansing needs to happen before we experience the joy of eternal happiness with God.

Purgatory purifies us, but it's very different from the punishment of hell. Our prayers for the dead help provide the grace that the souls in purgatory need to be welcomed into God's heavenly kingdom.



Faith Walk

How do you want to be remembered when you die? When people are remembering you, what kinds of things do you hope that they say about you? What values do you want your life to stand for? What are the actions that you would like to be remembered for?

Sometimes the best way to know how to live is to think about what we want our life to mean for people when we are gone. Imagine you have died at an old age and are going to your own funeral. Write your eulogy and then keep it somewhere where you can look at it every once in a while. It can be a great reminder on how to live your life right now!

Next Step

THE SECOND COMING

How can we be with Jesus on the last day?

Someday, at God's word, our world will end. Nobody knows when or why, or what it will look like. We just know that life as we know it will end and creation will be transformed. And as we pray at Mass, Jesus "will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead."



SCRIPTURE

GO TO THE SOURCE

Read **Matthew 25:31-46** to find out how Jesus, the King of Glory, will judge all people at the end of time.

Who Will Inherit the Kingdom?

Jesus described pretty simply what will happen when he comes again. At the second coming, the **last judgment** will take place, during which all the living and dead will be judged. Those who have died will appear in their own bodies before Christ. In the Gospel of St. Matthew's description of this judgment, the glorified Christ will sit on a throne, putting the righteous people on his right side and the others on his left, like a shepherd in Jesus' day would separate sheep from goats.

The faithful people will have life forever in heaven with God because they lived good lives and reached out to people in need. This includes feeding someone who was hungry, welcoming a stranger, or taking care of a sick person. At the end of the world, Jesus will reveal the secrets of our hearts and judge each of us in light of our works and the degree that we accepted his grace or refused it and sinned. Jesus knows what each of us do, just as he knows when we turn to him or turn away from him in our lives.

The kingdom that Jesus talked so much about will come into fullness at the last judgment. As Christ has risen, so will we. Our bodies will be transformed by reuniting with our souls. The righteous will be with Jesus forever and the world will be transformed. Then God will be "all in all."

The Works of Mercy

The Works of Mercy are ways to respond to Jesus when we see him in the poor and needy. The **Corporal Works of Mercy** meet people's physical needs, and the **Spiritual Works of Mercy** bring spiritual hope and healing.

Often several Works of Mercy are done together. For instance, if a friend's grandma dies, you're more likely to comfort your friend and pray for her grandma, while somebody else will deliver flowers and other people will speak at her funeral. Jesus is pleased with whatever we do for people in need. It's important to think about what that might be. Look at the examples below and come up with your own responses to people's needs.



CONNECT YOUR FAITH

CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

Feed the hungry.

Give drink to the thirsty.

Clothe the naked.

Shelter the homeless.

Visit the sick.

Visit those in prison.

Bury the dead.

ONE THING YOU CAN DO

Donate to a food drive.

Help Catholic Relief Services.

Donate your old clothing.

Support Habitat for Humanity.

Visit a nursing home.

Support Jubilee Campaign.

Help clean up a local cemetery.

SOMETHING I'LL TRY

SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

Counsel the doubtful.

Instruct the ignorant.

Admonish the sinner.

Comfort the sorrowful.

Forgive injuries.

Bear wrongs patiently.

Pray for the living and the dead.

Share God's love with a friend.

Help teach little kids at church.

Confront a friend who's sinned.

Help a friend who's sad.

Accept someone's apology.

Give someone a second chance.

Pray for a loved one by name.

CATHOLICS BELIEVE

By his death and Resurrection, Jesus makes it possible for believers to have eternal life—life with God forever.

- ▶ Christian hope is based upon putting our trust in God and the hope that we will rise one day as Jesus did.

- ▶ We will be judged at our death based upon the ways we have accepted and acted on God's grace in our lives; God desires all of us to make the right choices in life so we can be with him forever in the happiness of heaven.
- ▶ Jesus will come at the end of time to judge the living and the dead, and the kingdom of God will be complete and full in its glory.

WHAT NOW?

LIVE OUR FAITH

- ★ Be hopeful. Hope is the mark of a Christian.
- ★ Challenge and change your outlook on troubling issues to reflect your hope.
- ★ Offer hope-filled advice to family and friends.
- ★ Make a list of things that give you hope.
- ★ Consider what it really means to trust in God.
- ★ Pray for those who have died.
- ★ Live your life in the way you want to be remembered.

WHAT ABOUT IT?

WHAT about YOU?

We are all going to be judged by God someday. We know that it will be based on more than what we say we believe, but on what we do as well. Write down one or two things that you are going to do this week to live your faith.

Under the word "hope," write your definition of the word. Write things that are related to hope around the word and draw a line to connect them. What does this exercise tell you about hope?

HOPE



PRAYER

God of hope and life, you created us to live a life of abundance. You created us to live a life for others. Give us the peace that comes from your promise of eternal life. Help us to live our lives in a way that reflects your love for the world. Amen.

FAITH at HOME

At home ask your parents to share how they felt when someone close to them died. What questions and feelings did it bring up for them?

Discuss how the experience strengthened their faith.



Visit www.osvcurriculum.com for more family and community connections.

Saint Peter Claver

In the 1600s and 1700s, when Africans were kidnapped and brought to the Americas as slaves, they had little reason for hope. In many cases, they didn't even know why they were being kidnapped, and could not ask because they didn't know the language of their captors. They were herded into the holds of ships and chained together. They were forced to live in close, squalid quarters with little or no food on a journey across the Atlantic Ocean that took many weeks.

When they got to the Americas and began to understand their captors' plans for them, they had even less reason for hope. They were prisoners in a strange land with unfamiliar languages and customs and were often treated inhumanely. No one seemed to care whether they lived or died—until Peter Claver came along.

Peter Claver was born in Spain in 1580. He took his vows in 1604, two years after entering the Jesuit novitiate in Tarragona. While studying philosophy on the island of Majorca, Alphonsus Rodriguez (who was later sainted) encouraged him to go to the Americas and "save millions of perishing souls," the souls of the captured African slaves.

Landing in Cartagena, New Granada (later Colombia) in 1610, Peter went to work immediately. He gave hope to those who had no reason to hope. He boarded ships as they docked and helped feed and clothe the Africans before they disembarked. He brought warmth, medicine, and spiritual remedies. He ministered the gospel to them. To those who were already dying, he administered the Sacraments, giving them hope of heaven.

Peter followed the enslaved Africans to the plantations on which they were forced to work. There he and his followers taught them the Gospel. He gave them hope for a glorious afterlife. In many cases, he persuaded their owners to treat them humanely. He spoke out against the evils of the slave trade and founded charitable societies similar to those of St. Vincent de Paul.

Over a forty-year period, Peter Claver was reputed to have saved about 300,000 souls, mostly enslaved Africans, by converting them to Christianity. He died in 1654 and was canonized by Pope Leo XIII in 1888. The Knights of St. Peter Claver is a predominantly African American fraternal order that is named after him. He is also the namesake of predominantly black dioceses in two of the largest cities in Louisiana.



Global Data

- Colombia is in the northwest corner of South America and is the only South American nation bordering on both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean.
- Colombia has a population of 46 million, 80 percent of whom are Roman Catholic.
- Colombia was conquered by the Spanish in the 1530s and administered as a part of New Granada, which also included what is today Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama.
- Colombia won independence from Spain in 1819 and lost Panama in 1903 to rebels who wanted a canal built across it by the United States.

