

What do Catholics believe about the Last Things?

1. Life is...

- *Pure gift of a gracious Creator – made in 'the image and likeness of God'*
- *Participation in becoming who we are by the ongoing choices we make: over time oriented towards God, or oriented against God*
- *A journey where the human destiny is union with God*

2. Death is....

- *Not the end, but entry into new life with God*
- *When one's soul leaves the body and passes through death to eternal life*
- *The experience of one's individual or particular judgment immediately after death*
- *Knowing oneself in the face of a just and merciful God*
- *Knowing one's eternal destiny – union with God or separation from God*

3. Christian Hope is...

- *In the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come – Nicene Creed*
- *To share in the resurrected life of Christ*
- *Based on Jesus' promise, "I am going to prepare a place for you..., and... I will come back and take you to myself" (John 14:2-3)*
- *To see God, be united with God, to experience life eternal with God – the culmination of the destiny for which God made us*
- *To experience, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived - what God has prepared for those who love him". (2 Cor 2:9)*
- *In Christ's Second Coming at the end of time, when all of humanity will see that he is truly Lord*
- *In the fulfilment of the Reign of God*
- *In a new heaven and a new earth – the beauties of the universe and our physical bodies will share in the eternal glory of God's reign.*

Bibliography:

- Family-Whanau Programme Leader's Guide - NCRS, Wellington, NZ, 2001
- Path Through Catholicism by Mark Link -- Tabor Publishing, Texas, 1991
- Your Faith and You: A Synthesis of Catholic Belief by James Finley & Michael Pennock - Ave Maria Press, Indiana, 1978

Exit Meeting for Sacrament Strand

Reflect on teaching the Sacrament Strand

Effectiveness of planning and teaching:

- What went well in teaching the Sacrament Strand?
- What issues arose – what concepts were difficult?
- What did the summative assessments and affect domain evaluations show?

Entry Staff Meeting for Communion of Saints Strand

Staff Prayer – Praying with the Communion of Saints: *Staff may like to bring a photo of a family member or friend who has died for the prayer focus*

Introduce the Theology of the 3 key concepts in the Communion of Saints Strand:

- Communion of Saints – Mary, Saints and Inspiring People
- Choices & the Formation of a Christian conscience
- Life, Death and Christian Hope – Heaven, Hell and Purgatory

Activity: Roundtable. In groups, move between 4 charts to explore the following terms: write, move, read what others have written and add more:

1. Write a definition for the following terms:
 - Communion of Saints
 - Heaven
 - Hell
 - Purgatory
2. List events involving Mary written about in the New Testament – name what each tells us about Mary.
3. What is conscience? List ways adults can help children make good choices and form a Christian conscience.
4. What do Catholics believe about the Last Things: Life, Death, Christian Hope?

Share responses and discuss concepts, field any questions.

Complete Communion of Saints Strand planning sheet: (pairs, syndicates)

- Focus and Key Concepts – These have been prepared for each year
- Plan the Intended learning outcomes with success criteria for display, reference to and for feedback and feed forward comments
- Chose the Attitudes, Key Competencies, Word Bank and Resources to focus on in teaching this strand
- Later - complete Learning and Teaching experiences and consolidation activities from the Children's Activity book

Exploring the Theology of the Communion of Saints Strand

Round table exercise: (4 stations) Set up charts with the following headings: (*Italics indicate what people might write.*)

Write a definition for the following four terms:

1. Communion of Saints:

- *Three states of the Church:*
 - *the Church in pilgrimage - the Church on earth*
 - *the Church in purification - the Church undergoing purgatory*
 - *the Church in perfection - the Church experiencing heaven*
 - *The assembly of all the saints who belong to the Church (the canonised saints, those not canonised - our families and friends who have died and dwell in God, those undergoing purgatory, you and me still on earth) - joined to Christ, the source and fountain of all grace.*
 - *The Communion of Saints is like a great prayer network. The living pray:*
 - *To the saints to intercede for them, to help them and inspire them*
 - *For those undergoing purgatory - the Holy Souls.*
- The saints in heaven pray for the living:*
- *Saints do not have the power to give grace themselves - this comes only from God, but the saints speak for us to God. The saint who stands above all other saints is Mary the Mother of Jesus, who as the first disciple is a model for all Christians.*

Notes:

- *The thinking behind this theology is that we belong to a larger community or family of faith than the human family / church on earth - we also belong to those who have gone before us.*
- *Baptism establishes a bond with Jesus Christ so strong that death cannot shatter it. Love establishes a bond so strong among us that death cannot shatter it - one does not leave the church by dying! (So if you want to get out of the church - you won't do it by dying!)*

2. Heaven

- *Seeing God face to face, being with God and in God, being with those we have loved on earth, never ending happiness and contentment, experiencing the Fullness of Life - infinite love, peace, justice, joy, rest, contentment, meaning, fulfilment, inclusion, communion, creativity, freedom, inclusion....all that God IS*

3. Hell

- *The opposite of God: eternal isolation and struggle, a state of deep unhappiness and discontent, the realisation of one's own rejection of God, eternal separation from God, a complete lack of experiencing all that God is (love, peace, joy, rest, contentment, freedom, Fullness of Life etc); the experience of infinite emptiness, aloneness, exclusion, meaninglessness - all that God is NOT*

4. Purgatory

- *Not a place, but a temporary state of being readied for heaven so as to have the capacity to experience union with God; a state of intense longing for God. Purgatory could be described as a gift of the God of second (or seventy) chances who loves people into heaven while honouring their free will. It is a state of being purified by love.*

Notes:

- *Purgatory means we do not ignore/ brush over the fact that we also sin - at times we miss the mark about God, about living for God's reign *Te Tino Rangatiratanga*, about way we respond to the call to love one another*
- *Purgatory acknowledges we have free will - God does not enforce union with Godself*
- *Purgatory is not in Scripture but is grounded on what Scripture teaches about the holiness of God, about sin, about judgment and God's forgiveness and merciful love*

List major events involving Mary written about in the New Testament - name what each tells us about Mary (8 are listed here):

- *The Annunciation - Recognised her power to help extend God's reign on earth. Trusted God completely and was open to the unknown of God's ways*
- *The Visitation - Mary goes out, towards others, into Elizabeth's home, is with others - a woman who cares about others. Open to receive the wisdom of an older companion.*
- *The Birth of Jesus - Mary is the God-bearer, the Christ-bearer, the revealer of Christ to the world*
- *The Presentation - the giver - offers all she has been given to God*
- *Searching for Jesus - The one who searched for God. And she also knew what it was like to have a teenager in the house and was not afraid to set some boundaries.*
- *Wedding at Cana - Attentive to need, concerned for others, sensitive and practical - one who does something about it.*
- *At the Foot of the Cross - the compassionate one, mother of a dying child, of an executed criminal - companion in sorrow to every person who experiences distress, depression, loss, hopelessness. (Our Lady of Sorrows) She is a woman of courage and strength, standing with those who suffer.*
- *At Pentecost - along with others empowered for the Church - Christ's spirit becomes their spirit - to witness to Christ's resurrection - to bring Christ's life, care, concern, attention, compassion and hope to others.*

1. What is conscience?

- *Conscience is our capacity to judge what is right and wrong. It is the ability to judge whether an action or an attitude will help me to grow as a person or will stifle or kill my relationship with God and others*

2. List ways adults can help children make good choices and form a Christian conscience.

- *open children to the Scriptures - to know the dream, the vision and the values of Jesus*
- *make children aware of the formal teachings of the Church appropriate to their age*
- *help them seek and listen to advice from people with knowledge, faith, goodness and goodwill*
- *explain what is right and wrong according to Gospel values from an early age*
- *help children track the implications and consequences of choices they may make*
- *encourage children to reflect on the effect their choices have on others*
- *affirm their good choices, explaining why they are good choices*
- *use stories to illustrate what happens when people make selfish choices*
- *explain what to do when they are asked to act against their conscience*
- *emphasise the importance of choices that are life-giving, that would be in accord with what Jesus would do*

Notes:

Conscience is not a little voice in our heads. It is our mind and heart making informed judgments by reflecting on

- *Scripture - the dream, vision and values of Jesus*
- *Formal teachings of the Church*
- *Advice from respected people with knowledge, faith, goodness and goodwill*

It is through these three means that a Christian conscience is formed. Then it will be as Vatican II described in *Gaudium et Spes* #16: *The most secret core and sanctuary of a person where we are alone with God, whose voice echoes in our depths. In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbour.*

Communion of Saints

Hell

Heaven

Purgatory

List the major events involving Mary written about in the New Testament. Name what each tells us about Mary.

List ways that adults can help children make good choices and form a Christian conscience.

What is conscience?

**What do Catholics believe about
the Last Things?**