

Mission Perspectives

“I will set my Dwelling among you and will not disdain you. Ever present in your midst, I will be your God and you will be my people” (Leviticus 26:11-12)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Thanks be to God who has brought us to the threshold of the end of this month!

With the help of God, we have accomplished many things together. Besides the usual common liturgical celebration at Mass and other prayer services, we have been able to carry out other mission-oriented activities. Our youngsters were able to go through their VBS, the Knights of Columbus changed leadership and the new officers were installed and our new tabernacle was installed in the adoration chapel, among other important activities. We thank the Lord who has helped us to accomplish all these communal activities and more!

Last week I wrote about the deficit problem and one of the suggested solutions. The hope was that you would read about it before receiving the letter and the envelope in the mail. However, the envelope company was way ahead of me and they released the letter to you before you were alerted about it. Some of you called in wondering what was going on, while the rest of you just dove in immediately and started solving the problem. To date, the response is so far good, as you see in the “Offertory Totals” section in the bulletin. Hopefully, the explanation given today by the representative of the parish finance council was also helpful. Even then, please don’t hesitate to ask more questions for clarification.

As is our annual response to the Mission Cooperation Plan of our diocese, every year we welcome a missionary who comes to do mission appeals. Last year we welcomed one from the Philippines but this year, next weekend on August 5-6, shall we welcome one from the Diocese of Butare in Southern Rwanda. Fr. Denis Kiyenje will be telling us about the mission activities they are carrying out in his diocese, as he preaches during Mass. May we be as hospitable to Fr. Kiyenje as we have always been to other missionaries.

May the good Lord who has entrusted us with membership and the responsibility of building up the body of Christ at this point in the history of SEAS continue to give us the graces we need going forward.

Yours in the Master’s service,

Fr Evarist.



*Please be sure to read the Apologist's Corner each week.
Your Question may be one of those answered!*

Apologist's Corner

This form is for questions you have on *Faith and Morals*.

Please write clearly.

Please keep the questions coming!
Apologist's Corner Answers

Question 1

In Genesis we have our first parents: Adam and Eve. Cain and Abel were born of them. Cain killed Abel but the next thing in Genesis is that Cain knew his wife. From whom was this woman born? Did the sons of Adam and Eve marry their sisters?

Answer 1

Since this is the second time the same question has been asked, let me refer you to the answer I gave (Answer 3 in the bulletin of January 15, 2023). In that answer, I wrote, "The Bible does not mention all the children Adam and Eve had. For that reason, all people who have attempted to answer your question agree that Cain married his sister. For our modern age, this would unquestionably be incest, which God does not condone. So, what are we to think about Cain's wife mentioned in Genesis 4:17?"

The short answer is that there was nothing morally wrong with intermarriage *within the first generation of offspring* for Adam and Eve. They had no choice of spouse except their siblings. In contrast, incestual relationships in the direct line – i.e., between parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, etc. – are *intrinsically* immoral and thus never justified, because they violate the nurturing and other parental roles that parents and grandparents are to provide and that children and grandchildren have a right to expect (cf. Genesis 9:18-25; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 4-5; *Code of Canon Law* 1091 §1).

Beyond the first generation there arise concerns regarding incestual birth defects and inbreeding that will impair, not foster, family ties and the covenantal expansion of the family of God. Because of these concerns, there developed proscriptions against incest in both the Bible and modern Church canon law (cf. Leviticus 20:17; *Code of Canon Law* 1091 §2).”

Question 2

Jesus suffered, died and was buried – not burnt. How could the Catholic Church allow cremation? Isn't that changing Scripture?

Answer 2

You are right to mention that Jesus died and was buried, not burnt. The only time cremation is mentioned in the Bible is in 1 Samuel 31:11-13 where it is mentioned that the bodies of Saul and his sons were cremated, and their ashes and bones were buried at Jabesh. That passage just informs us about what happened but does not recommend or forbid the practice of cremation. With that in mind, there is nothing in the Bible for or against that cremation.

For Protestants who claim to believe only in the Bible but don't believe in the interpretative authority of the Church even if by doing so they disobey the very Bible they claim to be their guide, would be at loss in answering your question. When it comes to the Catholic Church, though, there is not much difficulty.

Whenever there is a practice such as cremation which is neither recommended nor forbidden in the Bible, the Church, using the power of loosening and binding entrusted to Saint Peter (cf. Matthew 16:19) and all the apostles together (cf. Matthew 18:18, Luke 10:16) who in turn passed that authority over to their successors, applies a principle known as prudential judgement in making practical decisions. Debates are held, opinions are raised and arguments for and against a certain practice are brought forward until a final decision is reached. For that reason, not even the pope just wakes up one morning and promotes a novel teaching without prior consultations with theologians who are competent in a given field. For that reason, whatever decision is reached must not be opposed to what God commands or forbids. Such was the decision to permit cremation. It neither goes against anything God commands nor anything God forbids. What the Church recommends is that even in carrying out such practice, it has to be kept in mind that it is a human body dealt with and has to be accorded the dignity that it is due, so that, even the ashes obtained after cremation, should not be discarded anyhow as if they are ashes from burnt wood, but must be treated with such dignity that decent burial must follow cremation. That is why such practices as keeping the urns in the house, scattering ashes or sharing ashes for jewelry or other ornaments...is forbidden by the Catholic Church.

You may still wonder why Jesus' body was not burned. The answer is that at that time, there was no practical need for doing so. Such is still the case among the African cultures, for instance. Poor as most Africans are, they still have enough land where they bury their loved ones and society pulls resources together to help the bereaved to give a decent burial, however minimal it may be, to their loved ones. In the Western countries, though – in Europe and North America – there are justifiable, practical reasons involving space and finances and sometimes lack of community support, why cremation should be permitted.

Some people wonder whether this doesn't hamper God's plan regarding the resurrection of the body. No, it doesn't. In Romans 8:35-39 Saint Paul mentions so many distressing things we can encounter in our lives but assures us that none of those will separate us from the love of God, including our eternal destiny with him. On that list, we can add cremation; only sin can jeopardize our eternal destiny, but cremation cannot, as long as we die in the Lord.

Question 3

Just an observation... When the gifts are brought to the altar prior to the consecration, the money basket is also brought. It reminds me of the money changers in the Temple. Your thoughts please...

Answer 3

It seems you are referencing the incident of the "cleansing of the Temple" mentioned in all Gospels: Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46 and John 2:14-16 where Jesus drove out people who had turned the Temple area into a market place. There we read that people were selling all sorts of animals and birds (intended for sacrifice) and running forex bureaus – exchanging money. Much as their service was important so that pilgrims could get animals and birds to offer for sacrifice and also to get the local currency needed for transaction, the principle motive of those selling was to make profits with total disregard to the reverence due the Temple area. Besides Jesus' actions mentioned in those passages, we find him also speaking out to justify his unusual wrath. He said, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples'? But you have made it a den of thieves'" (cf. Matthew 21:13, Mark 11:17, Luke 19:46). Here, Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 56:7. Then, after Jesus had whipped the merchants and given them the reason for doing so, he ordered them, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a market place" (cf. John 2:16).

Now, when you compare what was done by the merchants who sold animals and birds and exchanged money in the Temple area with what we do at Mass during the procession with gifts to the altar, there should be obvious differences.

- 1) the money in the basket is not collected on mercantile basis whereby anybody is making profits by selling anything during Mass. Rather, it is collected to assist with meeting the financial needs of the parish
- 2) the processing towards the altar whereby the consecration is about to take place involves reverence which was lacking among the merchants in the Temple area
- 3) all the items in the offertory procession: bread, wine, sometimes water or other items, and yes, money are symbols of the little we can offer to God as a sign of our gratitude so that in return, he may favorably look upon those mundane tokens to appreciate our small efforts of reciprocity.

What is done is recommended by the liturgical norms. For, according to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), we read in the last part of paragraph 73, "Even money or other gifts for the poor or for the Church, brought by the faithful or collected in the church, are acceptable; given their purpose, they are to be put in a suitable place away from the Eucharistic table."

This is exactly what we do.

Question 4

We are taught that Jesus a person with two natures, both divine and human. Was his human nature capable of fully understanding what his divine nature knew?

Answer 4

Jesus Christ is a mysterious person because since the incarnation (becoming human) human nature was joined to his divine nature and then he became one person with two natures. This is theologically referred to as *hypostatic union*. In this union, none of the natures was diminished because they never mingled. This puzzled theologians from the time of reflecting on this two-nature union in one person. Then they started wondering how the faculties of the two natures interacted. This brings us to the wonder expressed in your question.

Some theologians thought that at the incarnation, Jesus' human intellect was zapped with the beatific vision while others argued that it wasn't the case but at some point, he was infused with superhuman knowledge which guided him through his earthly life, while others insisted that Jesus accumulated knowledge through experiential learning like anybody else.

With variation in such theological opinions, the teaching authority of the Church had to step in. These are the questions addressed in paragraphs 472-474 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Paragraph 474 is most relevant to your question. It says, "By union to the divine wisdom in the person of the Word incarnate, Christ enjoyed in his human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans he had come to reveal. What he admitted to not knowing in his area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal."

To get the entire teaching about this issue, please read all the referenced paragraphs.

Question 5

Why did St. Francis of Assisi never become a priest?

Answer 5

Given the fact that St. Francis of Assisi was the founder of the Franciscan Order, you may be one of the few priests who know that he was never a priest. He was ordained a transitional deacon intending to become a priest but at some point, he became convinced that he was unworthy to ascend altar steps to call upon God's power to bring about the miracle of the Holy Eucharist.

Question 6

Have there ever been any Franciscan popes?

Answer 6

According to *Wikipedia*, there have ever been five Franciscan popes: Pope Nicholas IV (1288-1292), Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484), Pope Sixtus V (1585-1590), Pope Clement XIV (1769-1774) and Pope Pius X (1903-1914).