



OLOL
FLAME TEENS

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PART I

Introduction

“Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope” – 1 Peter 3:15

The purpose of this document is to serve as a resource for leaders teaching teens at OLOL (or any other Maronite Catholic parish). The ministry has been operating since 2009, and it has been noted that there are several recurring questions that teens ask. This document aims to provide a comprehensive response to those recurring questions, so that leaders are well equipped in answering those questions effectively.

References are provided in all answers, as well as additional resources for the leader to gain their own solid understanding of the Church's teaching on that specific matter. Only once the leader has a solid understanding, then they can effectively answer the question in their own way and own words. Catechism references are in **red** while scriptural references are in **blue**. Other references such as canon law, saints etc are in **green**. It is encouraged that the leaders dig deeper into the respective question using other resources too.

Note that this document does not include any ‘time-specific’ questions. Current affairs/ happenings always spark questions from teens, but these are not covered here as there are too many and are generally only relevant to their specific time. If you find any questions being frequently asked which isn’t included here, please email teens@olol.org.au and this document will be revised accordingly.

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Questions

AFTERLIFE & JUDGEMENT

1. Can non-Catholics go to Heaven?

Yes, they can. There are a few points to consider here:

- a. We are judged according to what we know. This is found in scripture & the Catechism.
 - ii. Refer to Luke's gospel, where the master's punishment is dependent on the knowledge of the servant *"And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating"* – Luke 12: 47-48
 - iii. *"Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience - those too may achieve eternal salvation"* – CCC 847-848
- b. It is a formal Dogma of the church that "There is no salvation outside the Catholic Church". This is perhaps the most misunderstood dogma of the Church. CCC 846 explains it well *"it means that all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body"* (CCC 846). So, by saying there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church, it effectively says that you can't get to heaven a different way other than Christ. Because Christ is united with the Church.

2. Will my pet go to Heaven?

No, they probably won't. There might be animals in Heaven if God so chooses to, but the souls of the animals that die on Earth do not survive death. This is the traditional understanding and position of most theologians such as St Thomas Aquinas. Note that it is not dogmatically declared.

A few points we can be sure of:

1. Animals have a *type* of soul
 - o Everything living has a soul. The soul is the principle of life. Animals have souls and so do plants as they are living. But their souls are much different from human souls. Humans have a rational soul, and it is spiritual in nature. An animal's soul is NOT rational and NOT spiritual in nature, it is bound to their physical matter. So once their physical matter stops functioning and dies, their souls will die too.

2. Animals DO NOT have a rational soul like we do.
 - Animals only act on instinct. They cannot make morally good or evil decisions.
 - Just think about it, can you think of a situation where you can point your finger at an animal and declare with full confidence that the animal has committed a morally evil act (mortal sin)? No, because they always act on instinct. The lion that kills a deer is just trying to eat. The dog that kills the other dog is just trying to survive. They act on *instinct* only, and it's because of this truth that we intuitively know that you can never hold an animal culpable for sin.

3. Animals DO NOT experience 'Heaven' as we do.
 - Let's define Heaven. According to the Catechism, Heaven is a *“state of supreme, definitive happiness” that involves a perfect “communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed” (CCC 1024)*. This requires rational knowledge and love, which animals don't have. So, no animals will not experience 'Heaven' as we do.

3. Do people turn to angels after we die?

No, they do not. Angels are fundamentally different creatures to humans and will always remain so. Angels were created by God as purely spiritual beings. As they are purely spiritual, they have no body at all.

“The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls ‘angels’ is a truth of faith” – CCC 328

God created man to have both body and soul, which means we have a physical and spiritual component. When a human dies, they remain a human, so it is incorrect to say they are an angel.

*“God from the beginning of time made at once (simul) out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and then (deinde) the human creature, who as it were **shares in both orders**, being composed of **spirit and body**.” – CCC 327*

CCC 327 says it well. Basically, God created all things spiritual and physical. And humans share in both the spiritual and physical at the same time (body and soul).

Sometimes the teen would understand “angel” as simply meaning a person in Heaven. For example, when someone passes away, they'll hear “we gained an angel” or “fly high angel”. The correct term to use is ‘saint’ not angel. A saint is a human who is in Heaven. Our nature will not change in Heaven, it is just elevated and perfected. We do not become angels, because angels are fundamentally different creatures to us.

4. Does purgatory exist? Where is it in the bible?

Yes purgatory exists and is a place of purification prior to entering heaven (if required) as mentioned in the Catechism.

*“All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed **assured of their eternal salvation**; but **after death they undergo purification**, so as to achieve the **holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.**” - CCC 1030*

So purgatory is for those that have died in Gods friendship and ultimately chose to be with Him. See some scriptural support for this:

- Nothing unclean can enter heaven as mentioned in Revelation below. This implies a necessary process to completely and utterly purify a soul before entering heaven.
 - *“**Nothing unclean shall enter heaven, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood**” - Revelation 21:27*
- The doctrine of Purgatory is shown in 2 Maccabees. This passage discusses prayers for the dead, suggesting that the dead can be aided by the prayers of the living, which implies a state in which the dead can be purified.
 - *“**But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin.**” - 2 Maccabees 12:45-46*
- St Paul implies that one can be saved through fire although they have not necessary built their work perfectly.
 - *“**But if someone's work is burned up, that one will suffer loss; the person will be saved, but only as through fire.**” - 1 Corinthians 3:15*

Purgatory is to purify you to prepare you to see God face to face in the ‘Beatific Vision’.

*“The Church gives the name **Purgatory** to this **final purification of the elect**, which is **entirely different from the punishment of the damned**. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire.” - CCC 1031*

Our affiliation/ inclination to sins is an uncleanness which needs to be purified. Every single sin you commit has the effect of growing your attachment to sin or created things (not God). This attachment to sin cannot be present in heaven, so a process needs to happen to purge you of these attachments (hence the name purgatory).

*“To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church, it is necessary to understand that **sin has a double consequence**. Grave sin **deprives us of communion with God** and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the 'eternal punishment' of sin. On the other hand **every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures,***

which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the 'temporal punishment' of sin." - CCC 1472

5. Do aborted babies go to heaven if they are unbaptised?

There are 2 things to note for this question:

- The Church directly answers this question. Effectively, we entrust the fate of these souls to the mercy of God.
 - *"As regards children who have died without Baptism, **the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God**, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children which caused him to say: '**Let the children come to me, do not hinder them,**' (Mk 10:14; cf. 1 Tim 2:4) allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism. All the more urgent is the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy Baptism."* - CCC 1261
- While its been revealed that Baptism is necessary, its important to note that God is not bound by the sacraments.
 - *"The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation... **Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament...** God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, **but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.**" - CCC 1257*

6. Why is there 2 judgements? What's the point of the final judgement?

There are two judgements that occur, the Particular Judgement and the Final Judgement.

Particular Judgement

When you die, you are immediately judged. This will determine if you are going to Heaven or Hell.

- *"For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body."* 2 Corinthians 5:10
- *"Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either **entrance into the blessedness of heaven**-through a purification or immediately, -- **or immediate and everlasting damnation.**" - CCC 1022*

Final Judgement

The final judgement occurs at the second coming of Christ. He will judge all humanity all together, the living and the dead:

- ***“Then Christ will come in his glory, and all the angels with him... Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. . . . And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” - CCC 1038***

The question now is “what’s the point of this? If you already went through the particular judgement then what’s the point of the final judgement”?

See below:

- The point is for God to reveal to all humanity his glory and justice by revealing to everyone everything that happened and showing why His love and justice triumphs in the end. The first step is to reveal to everyone everything that has happened.
 - ***“In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man's relationship with God will be laid bare. The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life” - CCC 1039***
- So you will know everything about everyone and all that has ever happened. You will come to understand why God allowed everything to happen and how He was ultimately in control the entire time. This reveals his glory and justice.
 - ***“Jesus Christ he will pronounce the final word on all history. We shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation and of the entire economy of salvation and understand the marvelous ways by which his Providence led everything towards its final end. The Last Judgment will reveal that God's justice triumphs over all the injustices committed by his creatures and that God's love is stronger than death.” - CCC 1040***
- Debrief analogy: When you organise a huge event, you will usually debrief with other organisers afterwards. You will find out why certain things played out the way they did by learning about other peoples experiences. Debriefing is a form of judgement.
 - The final judgement is kind of like that, a really big debrief of all of humanity. Everything is revealed to everyone, and because of that you will understand why everything played out the way it did. And in understanding that, God shows how he triumphed in the end showcasing his Justice and Love.
- Your destination does not change from the particular judgement. If you are judged to go to Hell then that can't change at the general judgement
- Those that are still alive when the final judgement occurs, will receive their judgement then. This means they 'skip' the particular judgement but that has no effective difference as they still get judged, just at the final judgement.

KILLING

7. Is it ok to kill in war?

Yes, it is justifiable to go to war and kill, but only for the right reasons. The Church lays out certain conditions that must be met for it to be a justified action (CCC 2309). They are summarized below:

- a. **The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain.**
- b. **All other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective.**
- c. **There must be serious prospects of success.**
- d. **The use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated.** The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.

If these conditions check out, then it's justifiable to go to war!

8. Is it ever ok to kill another person?

Only in very specific situations. Murder is never ok. The definition of murder is unjust killing. So, it is never ok to unjustly kill another of course. But in some situations, it is justified to kill but that is not considered murder. This type of 'just' killing is only morally permissible in certain situations such as:

- a. In a justified war (refer to Question 7),
- b. It is justified to kill as an act of self-defence. As per CCC 2264, *"Someone who defends his life is not guilty of murder even if he is forced to deal his aggressor a lethal blow"*.
- c. The Catechism goes even further to say that it is a requirement to take action to defend life if you are a responsible person for a family, community or country. *"Legitimate defence can be not only a right but a grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others. The defence of the common good requires that an unjust aggressor be rendered unable to cause harm"* – CCC 2265

Note that the teen might ask how the 5th Commandment fits into this ("thou shall not kill"). The more accurate translation from the Hebrew for this Commandment would be "thou shall not murder," as the word for kill used is *'rāṣah'* which is illicit killing.

SIN

9. What is a mortal sin? Why is it so bad?

A mortal sin requires 3 conditions to be met:

1. It is a grave matter (you did something seriously wrong, typically an offshoot of the 10 Commandments).
2. Full knowledge (you knew fully this was wrong)
3. Full consent (you fully chose to do this of your own accord)

*“For a sin to be mortal, **three conditions** must together be met: “Mortal sin is sin whose object is **grave matter** and which is also committed with **full knowledge** and **deliberate consent**.” – CCC 1857*

If all the above 3 conditions are met, then you have committed a mortal sin and **MUST** go to confession for forgiveness. If any of these conditions are not met, then it is a venial sin.

It is considered serious because the Church teaches that if you die in a state of mortal sin, you go to Hell... Yikes!

*“Mortal sin...results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace. If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and **the eternal death of hell**” – CCC 1861*

10. What is the unforgivable sin?

The unforgivable sin is to refuse God's mercy. It is also called Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It is simply; a refusal to repent of sin.

*“There are no limits to the mercy of God, but **anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy** by repenting, **rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit**. Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence **and eternal loss**” – CCC 1864*

11. Why would God allow temptation?

God allows temptation because it is through temptation that one grows closer to God. If you are never challenged, or never struggled, you will never learn anything! God makes it clear that you are never ever tested beyond your limit, as shown in St Paul's letter to the Corinthians when discussing his struggles with temptations.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness” – 2 Corinthians 12:9

The Church reinforces how vital temptation is to grow in holiness. It gives you the opportunity to choose God and grow in your love towards God.

*“The Holy Spirit makes us discern between trials, which are **necessary for the growth of the inner man**, and temptation, which leads to sin and death. We must also discern between being tempted and consenting to temptation... **God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings**. . . There is a certain usefulness to temptation. No one but God knows what our soul has received from him, not even we ourselves. But temptation reveals it in order to teach us to know ourselves, and in this way, **we discover our evil inclinations** and are obliged to give thanks for the goods that temptation has revealed to us.” – CCC 2847*

Further points:

- If all temptation is removed, then that means you’ll lose your free will! You need to have the option to NOT follow God available, otherwise your love doesn’t mean anything, because you didn’t choose God! You had no other option!
- It requires greater love to choose love in the face of struggles. Is it harder to love your friend or your enemy? It is harder to love your enemy because you need MORE love to do this! But if you choose to love your enemy’s, you grow in love & holiness. Similarly, if you choose God in the face of hard temptations, you grow in love & holiness!

12. How can I fight temptation?

There are several different ways to fight temptation/ vices. A few are outlined below:

1. **Pray.** Pray for assistance from God and the saints. Pray for the graces to fight. *“Such a battle and such a victory become possible only through prayer. It is by his prayer that Jesus vanquishes the tempter” – CCC 2849*
2. **Avoid the occasion of sin.** So, avoid the situation where it is likely you’ll fall into sin. For example:
 - If you have a problem with pornography, don’t walk into the bathroom with your phone. Keep your phone somewhere else
 - If you have a gambling problem, avoid going to the pokies
 - If your friends commit certain sins, avoid the group so you don’t fall too
 - If your friends are gossiping, walk away from the situation to prevent the temptation getting too strong as you hear more
 - If you get extremely angry gaming, causing you to be bitter, rude and wrathful, then avoid playing that game
3. **Take your mind off it!** Experiencing the thought of temptation is not a sin, you must put a stop to it immediately otherwise it will get stronger if you dwell on it. You are making it harder for yourself to fight the temptation if you let it linger and dwell on it. Put it out of your mind. Do something else to distract you or refocus your attention. For example, go for a run, play a sport, play a game, call a friend, go to Church etc.
4. **Focus on practicing the opposing virtue to the vice you are struggling with.** For example:

- If you are feeling wrathful, then practice the opposing virtue which is patience. The more you practice patience, the weaker your affinity to wrath will be
 - If you are envious of what others have, then practice acts of kindness. This will extinguish the affinity towards envy as you perform more acts of kindness
5. **Note:** *This answer is probably for older teens* - It is important to note that God allows these struggles for a reason (He does not cause them but allows them). If He is allowing you to struggle with a particular vice, then it is because He has great plans for you to grow in holiness. That said, you can use the Devil’s weapon of temptation against him. So, when you are tempted, take a moment and THANK God for allowing that temptation. Then ask Him for the grace to grow in the respective virtue as outlined in point 3 above.

seven cardinal virtues & seven deadly sins	
• chastity	• lust
• temperance	• gluttony
• charity	• greed
• diligence	• sloth
• patience	• wrath
• kindness	• envy
• humility	• pride

13. Why does God allow evil?

Note: Refer to Question 37 & 11

There are **two** types of evil that we will differentiate. There are moral evils and natural evils.

1. Moral evils are when someone chooses evil
 - a. Eg. If someone punches another, or shoots them or steals etc.
 God allows this simply due to his gift of free will. If God stopped us every time we decided to do something wrong, then we would not have free will! And if we don’t have free will, then we would just be robots and can never truly love God. Love, by definition, must be freely given, this means, you must have the option NOT to follow God available. This is why God permits moral evils. *“God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings.” – CCC 2847*

2. Natural evils are what humans have no control over
 - a. Eg. Natural disasters, diseases etc.
 The Church teaches clearly that God allows these evils as a greater good will result from them. *“The fact that God permits physical and even moral evil is a mystery that God illuminates by his Son Jesus Christ who died and rose to vanquish evil. Faith gives us the*

certainty that God would not permit an evil if He did not cause a good to come from that very evil, by ways that we shall fully know only in eternal life.” – CCC 324

There are a few things to note here:

- The point of our life is not to avoid suffering. Yes, it is difficult, but Christ shows us that you can be sanctified through it. If you are suffering, you can unite that to the suffering of Christ and grow in holiness as a result.
- Death is not the end. If we hear of a tragic event that killed innocent people, we must remember that death is simply a path all must eventually take. Someone dying does not equate to damnation. God Willing they would be rejoicing in Heaven.

14. Is not attending Mass on Sundays a sin?

Yes, it is. It directly breaks the 3rd Commandment (Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy). The Church is very clear on this, that you can only miss mass for a valid reason. Deliberately missing mass constitutes a grave sin. So only if the other 2 conditions of a mortal sin are fulfilled, then it’ll be a mortal sin (full consent, full knowledge). If you didn’t know how vital it was to attend mass, then it will just be a venial sin (because you lacked full knowledge in that case).

*“The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: “On **Sundays** and other holy days of obligation **the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass**” – CCC 2180*

*“The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason, **the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist** on days of obligation, **unless excused for a serious reason** (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who **deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin**” – CCC 2181*

15. Why do we have to have original sin if we didn’t do it ourselves?

Original sin is not a punishment but just a consequence of Adam’s sin. It’s a deprivation of original holiness. It’s not a question of if it’s fair or not as it’s just the consequence of the action. It’s a fact of life that applies to anything our ancestors do. For example:

- If a mum is an alcoholic while pregnant and the kid is born with defects. It’s not about fair or unfair. The defects are a natural consequence of the action (drinking alcohol).
- If a man gambles away all his money and now his children are born into poverty. It’s not about if this is fair or unfair. It’s just the natural consequence of his action.

The Catechism goes further to explain that Adam represented all of humanity. The actions of Adam are implicated in humanity just as how the actions of Christ are implicated in humanity.

*"How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The **whole human race is in Adam 'as one body of one man.'** By this 'unity of the human race' **all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice...** that is why original sin is called 'sin' only in an analogical sense: **it is a sin 'contracted' and not 'committed'—a state and not an act.**" - CCC 404*

This concept is rooted in scripture in St Paul's letter to the Romans

"For just as through the disobedience of one person the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one the many will be made righteous" - Romans 5:19

CONFESSION

16. Why do priests have to hear confession? Can't I just pray to God?

You only must go to a priest for confession when you have committed a mortal sin. This is directly instructed and instituted by Christ himself. This is found in scripture *"Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them "Receive the holy Spirit Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."* – John 20:21-23. Christ gives his disciples the ability to forgive sins.

Important notes:

- When you confess to a priest, the priest is acting 'in persona Christi' - in the person of Christ. It is Christ that listens and forgives you, but the priest is used as an instrument of that grace. *"The priest is not the master of forgiveness, but its servant" – CCC 1466*
- You can "just pray to God" for forgiveness, and that can forgive your venial sins, but NOT your mortal sins. *"When (contrition) arises from a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called "perfect". **Such contrition remits venial sins**" – CCC 1452*

17. How do I know the priest won't tell other people my sins?

You can 100% certain that a priest will not tell anyone about your sins. The Church is very clear and firm that no priest is ever permitted to ever reveal information he has obtained through confession. This is called the 'Seal of Confession'.

In fact, the Church is so strict on this, that the consequence of breaking the 'Seal of Confession' is excommunication of the priest. Refer to the code of canon law below.

Can. 1386—§ 1. A confessor who directly violates the sacramental seal incurs a latae sententiae excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See.

There is no exception to every breaking the ‘Seal of Confession’. Ever. Period. Refer to the CCC below:

*“Given the delicacy and greatness of this ministry and the respect due to persons, the Church declares that **every priest who hears confessions is bound under very severe penalties to keep absolute secrecy** regarding the sins that his penitents have confessed to him. He can make no use of knowledge that confession gives him about penitents’ lives. This secret, **which admits of no exceptions, is called the “sacramental seal,”** because what the penitent has made known to the priest remains “sealed” by the sacrament” – CCC 1467*

In fact, this is a very common reason priests are thrown in prison. An authority knows that the priest knows something about a particular case yet refuses to reveal it. Certain countries, according to their law, would consider the priest indirectly complicit and hence throw them in prison. This includes some states of Australia currently at the time this is written.

18. Confession. When are you forgiven? Do you have to do penance?

You are forgiven for your sins at the moment of absolution. You are not forgiven on *the condition* that you do your penance. Once you hear the priest absolve you, that’s it, you are forgiven (assuming you are repentant for your sins).

The point of penance is for reparation for your sins, not to obtain forgiveness. All sins cause damage. You seek forgiveness through confession, but the damage is still there, so you need to repair it somehow.

The Cricket Analogy

The cricket analogy works well here. Consider you are playing cricket with a friend. They bowl the ball, you hit it and it breaks your neighbour’s window. You go up to their house, knock and the bloke opens. You say “Sorry 3mo, but I broke your window”. The bloke looks at the broken window, back at you and says “no worries. I forgive you!”.

Is that it? Do you just go home now? Of course not! You still broke the window! You need to do something to repair the damage. Maybe that means paying for a new one, cleaning the broken glass or offering your time to install a new window. Whatever it may be, you need to do something to repair the damage.

Penance repairs (reparation) the damage of sins.

*“Many sins wrong our neighbour. One must do what is possible in order to **repair the harm** (e.g., return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for injuries). Simple justice requires as much. But sin also injures and weakens the sinner himself, as well as his relationships with God and neighbour. **Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must ‘make satisfaction for’ or ‘expiate’ his sins. This satisfaction is also called ‘penance.’**” – CCC 1259*

CREATION

19. Is the Big Bang against our faith?

No, it is not. The Big Bang theory was first introduced by a Catholic Belgian priest named Fr George Lemaitre in 1927. It does not contradict the faith in any way, because, if the Big Bang is true, it still requires a cause which is God.

The exact way the world was made is difficult to know as we were not there to physically observe it. Whatever the theory of creation is, we must hold that God is the ultimate cause of it. So, for the Big Bang theory, if we want to believe it, you must believe that God is the cause of it.

*“The question about the origins of the world and of man has been the object of many scientific studies which have splendidly enriched our knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life-forms and the appearance of man. These discoveries **invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator, prompting us to give him thanks for all his works and for the understanding and wisdom he gives to scholars and researchers.**” – CCC 283*

20. Were Adam and Eve were real people? What about Evolution?

Yes, Adam & Eve were real people. There are a few points here to consider:

1. The story of genesis does not need to be taken literally. But what you must take away from it, is the fundamental truths that God created the universe, Adam & Eve were our first parents and they caused the Original Sin.
 - *“The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man. Revelation gives us the **certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents**” – CCC 390*

2. The Church teaches that Adam & Eve were our first parents. *“The Church, interpreting the symbolism of biblical language in an authentic way, in the light of the New Testament and Tradition, teaches that **our first parents, Adam and Eve, were constituted in an original ‘state of holiness and justice’**” – CCC 375.* They were the first humans that had a rational soul, as God breathed the breath of life into them *“God shaped man from the soil of the ground and blew the breath of life into his nostrils” – Gen 2:7.* This could have occurred through 2 different ways, and either way is not an issue to believe, so long as you hold that Adam & Eve were the first 2 humans that had a rational soul and was blessed in the image and likeness of God
- Possibility 1: Adam and Eve were created exactly as the text mentions
 - Possibility 2: Adam and Eve evolved from prior primitive creatures that were almost human, but Adam and Eve are the first humans where God stepped in and blew the breath of life, giving them rational souls and therefore, becoming the first humans.

Either option is not an issue to believe, as the Church does not formally teach which option it is (nor can it, as it can only formally preach on matters on faith and morals, not scientific ones). But you **MUST** believe in the fundamental truths, being that Adam and Eve were the first REAL humans.

21. Can science and religion coexist?

Of course they can. They actually complement each other. Pope John Paul II in his 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio* wrote that *“faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”* Which means that you can use both science and religion to understand truth. They fundamentally deal with 2 different questions. Science asks “how” and religion asks “why”. Yes, there is some cross over, but they never undermine each other, only reinforce each other. This is why several great scientists were also religious at the same time. Just google “catholic scientists” and you’ll be surprised to see just how many there are!

“How could science be any enemy of religion when God commanded man to be a scientist the day He told him to rule the earth and subject it?” – Fulton J. Sheen.

Note: This question usually is a preface to an actual specific question such as evolution, big bang theory, or something else the teen heard from somebody or online. So, ask the teen what the specific issue is they have encountered, and they’ll usually mention it. Then you can address it directly.

RELATIONSHIPS

22. Can Catholics divorce? In an annulment the same thing?

No, they cannot. There are a few points to consider:

1. Once the sacrament of marriage is validly undertaken, there is nothing that can be done to undo this union (except death). This is shown both in scripture and reinforced in the Catechism. *“For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, **what God has joined together, no human being must separate.**” – Matthew 19: 5-6*

*“In his preaching Jesus unequivocally taught the original meaning of the union of man and woman as the Creator willed it from the beginning: permission given by Moses to divorce one's wife was a concession to the hardness of hearts.106 **The matrimonial union of man and woman is indissoluble: God himself has determined it** “what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” – CCC 1614*

2. Divorce is not recognised by the Church. It is just a legal proceeding by the State that has no affiliation with the Church.
3. An annulment is different. An annulment is a recognition that the marriage never actually happened in the first place. So, the couple were never actually married; something has gone wrong either leading up to the marriage, or during the marriage, which means the sacrament was not validly administered. *“For this reason (amongst others) the Church, after an examination of the situation by the competent ecclesiastical tribunal, can declare the nullity of a marriage, i.e., **that the marriage never existed.** In this case the contracting parties are free to marry, provided the natural obligations of a previous union are discharged.” – CCC 1629*
 - This is applicable in other types of sacraments, for example confession. If you attend confession, and you do not fulfill the required prerequisites for a valid confession (genuine repentance or mentioning of all mortal sins) then the confession will not be valid. Similarly, if you do not fulfill the required prerequisites for a marriage, then the marriage sacrament will not be valid. And an annulment is a formal recognition of this.

23. Does it really matter who my friends are? Does it really matter what we listen and watch?

Yes, it really does. We will definitely be influenced by whatever we fill our minds with. St Paul tells us: *“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely,*

whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” – Philippians 4:8.

Ever heard of the expression “you are who your friends are”? Whenever we are exposed to a particular environment for an extended period of time, that environment will definitely start to influence us. This is why it’s so important to ensure you friends are trying to grow closer to God too so we assist each other.

“Fly from bad companions as from the bite of a poisonous snake. If you keep good companions, I can assure you that you will one day rejoice with the blessed in Heaven; whereas if you keep with those who are bad, you will become bad yourself, and you will be in danger of losing your soul” – St John Bosco

In the same way, if you fill your head and ears with music about sinful things, then it will start to affect the way you think. Any exposure to any environment for a decent amount of time will change you.

MARONITE CHURCH

24. Are Maronites different from Catholics?

Maronites are Catholics. Catholicism is the One, True, Holy & Apostolic faith, and it is composed of multiple rites/ churches, each with their traditions. There are 24 Churches or rites that make up the Catholic Church for example the Roman rite, the Maronite rite, the Melkite rite etc. All these Churches/ Rites are united under the patronage of the Pope, forming the Catholic Church. We are not different in the sense that we believe different things, but we do differ in some of our traditions.

*“The liturgical traditions or rites presently in use in the Church are the Latin (principally the Roman rite, but also the rites of certain local churches, such as the Ambrosian rite, or those of certain religious orders) and the Byzantine, Alexandrian or Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, **Maronite** and Chaldean rites. In "faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that Holy Mother Church holds **all lawfully recognized rites to be of equal right and dignity**, and that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way.” – CCC 1203*

25. Why do Maronites not kneel?

Maronites are people of the Resurrection. This just means that our Divine Liturgy reflects our focus on the Resurrection Moreso than the Roman Rite. And one way this is made manifest is through our tradition of standing in mass even at the words of Consecration. Maronites stand for

prayer as we believe this posture prepares us to greet the Risen Christ when He comes again in glory.

26. How do you know our faith is the right one?

Note: *This question might be a symptom of something else going on, causing doubt/ struggles. In either case, we will take the question at face value.*

We know the Catholic faith is the true faith for several reasons. We will go through one stream of logic here, but there are several others.

Firstly, it's important to note that nobody disputes that a man named Jesus lived 2000 years ago. Even the atheistic historians know this to be the case due to the overwhelming evidence for his existence. The question is **WHO** is Jesus.

1. If God was going to come as a human, the least He could do is let us know He is coming! Jesus was prophesied. Looking at the Old Testament (written hundreds of years before Christ), there are so many prophecies about Christ that all came true. No other religion can claim that their main prophet/ representative was prophesized. Muhammed, Buddha or anyone else was not prophesized as Christ was. See below for just a few of these. There are SEVERAL more.

No #	Prophecy	Old Testament	New Testament
1	The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1, Galatians 4:4
2	The Messiah would be born of a Virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:22-23, Luke 1:26-31
3	The Messiah will be rejected by his own people	Psalm 69:8, Isaiah 53:3	John 1:11, John 7:5
4	The Messiah will be called a Nazarene	Isaiah 11:1	Matthew 2:23
5	The Messiah will be betrayed	Psalm 41:9, Zechariah 11:12 -13	Luke 22: 47-48, Matthew 26: 14-16
6	The Messiah will be falsely accused	Psalm 35:11	Mark 14: 57-58
7	The Messiah will be crucified with criminals	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27: 38, Mark 15: 27-28
8	The Messiah's feet and hands will be pierced	Psalm 22: 16, Zechariah 12: 10	John 20: 25-27
9	Soldiers will gamble for his garments	Psalm 22:18	Luke 23:34, Matthew 27: 35-36
10	Messiah will be forsaken by God	Psalm 22:1	Matthew 27: 46

2. Focusing on WHO Christ is now, Jesus was either a **Liar**, a **Lunatic** or **Lord** when He claimed to be the Lord. Through process of elimination, the most likely answer is that He is Lord.
 - **Liar:** A person who lies acts out of self-interest, to gain something. Jesus had nothing to gain, He was crucified for claiming to be God! There is no reason why someone would make this lie, because there is nothing to gain here. Some would say maybe the apostles lied but again you run into the same problem. They were all (but 1) killed for their teachings, making it unreasonable to think it's all a lie as they had nothing to gain.
 - **Lunatic:** Maybe He just thought He was God? Well, back in those days, the crazy was shunned as having the lowest status in the social hierarchy. Insane people were left to the streets and nobody respected them. Jesus managed to convince not just 12 apostles but many others too! This is not the achievement of a crazy man!
 - **Lord:** Seems like the most likely by process of elimination.

4. Now that we believe in Jesus. We need to address the thousands of different denominations there are. Through simple history, we know the Catholic faith is the true one, and us Maronites are Catholic.
 - Every denomination can be traced back to someone who started it. For example:
 - Protestantism: Started by Martin Luther in 1517
 - Anglican Church: Started by King Henry the 8th in the 16th century
 - Mormonism: Started by Joseph Smith in the 1800s
 - Etc
 - There is only 2 Churches that trace back to Christ Himself. And that's the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church (split in the year 1054).
 - The Catholic Church is the correct one due to the primacy of the Pope as Christ established (refer to Question 31)

So straight away, if you want to follow the Church that Jesus started, it's the Catholic Church. And we Maronites, are part of that Catholic Church.

POSSESSION & DEMONS

27. Is possession real? How does someone get possessed?

Possession is the most extreme case of demonic activity. There are lesser forms of demonic activity, being:

- **Temptation:** Everyone experiences this.
- **Infestation:** When a demon occupies a place, object or animal.
- **Oppression:** When a demon affects things in your life externally. This can manifest in a multitude of ways such as financial difficulties, illness, fracture of friendships, hardships etc. The goal of the Devil is to leave the person isolated and try to get them to turn away from God. Take the example of Job from the bible as the prime example of this. Satan attacked Job externally. This is demonic oppression.
- **Possession:** When a demon takes full control of a person.

Now, it is incredible rare for a possession to take place. This is why the Church will first see if the resulting phenomena is just a mental health issue before proceeding with an exorcism.

*“...The solemn exorcism, called ‘a major exorcism,’ **can be performed only by a priest and with the permission of the bishop.** The priest must proceed with prudence, strictly observing the rules established by the Church. Exorcism is directed at the expulsion of demons or to the **liberation from demonic possession through the spiritual authority which Jesus entrusted to his Church.** Illness, especially psychological illness, is a very different matter; treating this is the concern of medical science. Therefore, before an exorcism is performed, **it is important to ascertain that one is dealing with the presence of the Evil One, and not an illness**” – CCC 1673*

Possession can only occur if the possessed person allows it. The person must give consent to the demon for the demon to take control. A demon cannot take control without permission from the individual.

This most commonly occurs through a mortal sin relating to violating the First Commandment. This is why most possession cases are a result of some interaction with fortune tellers, tarot card reading, Ouija boards, palm reading, etc. All these directly violate the First Commandment, because you are **seeking/ trying to communicate with something OTHER than God**. You effectively tell God you do not need him, and that you have other sources of truth besides him.

*“**All forms of divination are to be rejected:** recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to ‘unveil’ the future. **Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums** all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. **They contradict the honour, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone.**” – CCC 2116*

28. If I'm getting tempted... is that a Demon?

The short answer is: It doesn't matter.

The long answer is: There are three sources of temptation as defined in the Council of Trent & St Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica* Q41)

- The World: The bad example set by others. This will tempt us to do wrong too.
- The Flesh: Our desires/ inclinations towards specific sins. Disordered desires.
- Demons: Demons actively try and put thoughts into your mind to tempt you to a specific direction

No point in figuring out where it came from. Just deal with the temptation accordingly. Refer to Question 12 for further details on dealing with temptation.

PAPAL INFALIABILITY, PRIESTHOOD & HOLY SPIRIT

29. Can priests get married?

Certain Eastern rites of the Church allow married priests, including the Maronite Church. However, they can only become a priest after they are already married. The Church does not allow an ordained priest to then go get married.

In fact, married priests were permitted by the Roman Catholic Church for the first 11 hundred years. It was only changed in the 12th century for priests to be celibate in the Roman rite.

30. Can there ever be a woman priest?

No. Christ himself only ordained men for a reason and we need to trust Him. The first apostles did just that as they only ordained men. The Catechism explains well

- ***“Only a baptized man validly receives sacred ordination. The Lord Jesus chose men to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry. The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ's return. The Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason, the ordination of women is not possible.” – CCC 1577***

God has ordered the Church in a specific way and we need to respect that. St Paul discusses this when he talks about the Body of Christ and how it is composed of many parts of the Church. *“But*

as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as He intended.” – 1 Corinthians 12:18

31. Is the Pope always right?

No, not necessarily. He is only guaranteed to be right if he is speaking “Ex Cathedra” (from the seat of Peter). In other words, the Pope is always right when he clearly exercises the authority given to him by Christ Himself. This is called the concept of ‘Papal infallibility’ as derived from Jesus directly, see below.

“And so, I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” – Matthew 16: 18-19

Few points to consider:

- The Pope can have his own opinions on certain matters that is *not* binding on the faithful to believe. These are not guaranteed to be right. For example, if he is getting interviewed, whatever he says in this interview is not guaranteed to be right.
- Only when it is made clear that the Pope is exercising his Papal Infallibility, it is only then we must believe it. This does not happen often. The last time was by Pope Pius XII in 1950 when he declared the dogma of the Assumption. From then, we must believe in the Assumption of Our Lady.
- The teachings the Pope declares are only allowed to be related to Faith and Morals. **“The Roman Pontiff... proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or moral” – CCC 891.** So, the Church won't formally teach something purely scientific in nature.
 - *A smart teen might make a comment about Galileo and how the Church rejected his notion of Heliocentrism. While it was the popular opinion at the time that the Sun revolved around the Earth, it was never formally declared a dogmatic teaching. Why? Because the Church can't formally declare teachings on scientific matters.*
- The teen may ask “why must we believe it?” or “How do we know the Pope is right?” There are a few answers:
 - Jesus said so himself. He said **“the gates of Hell will NOT prevail” – Matthew 16:8** He promises to protect his Church from formally spreading error.
 - Jesus made it clear that the Holy Spirit will guide the church in all teaching matters **“The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.” – John 14:26.**
 - So, we believe that the Holy Spirit is guiding the Church now and preventing it from formally preaching error.
 - We say that the books of the bible are ‘divinely inspired’. So, the New Testament writers (such as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) were being guided by the Holy Spirit, preventing them from writing down anything

incorrectly. In the same way, that same privilege is extended to the Church as a whole. The Church is being guided by the Holy Spirit, preventing it from formally preaching error.

32. Is speaking in tongues true?

Yes, it is a genuine gift of the Holy Spirit. The Church affirms this gift of tongues.

“There are furthermore special graces, also called charisms... sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues” - CCC 2003

However, it does not define the nature of this gift. There are two main schools of thought:

- 1) The gift of tongues is the ability to communicate in other known, native languages without knowing that language (most supported by Church history)
 - a. This is shown in scripture. *“Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, **but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.” - Acts 2: 5-11***
- 2) The gift of tongues is a ‘private prayer language’ that can only be understood by some.

In either case, the point of the gift is to service the Church in charity.

“There are furthermore special graces, also called charisms... sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues. (These) charisms are oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church. - CCC 2003

So if someone is “speaking in tongues” while actively preaching disobedience to the Church & without Charity, it is unlikely to be from God.

God

33. Why do Christians believe in 3 'Gods'?

No we believe in 1 God, 3 persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each God, but they are distinct, divine persons. The teaching of the Trinity is that there is one God in three persons.

It is important to acknowledge the mystery behind this as outline in the Catechism.

*“Christians are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: not in their names, for **there is only one God, the almighty Father, his only Son and the Holy Spirit: the Most Holy Trinity.**” - CCC 233*

*“The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. **It is the mystery of God in himself.** It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the "hierarchy of the truths of faith" - CCC 234*

A few points to note in responding to this:

- We cannot understand God. It is impossible to think we can fully understand God. God created the world, and everything in it including space, time, and matter. We can't use space, time, and matter to understand God as he is above it all! There will always be an element of mystery.
- You can use analogies to explain the trinity. Some include:
 - **Water analogy:** Water is H₂O. This can be in the form of solid (ice), liquid (water) or gas (steam). All are still H₂O yet 3 distinct forms. 1 substance yet 3 distinct forms. Similarly, all 3 persons of God (Father, Son & Holy Spirit) are still fully God (H₂O) but still distinct persons.
 - **3 leaf clover analogy:** Consider a 3-leaf clover. A a single plant with three leaves is analogous to the one Triune God with three distinct Persons. *This is the preferred method of St Patrick to explain the Trinity.*
 - **Humanity analogy:** You are 1 being, 1 essence, 1 mind. Now consider these three: to be, to know, and to will. For I am, and I know, and I will: I am a knowing and a willing being, and I know that I am and that I will, and I will to be and to know. Therefore, in these three, there is 1 being, 1 essence, 1 mind. Yet yet there is a distinction between being, knowing and willing. *This is the preferred method of St Augustine to explain the Trinity.*

34. Why did Jesus pray to the Father if He is God? Wouldn't he already know?

He wasn't praying to himself. He was praying to his Father.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each God, but they are distinct, divine persons. The doctrine of the Trinity is that there is one God in three persons. (refer to Question 33 for explanation of the Trinity)

Consequently, it was natural for Jesus as one divine person to speak to his Father as another divine person as prayer in essence is simply communication between persons. In this case, 1 person (God the Son) is communicating to another Person (God the Father).

By praying, he was not giving the Father information that the Father did not already have. The same is true of us when we pray, as Jesus pointed out the gospel of Matthew. *"Your Father knows what you need before you ask him."* - *Matthew 6:8*.

Prayer is not about giving God information, but about relating to him in a way suited to human nature. Having taken on human nature, it was natural for Jesus to relate to God in this manner. In doing so, he also set an example for us.

35. Does prayer change God will? Why should we pray?

No prayer does not technically change Gods mind. So why pray? Couple responses below:

- God is outside of time. So he has already taken into account all your prayers in His Divine Will. He knows whether or not you will request something in prayer, and in His infinite wisdom, has already taken that into consideration. So no, prayer does change Gods mind in the sense that he reacts to new information he didn't know of (since he is all knowing), but it does have an affect as far as that has been taken into consideration already.
- Jesus told us to ask for things in prayer (petitionary prayer). *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened"* - *Matthew 7: 7-8*. So always ask in prayer!

36. If Jesus chose to die on the cross, didn't he commit suicide?

Not he sacrificed himself, not commit suicide. There is a difference. Sacrifice is when you die for another, suicide is sadly when you die for self (to end pain/ suffering).

Imagine if someone jumps in front of a bullet for another. Do you consider that suicide? Surely not, its sacrifice!

37. Why would God allow suffering?

Many times, this question comes from curiosity but also often comes from a place of hurt. You must show compassion answering this.

3 reasons are provided below.

1-It is the natural biproduct of free will

The best way to answer this is systematically:

- i. God has given us the gift of free will.
 - ***"God willed that man should be 'left in the hand of his own counsel,' so that he might of his own accord seek his creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him" (CCC 1730).***
- ii. It is up to us to choose good or evil. Sometimes we choose evil.
 - ***"Moral evil is the result of the abuse of freedom" - CCC 311***
- iii. God, out of love, allows us to choose evil.
 - ***"God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil. He permits it, however, because he respects the freedom of his creatures and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it" - CCC 311.***
- iv. Our choice of evil leads to suffering. For example, killing another, driving drunk causing a car crash, gossiping, abuse, theft, broken relationships etc (list is endless).

If the teen is going to have an issue with this, it will be with point 3. Explain this further.

Love by definition MUST be FREELY given.

- Imagine if a man pursues a woman who has rejected him countless times. And eventually he says "I love you so much that I'm going to force you to love me back"... creepy right? Because thats NOT how love works! There MUST be a FREE response to love
- In the same way, God cannot FORCE us to choose him all the time. Thats just not how love works.
 - Imagine if EVERY time someone is about to choose evil, God swoops in and stops them. Then nobody will ever actually have free will. Everybody will be forced all the time to do good, and that is the ultimate contradiction of Love and therefore God, as God IS love.
 - Therefore, because God loves us, he allows us to choose evil. And evil ultimately leads to suffering
- Remember that for love to be true and genuine, they must be given the option not to love you back. You cannot force love.

2-Suffering brings us closer to God.

- Suffering brings us closer to God. How many people start praying more when things are going wrong? I bet many.
 - ***"Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations,***

and his finitude. *Every illness can make us glimpse death"- CCC 1500.* This experience can lead to a deeper reliance on God and a purification of the soul.

3-Our Suffering can be united to Christ to be redemptive.

- Our suffering can be united to Christ. So suffering can have redemptive value when you unite it with the suffering of Christ.
 - ***"By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion" - CCC 1505.***

And finally, it is important to note that there is an element of mystery to this. Ultimately, only God knows why He allows certain things to happen. We trust and know that He allows all these sufferings for an ultimate good, beyond human understanding as we are not the grand architects of this universe.

38. Why would God create a person he knows will go to Hell?

This has a similar answer to Q37. Check out that answer first before reading the below.

God, out of love gives us free will. And it is our choice if we choose him or not.

Consider the alternative. God creates a person, forces them to choose good all the time, forces them to choose Him all the time, stops them from doing evil all the time etc. This cannot be real love as it is forced. So either God creates a creature with free will or doesn't. If He does, then they must have the option to not follow him.

SOCIAL ISSUES

39. Why is it wrong to be gay?

All humans have weaknesses. All humans will have disordered desires. Whether that be towards gambling, alcohol, drugs, homosexual attraction etc (the list is endless). This inclination towards sin is called ‘concupiscence’ by the Church. And this ‘concupiscence’ is the result of original sin.

*“Concupiscence can refer to any intense form of human desire. Christian theology has given it a particular meaning: **the movement of the sensitive appetite contrary to the operation of the human reason.** The apostle St. Paul identifies it with **the rebellion of the "flesh" against the "spirit."** Concupiscence **stems from the disobedience of the first sin.** It unsettles man's moral faculties and, without being in itself an offense, inclines man to commit sins” - CCC 2515*

Homosexual attraction is just that, a disordered desire. It is contrary to human nature and the homosexual act can never in any way be approved.

*“Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that **"homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered."** They are **contrary to the natural law.** They **close the sexual act to the gift of life.** They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. **Under no circumstances can they be approved” - CCC 2357***

*"Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor **men who have sex with men** nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." - 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10*

However, it is important to distinguish between the sinner and sin. We are called to love all in charity but hate the sin itself. In the same way we show love and compassion to those struggling with alcohol, drugs, gambling etc, we are to show love and compassion to those experience same sex attraction. They are in no way better or worse than anyone else.

*“This inclination, which is **objectively disordered,** constitutes for most of them a trial. They **must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.** Every sign of unjust discrimination **in their regard should be avoided.** These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, **to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition” - CCC 2358***

Now relate sin back to the teens. This usually humbles them.

All humans have disordered desires that should be controlled.

- If someone upsets you, you may feel like slapping them but you restrain yourself. Because it is a sin to unjustly harm others.
- If you overhear some gossip, you are filled with the temptation to go tell others but you need to restrain yourself. Because it is a sin to gossip without grave reason (see Question 44)
- If your parents tell you to do something, you may feel like arguing but you need to restrain yourself. Because it is a sin to break the 4th commandment – honour your father and mother.

Homosexual acts are another type of sin. And the person suffering through this is called to restrain themselves from acting on it in the same way you are called to restrain yourself with these other sins. All sin offends the Lord. You are no better or worse than anyone.

“Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.” - CCC 2359

40. Why is IVF wrong if it creates life?

Few points:

- IVF involves implanting several embryos and only allowing just 1 to survive (the preferred one). This means all the other embryos are killed off. Killing of human life at any stage is an evil act. Its effectively as evil as abortion as both involve killing a young human at the early stage of life.
- You cannot treat human life as product that can be traded and demanded. Life is a gift, and IVF does not respect that fact.
 - ***"A child is not something owed to one, but is a gift. The 'supreme gift of marriage' is a human person. A child may not be considered a piece of property, an idea reflected in the common expression: 'The child is not an object of ownership: the child is a gift.' For this reason, in vitro fertilization (IVF) and other similar techniques often involve the destruction of embryos, which is equivalent to the destruction of human life." - CCC 2378***
- Further to this, the church is very clear that any techniques that disassociates the man and woman from the procreative act is immoral. Procreation is designed by God to come from the procreative act per se and to go against that is to go against the designs of God.
 - ***"Techniques that entail the dissociation of husband and wife, by the intrusion of a person other than the couple (donation of sperm or ovum, surrogate uterus), are gravely immoral. These techniques (heterologous artificial insemination and fertilization) infringe the child's right to be born of a father and mother known to him and bound to each other by marriage. They betray the spouses' right to become a father and a mother only through each other." - CCC 2376***

41. What if a woman is raped? Is abortion fine then?

No, it is still not fine. The child is still innocent, and it isn't justified to kill the unborn child. It will not solve anything. If there was an evil act that lead to another life, it doesn't make that life any less. They are still a human and should be treated as such.

*“Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of **every** procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable” - CCC 2271*

Note that abortion as the result of rape makes up for less than 1% of abortions. So using this to justify most abortions is a logical flaw.

42. Why is it wrong to euthanise someone if they want to die?

The Church makes it very clear that this is wrong.

*“...direct euthanasia consists in putting an end to the lives of handicapped, sick, or dying persons. **It is morally unacceptable.**” - CCC 2277*

The main reason is that it is the ultimate insult to their dignity as a human & a child of God. If someone is thinking of committing suicide, and they call you to tell you, should you respond with “yeh go for it”? How would that make them feel?

If someone is in an incredibly dark place, where they contemplate killing himself, they absolute worst thing you can do is encourage their death. If you encourage their death, then you effectively tell them they aren't worthy of life, which undermines their dignity as humans. You should be supporting them in such dark times!

*“An act or omission which, of itself or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder **gravely contrary to the dignity of the human person and to the respect due to the living God, his Creator**” - CCC 2277.*

43. If someone commits suicide, do they go to Hell?

Suicide is wrong, the Church makes that clear. However a clear answer to this specific question is given as shown in the Catechism.

“We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives.” - CCC 2283

So trust that God can still give them the opportunity to repent. Best to provide examples (take into account their age + maturity).

One example:

The Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco was a very popular suicide spot (until they installed nets). There are many reported cases of survivors that all reported regret and repentance after jumping.

In an article for The New Yorker, Tad Friend wrote, "Survivors often regret their decision in midair, if not before", supported by survivor Ken Baldwin explaining, "I instantly realized that everything in my life that I'd thought was unfixable was totally fixable—except for having just jumped."

If you want to look more into this, check out the 2006 documentary “The Bridge”

44. Is it always bad to gossip?

It is wrong when you are going to damage somebody’s reputation (which is more often than not!). The Church defines 3 types of gossip:

- 1) Rash Judgement: When think you know something about someone without proof, but you go and tell people. This is always wrong
- 2) Detraction: When you know something is true and you go tell others. This is wrong unless you have a ‘valid reason’
- 3) Calumny: When something is false and you go tell others. This is always wrong.

The Church says you need a ‘valid reason’ to tell others something about someone. The question is ‘what’s a valid reason’?

Ultimately that completely depends on context. Might be best to speak to a spiritual director to confirm. Some main points to consider:

- It is unlikely your mates need to know about the fault of another.
- It may be valid to tell someone close to that person. For example, if you find out someone is taking drugs, you don’t go tell your mates, but you might tell their sibling.

- The main point is that you need to protect their reputation. Because we are all sinners and if you spread the faults of someone, you harm their reputation ALWAYS.

“Respect for the reputation of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury. He becomes guilty:

- of rash judgment who, even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor;

*- of detraction who, **without objectively valid reason**, discloses another's faults and failings to persons who did not know them;*

- of calumny who, by remarks contrary to the truth, harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them. “ - CCC 2477

THE BIBLE

45. Who wrote the bible/ where did it come from?

The bible is collection of 73 different books, written by about 40 (debated) different human authors, across 1500 years, all coming together to tell the cohesive story of Gods salvation for us.

Ultimately, it is God that wrote the bible through the authors. We would say that the Holy Spirit guided the authors to write down books of the bible.

“God is the author of Sacred Scripture. "The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit” - CCC 105

These ‘divinely inspired’ books were collated into what we now know as the bible in the late 4th Century at the Council of Rome (382AD). There were several other books floating around at the time where some were claiming to be the word of God, however it was this collection of 73 divinely inspired books that was affirmed as Gods word. It was even reaffirmed many times at subsequent councils. Thus, the Church utilised its authority given by Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (see Question 31) to formally declare the books of the bible as divinely inspired.

46. Is the bible all true?

Yes, it is true since it is inspired by God. However we need to be careful to not assume this means we take everything literally.

The bible is made of 73 different books, many of which are different types of literature. There are historic books, poetic books, prophetic books, the gospels etc. Each book is to be understood within its context and literature type so you should not interpret all literary types in the same way.

- *“In order to discover the sacred authors' intention, the reader must **take into account** the conditions of **their time and culture**, the **literary genres** in use at that time, and the **modes of feeling**, speaking and narrating then current. **For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetic and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression.**” - CCC 110*

One example, consider the song of songs chapter 4.

“your hair is like a flock of goats surging down Mount Gilead” - Song of songs 4:1.

Very clearly, her hair was not literally a flock of goats. You don't take this literally (refer to Question 20 for further guidance on how the Church says to interpret Genesis)

THE ENDTIMES

47. The Rapture. What is it? Is it true?

The concept of the "rapture" exists in Protestant beliefs primarily, it is NOT our teaching. Basically, it refers to a future event where believers in Christ are said to be taken up ("raptured") to meet the Lord in the air, leaving the others on Earth who are damned. Their main defence for this idea comes from 1 Thessalonians:

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." - 1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17

We do believe in the second coming of Christ as this is also known as the general (final) judgement. But we do not believe it will happen in this way, where people will be taken up and others stay down on Earth.

The way the church understands this is:

- At a time we don't know, Christ will come again – CCC 1040
- He will call everyone, the dead and living – CCC 1038
- We are united with our bodies (if we have already died) - CCC 1038/ 997
- He will judge all of humanity together – CCC 1038
- Those judged for Hell go to Hell. Those judged for Heaven go to Heaven. - CCC 1039

For more info on the general/ final judgement, see Question 6

48. When/ How is the world going to end? What are the signs to foreshadow it?

Few things to note for this:

- A. Some teens tend to over-stress about this because of all the so-called 'prophesies' they see on social media. What is more important than being concerned with the end of the world is that each of us be concerned with the end of his own life. So focus on preparing for the end of your own life instead of overly concerning yourself with the end of the world.
 - *"Every action of yours, every thought, should be those of one who expects to die before the day is out. **Death would have no great terrors for you if you had a quiet conscience**" - CCC 1014*

- B. Nobody knows when the world will end (the end of the world is at the Second Coming of Christ). Nobody at all. Christ makes this clear in scripture
- *“And then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven; then, too, all the peoples of the earth will beat their breasts; and **they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.... But as for that day and hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, no one but the Father alone.**” - Matthew 24: 30-36*
 - As much as people may try to guess, nobody really knows.
- C. There are some signs which will signify that the end is near. A few of these include:
- **The Gospel Preached to All Nations:** Before the end comes, the Gospel must be preached to all nations. Jesus says , *“**And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**”- Matthew 24:14*
 - **The Conversion of Israel:** Another sign is the conversion of Israel. St. Paul speaks about this in Romans 11:15, 25-26, suggesting that a significant number of Jews will come to recognize Jesus as the Messiah before the end of time.
 - *“**Since their rejection meant the reconciliation of the world, do you know what their re-acceptance will mean? Nothing less than life from the dead!**” - Romans 11: 15.* Alluding to the resurrection of the dead which will happen at the second coming of Christ.
 - The Catechism mentions this in **CCC 674: “The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history **until his recognition by 'all Israel,'** for 'a hardening has come upon part of Israel' in their 'unbelief' toward Jesus. St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: 'Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.'”**
 - **The Great Trial/ Tribulation/ Apostasy:** Jesus speaks of a time of great tribulation in *Matthew 24:21: “**For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.**”*
 - The Catechism addresses this period in **CCC 675: “Before Christ's second coming, the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the 'mystery of iniquity' in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth.”**
 - **The Appearance of the Antichrist:** The Antichrist is a key figure associated with the end times. St. John speaks of the Antichrist in *1 John 2:18: “**Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour.**”*
 - The Catechism describes this in **CCC 675-676: “The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.”**