

Ask Me Another

By Rev. Daniel A. Lord, S.J.

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With a bow of thanks to Robert Morrison, S.J., who gave the questions a very careful reading and made suggestions that were wise, accurate, from the viewpoint of the author most welcome, and from the viewpoint of the potential reader most important. D.A.L., S.J.

Out of the question boxes which I have opened in many retreats and days of recollection, I made a first sifting called *The Questions They Always Ask*. In this booklet I included the normal run-of-the-box questions, the type that invariably cropped up in every question box. Then it occurred to me that the less usual questions might be of interest. So I made a second sifting - this time for the out-of-the-ordinary question, the problem that seemed somewhat different. Yet I threw out the purely personal questions or those which were abnormal or "queer." I did not include questions that clearly pertained to one person and only one person. I did include the questions that might be asked by a great many people. They were unusual in the sense that they did not happen to everyone; but they occurred, I was sure, to a great many people. And most of all the questions interested me. So I thought they might interest readers as well. Here they are, offered with the answers that may serve as enlightenment.

For the standard questions that are sure to be in large measure your problems too, I refer you to *The Questions They Always Ask*. For questions that open vistas of less routine difficulties, for problems that may interest many but not all readers, I now submit this little booklet. If in the two booklets you are still not answered - well there may be place for a third and a fourth book of questions and answers. Of the making of questions, there is no end. Of the writing of answers, there may be parallel endlessness.

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[Sequel to "The Questions They Always Ask". By Rev. Daniel A. Lord, S.J. Reprinted with kind permission of The Queen's Work 1960. [Webmaster's assistant's comment:...Fr Lord wrote these answers at various retreats for young people during the 1950s. Since Vatican II, several of the merely disciplinary rules of the Church to which Fr Lord refers have been changed. We bring you this booklet in its original form for its intrinsic worth and for the sound guidance it gives in answering many common issues raised by young people today.]

How important is pride in the process of one's losing the faith?

Someday we may be able to stage some such debate: Resolved that lust has caused more men and women to lose their faith than has pride. I am quite sure that in the long run the affirmative will win. Certainly of the men and women that I have known who have lost their faith, nine out of ten have done so because of some illicit love. As a wise old Irish pastor once said, "When a man loses his faith, if it isn't punch [alcohol], it's Judy."

Pride does however very frequently enter the picture. A man is convinced that he has a very brilliant mind and that what he knows is right and that what he cannot accept is necessarily wrong. The Pharisees were probably scrupulously pure men, but they were too proud to believe that a carpenter could teach them anything. So many a young man has gone to a secular university, received an excellent education - during the course of which his faith was ignored or derided - and at the end has felt that he knew a great deal more than did the priests of his acquaintance and much too much to accept the teachings of the "antiquated" Church. One famous apostate, Conan Doyle, is reported to have said that he had mercifully outgrown the religious superstitions of his adolescence. Later on he swallowed - sheet, tambourine, and ouija board - the superstitions of spiritualistic seances.

One of the most brilliant students of the Catholic university where I taught left the Church shortly after he was graduated because there were so many things that the Catholic Church taught that he "could no longer believe." But aside from this pride of mind there is another pride which is much more frequent in its undermining of faith. There is the pride of the man who makes a lot of money and who, conscious of his power, finds it annoying to have to kneel in the confessional or be one of a congregation made up largely of the day labourers in his plant. There is the society woman who recognizes that Catholicity is a social handicap, sends her sons and daughters to fashionable non-Catholic schools, and dislikes to attend the devotions at which her cook and her upstairs maid are present. There is the author who refuses to submit his books for the censorship required by the Catholic Church, and the banker who regards the Church's laws on honesty as a handicap to his success in business. There is the young man who finds that success in business goes oftenest, to the man who sports the Masonic pin; in his anxiety to rise to power and fame, he gives up his faith, of which he has grown ashamed. Pride has a great deal to do with the losing of one's faith, but I still believe that in the long run passion causes more men to turn their backs on their religion than does pride.

How can I get my father to receive Holy Communion ? He receives only once a year.

Sometimes it is more difficult to get a member of one's own family to practise his religion than it is to get a stranger to do so. Would it be possible to interest your father by having one of his Catholic men friends invite him? Couldn't a friend get him to join the married men's Sodality or the Holy Name Society or some other Catholic fraternal organization that receives Holy Communion frequently? Couldn't you get one of his friends to invite him to make a retreat, in which Frequent Communion would certainly be discussed ? As for yourself, it might be that if you invited him to go with you to Communion he would go. Pick some important day, Mother's Day for example, and ask him to go to Holy Communion for mother's intention. Or pick out the anniversary of some family death and ask him to go for the repose of the beloved soul. Or if you know that there are going to be Eucharistic devotions, like the Forty Hours, ask him to go along With you to these devotions. Plan to go to Confession, and suggest his going with you; then take it for granted that he will also go to Communion with you at Mass the next morning. Sometimes these things are best handled without too much discussion. Just take it for granted that the occasion calls for Holy Communion and that you would love to have him with you, and he may come. of his own accord.

A Catholic friend of mine is going to marry a divorced man. What attitude do you think I should take ?

I think that in all honesty you ought to tell her what a mistake she is making and what a serious sin she is committing. Don't you think you could do this, not sternly, but in as friendly a fashion as

possible ? Tell her that in most dioceses, St. Louis for instance, not only would she be excommunicated by her action but her bridesmaid and groomsman would be excommunicated too. Many Catholics pretend that they don't know this. Perhaps they don't know it, but they should. They might then take the whole performance less casually and a little more seriously. Of course if she persists in going through the civil ceremony with the man, you cannot attend such a wedding. Tell her that in advance. And remind her that despite the civil character of the ceremony she is not married in the eyes of Christ or the Church and receives none of the rights and duties of a married person. She must realize that after the civil wedding your social relationships with her will necessarily be curtailed. It is possible however that you will be her only remaining link with the Church. So I think you would be wise to keep up some sort of contact with her after her marriage. You can see her occasionally, for example at lunch, when her husband is not present; you can even invite her sometimes to go with you to church or to some parish affair. She may thus retain some slight connection between herself and the Church. But you should let her know that if at any time she does want to talk with a priest, you will be happy to help her towards the beginnings of a return to her faith.

Why hasn't the Catholic Church been more active to set up its ideals before the United States and the world ?

For the last four hundred years and more the Catholic Church has been in a state of almost continued siege. Even in the so-called Catholic countries its enemies have been largely dominant and have made its existence difficult and often precarious. In countries dominated by England, the Church was for two and a half centuries either exiled, persecuted, or barely tolerated. The persecutions of the Church in France, in Italy, and in Spain are matters of simple historical record. For a long time here in the United States we Catholics, always in a minority, belonged to the poorer classes or to classes that were regarded as distinctly unfashionable. As a result the leading newspapers could safely ignore us, and the big universities could treat our struggling educational system with patronage or contempt.

All this made Catholics almost timid. In lands where Catholics have been persecuted, they have dreaded the return of persecution and have felt that by being quiet and unobtrusive they would cause less attention to be paid them and less dislike to be aroused against them. In Italy, France, and Spain - to take the examples of lands where belligerent anti-Catholic minorities seized power - Church property was confiscated. The schools were closed, and, as happened under the Kulturkampf of Germany, the right to print a newspaper or publish a book was denied. All this certainly made Catholics self-conscious, often glad enough to be allowed to live unmolested or reluctant to arouse further persecution by an aggressive attitude.

I do not for a minute pretend that such an attitude may not be cowardly. I do think however that anyone can see that the attitude was natural. So we are very foolish if we take the past as an excuse for present apathy and lack of zeal. Even if we arouse the most bitter persecution, as the magnificent Catholic Centre Party did in Germany or as Catholic Action did in Italy, we owe it to ourselves, to Christ, and to the Church to present our ideals courageously and without consideration of consequences to ourselves. Yet despite all this it is difficult to see how Catholics can in many cases - and non-Catholics in almost all cases - be apparently unaware of the leadership of the bishops of this country and of the frequent pastorals they issue on almost every question of importance to our nation. Are they unaware that the bishops meet every year to discuss and to

present to the world solutions of current problems, to apply Catholic principles to the questions of the hour, and to view contemporaneous matters in the light of Christ's great teachings?

Are they still unacquainted with the Papal encyclicals and the applications which the bishops and other Catholic leaders are making in all fields of human relationships? It is a little perplexing that we are taunted because we do not speak out on public questions and then in so deep a silence and so wide a neglect are ignored when we do speak out.

When does gambling become a sin ?

Gambling becomes a sin when a person risks money which is not his own, money which he should rightfully use for other purposes - such as the care of his family; when through the excitement of gambling he neglects his duties - for example by failing to work properly at his own profession; and when gambling brings about a nervousness that unfits him for normal life. There in all of us a strange gambling instinct which makes us like first of all to take chances and then to lay our hands on a little money that came to us with apparently no effort on our part. The gambler is always convinced that easy money lies within the next turn (of the card or the next click of the roulette marble. For that matter we are gambling more or less all the time. Every new business venture is a gamble. If a man writes a book, he gambles on whether or not it will be a success. If we make a new acquaintance, we gamble to some extent on whether or not the friend will prove faithful and trustworthy.

Some of the evangelical religions have pronounced all forms of gambling as sinful. I remember a minister who wrote to me; denouncing Catholics because they did not list gambling as one of the greatest of sins. I retorted by asking him where in the Bible gambling was explicitly forbidden. Since he was an evangelical, he believed that the Bible contained all articles of faith and morals. Where in the Bible was gambling forbidden? I never received an answer from him. But though a certain amount of pleasant risking of money - money that we do not need for other purposes - in friendly companionship over a card game in the living room is surely harmless, still gambling is associated with real perils. A gambler makes a terrible husband. A youngster who acquires the habit of gambling may later on become a thief or a wastrel. The sad leading man of Show Boat is merely typical of the professional gambler, who usually succeeds in wrecking too, too many lives.

Can you prove that there is a personal God ?

That is relatively simple. I need not remind you that Our Blessed Lord spoke of God as Our Father. Nothing else could be more personal than that. Christ claimed to be God and proved Himself to be God. Certainly Christ is a person. And when He spoke of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, He was referring to a quality to be found only in a person. But if the person who asks this question prefers a non-Biblical proof, the philosophical proof is simple too. The visible world around us is proof of an intelligent creator. The whole structure of the world is of such an elaborate plan that a great non-Catholic scientist was led to say that quite clearly the maker of the universe must be the greatest of mathematicians. The carrying of that plan into effect, an effect which continues from day to day and from minute to minute, requires the strongest and most efficient will on the part of the planner. But a being with an intellect and a will is a person. So the creator of the universe is a person.

A non-Catholic friend of mine tells me that Catholics have the wrong Bible. He says that the true religion is contained in his Bible and that the Bible used by Catholics is different.

The Catholic Bible contains everything, all the books that are in the Protestant Bible. The Protestant Bible does not have all the books which are in the Catholic Bible; the Catholic Bible has all the books which are in the Protestant Bible. You will find in your Catholic Bible anything that the Protestant Bible contains. The Protestant will not find in the Protestant Bible some of the things that are in your Catholic Bible. There have been differences between the King James or Protestant Bible and the Douay-Rheims or Catholic Bible. But it is interesting to note that many of these differences have disappeared since the Protestants revised their Bible and eliminated some of their incorrect translations and especially since in the new version of the Catholic Bible, just brought out in English under the guidance of the bishops, our translation has been made more readable. You would be very wise by the way to become well acquainted with this new version. Nothing is added, nothing subtracted; but a fine body of scholars have worked over the original versions of the Bible, made a fresh translation, and brought the New Testament (the part retranslated thus far) in closer touch with modern English. And again by the way . . . How often do you read your New Testament - not to mention your Bible - at all?

How do you disprove the charge that the Catholic religion is a religion only for those who are of strong character ?

This is a perfect case of "Damned if you do, and damned if you don't." How many times I have heard the Catholic religion accused of being a religion only for the weak ! It is, according to these objectors, intended for those who need to be frightened by the fear of hell; who need the protection of the Ten Commandments; who aren't strong enough to decide right and wrong, truth and error, for themselves; who need popes, bishops, and priests. So you see the proper answer to your question is this: The Catholic religion is the religion for the strong, for the weak, for everybody. If you are weak, Christ placed within His Catholic Church all those aids that make strength possible. If you are strong, you can rise with the help of God to the highest sanctity. If your mind is not too vigorous, there are the simple truths of religion, beautifully and easily expressed. If your mind is strong, you can study the great philosophy and theology of the Church. If your will is weak, you have all the strength of the sacraments and of prayer and of the intercession of the saints. If you are strong, you can use these aids to scale heroic heights.

If two Catholics are married by a priest, and one of the parties to the marriage contract is in the state of mortal sin, is the marriage recognized as valid by the Church ?

Most assuredly yes. However the person who is in the state of mortal sin does not at the time receive the grace of the sacrament. Later on when the mortal sin has been removed and he is in the state of grace, then the grace of the sacrament enters his soul. But even if he is in the state of mortal sin when he contracts the marriage, he is validly married. It does not need a lot of deep thinking however to realize the sacrilege involved in one's receiving the sacrament of matrimony when one is in the state of mortal sin. And how can a person hope for the blessings of God on a life started with God's enemy in the possession of his soul? Hence the wisdom of the Church is that she insists upon a good confession before marriage. In the St. Louis Archdiocese the pastor is instructed "strenuously to insist that they confess their sins for the worthy reception of the sacrament of matrimony." In some dioceses a priest will not marry Catholics who have not first gone to confession. That seems to be nothing short of a sensible and wise provision.

Did God create evil, or did it exist for all eternity ?

Neither. God permits evil. which He did not create and which in a kind of way has no positive existence. That last statement may sound a little queer. Indeed it would take a long discussion to make it absolutely plain. But evil in itself is, as St. Thomas explains, the absence of good. When you are well, you have all that is requisite for health. When you are sick, something necessary for health is missing. When you have money enough for your needs, you are in a satisfactory state. When bankruptcy, a financial evil, hits you, you are simply in a state of being without enough money.

Evil is sometimes considered as the physical action. A man picks up a gun, pulls the trigger, and fires. In itself this physical action is neither good nor bad. The man may be a murderer; he may be a hero protecting his country; he may be a husband striking down the villain who would kill his wife and children. But beyond this physical action there is good or evil. Men were intended to protect life. Some men throw his obligation away and commit murder. The physical act is neither good nor bad, but the moral intention either to protect life or to destroy it is something else. When the man's intention is evil, it is really a negative thing because it destroys something, puts something out of his soul and character, and leaves him less than he was before the crime was committed.

So God helps man to perform his physical act. That negative, evil thing which he does is the man's own. Why did God permit men to commit evil ? That question is bound up with the whole fact of our free will. God, as we have heard a thousand times, did not want to be served by slaves. He asked His sons and daughters to help Him run the world. If they agree, He is glad. If they refuse, He has given them a free will that makes refusal possible. If you were like the stars, moving by the resistless law of gravity through the sky , . . if you were like an ant, controlled by blind slave instinct, you could commit no evil. But you are a free child of God. Hence God has put it in your power to save or to destroy the beautiful things of the world and of your own life if you so will. He strongly repudiates the evil that you do. He will not interfere to prevent you.

Should a boy keep company with a girl who is out of his financial class or marry out of his financial class ?

I am taking it for granted that this is a young man who has suddenly become interested in a young lady who has a good deal more money than he has. For some reason, perhaps obvious, I do not think he is a rich young man suddenly about to confer his riches on a girl who happens not to belong to the moneyed class. We in America are smart to avoid the use of the word class - in any connection. Certainly we have no strict social classes. And may we be long preserved against them ! Certainly even our financial classes are very impermanent and unstable. The poor boy of today may, in proper Horatio Alger style. become the rich man of tomorrow. We are very proud of the opportunities by which a young man with ability and energy can attain to almost any financial stature.

So it is possible that a young man might, by falling in love with a daughter of the rich, be inspired actually to work harder. But if he is, as I hope, the kind of person who doesn't intend to make money the goal of his life, he had better talk pretty honestly to the rich girl. Will she be satisfied to live on a smaller income? Will she resent the small house that he can afford, after the mansion in which she has been living? Will she stop depending upon her father's income and willingly live within the income of her husband? In other words is she wed to riches or is she willing to be wed to a young man of moderate income?

I think that a rich wife and a husband who is not rich is not a very satisfactory situation. There are too many sad stories of husbands who are embarrassed at the higher incomes of their wives or who are infuriated if they find themselves dependent upon their wives' money. They are placed in false positions, since they live, not according to their own incomes, but according to the incomes of their wives. As for the young man's keeping company with a girl who is outside of his financial class. I think this is largely a practical problem. Will the girl be satisfied with his second-hand car or with the bus, or will she expect him to call for her in a taxi or in a limousine? Will she be satisfied with the movie, or a "coke" and a hamburger, or will she want to be entertained via the Stork Club and a box at the opera? The young man will soon find out whether the young woman loves him enough to accept what he can give her on his income. If she isn't satisfied, he had better go wooing elsewhere.

Is the Rhythm Theory advocated by the Church ?

"Advocated" is entirely the wrong word. The Catholic churchmen have definite views on the subject of contraception, views which have been expressed on many occasions. The Rhythm Theory is not wrong. Whether or not its use by a particular couple is right will depend upon their intentions. But the Church does not advocate something which it is inclined rather to tolerate. In any case a couple are extremely unwise to set themselves to practise the Rhythm Theory without first talking things over with their confessor and then with a Catholic physician. Too many people are using the possibilities of the Rhythm Theory as excuses for selfishness. Too many are putting much too much trust in its unguided use.

A man plans a murder. He has every intention to commit it. Then circumstances arise which make him change his mind. The civil law would not punish him. Do Catholic morals regard him as a criminal?

Before a crime can be committed, it must first exist in the mind of the criminal. So when this man planned his crime and fully determined to carry it out, he was in fullest intention a criminal. Hence if the act in itself would have been a mortal sin, his fully determined intention to commit this act is a mortal sin.

Perhaps you can suggest some ways by which we can keep from being distracted during Mass or while we are saying our prayers.

Since the greatest of saints have not succeeded in avoiding distraction, I am afraid that there is no sure recipe. At Mass the easiest means against distraction is to follow the priest as closely as possible. Hence the use of the missal and the actual offering up of the Mass with the priest are the best guard against distraction. But I think that a great deal of distraction would be avoided if people sat in the front of the church instead of in the back. Sometimes distraction results from our going to church with the wrong person, either someone who is fidgety or someone who at the moment is too much interested in us -or we in him. I am quite willing to admit that a young man or woman may perhaps pray more devoutly if he or she is praying for some very dear person who happens to be along. But a high emotional state may not be conducive to great attention to the Mass.

If however when you come to Mass you go up to the front of the church, do not sit in the end of the pew so that everyone will have to disturb and climb over you, follow Mass with a missal or a prayer book, offer up the Mass - before it begins -for some important intention, and then carefully follow the priest at Mass, distractions will be cut to a minimum. Somewhat the same procedure should be followed in the case of prayer. Make your intention for your prayers; use your rosary, your

meditation book, a prayer book, or some favourite form of prayer; choose a place for prayer where you are not likely to be interrupted or disturbed; and ask God to be with you.

If a girl has been divorced, marries again, and has a child by her second husband, can the child be baptized in the Catholic Church?

A famous old parish priest who was almost notorious for his sleuthing after souls was one day walking down the street. Towards him came a man wheeling a baby in a baby-carriage. The man was a Catholic, had been divorced, and was married again; the child was the child of the second and civil marriage. When they met, the priest stopped, looked sternly at the father, and said, "Has that baby been baptized?" The man shook his head in solemn negative. "The Church doesn't baptize babies like this," he said. The priest leaned forward, his face dangerously red. "Look here," he said, very quietly but very tensely, "you can go to hell yourself if you want to, but you have no right to put that child in danger of losing his soul. Wheel that baby right down to church this minute, and I'll baptize him."

To this answer however a warning should be added. The Church is very urgent that babies that are baptized be reared in the Catholic faith. Hence she will not permit the offspring of non-Catholics to be baptized unless there is reasonable hope of their Catholic rearing. So though in the case given baptism must be administered, it is true only if there is a reasonable prospect of the child's receiving Catholic education and training. In the case I gave, this was certain - and was later borne out.

Must a Catholic necessarily be buried in a Catholic cemetery ?

In most modern dioceses the Church law requires this. The reason is obvious. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, have been again and again the tabernacles of the Eucharistic Christ, will rise on the last day to rejoin our souls, and hence are precious and in a very real sense sanctified. So the Church out of respect for this body which has been and will again be the companion of our soul throughout eternity demands that the body be placed in earth that has been blessed and consecrated. Sometimes this causes apparent hardship for people whose Catholic relatives must by the demands of Church law be buried in consecrated ground. The Church does not lose sight of the precious and consecrated character of the body of a Catholic even in cases like this. The bodies that are to be forever in heaven must rest in ground that is marked with special blessing and dedication to God. And in these days, when the human body has been treated with the contempt bestowed on something merely animal, that legislation has special force and value.

We should love God before our parents, shouldn't we ?

As a matter of fact we should love God before everyone else. God is the supremely loveable Being, the One who has done far more for us than have all our friends and relatives combined. Our hearts were destined to love Him; and if any other love prevents us from loving Him, that love is harmful, sad, and perhaps evil. Sometimes it may happen that our love of God forces us to do things that may seem to hurt our parents. This is the case when a child becomes a priest or a religious despite the unreasonable opposition of parents.

Christ spoke of occasions like these when He said in almost frightening fashion that sometimes we must hate father, mother, brother, sister, and everyone else for His sake. If they stand between us and our duty to God, we must push them aside. Yet in the long run that apparent hardness is the truest love we show those others. If we love God and ask Him to care for those we love, we may be sure that His generosity will more than make up for any apparent coldness or hardness on our part. I

have seen this a hundred times in the case of parents blessed in the religious vocations of their children even though these parents might savagely and selfishly have opposed them. But let's remember this: We should love our parents, our husbands, our wives, our immediate relatives with great care for the prepositions "before" and "after". Don't let's think of loving them "before God" or "after God". Let's love them "in God". That means that we love them as God meant us to love them; we love them even more because we love God; and we love them because God loves them and has given them to us as among his greatest gifts.

In what way does purgatory differ from hell ?

Largely the difference lies in the fact that hell is forever and purgatory is merely for a time. So in hell there is no hope. In purgatory there is every hope. In hell there can be no love of God. Purgatory is rich with the love of God's friends. At the end of the world purgatory will close its doors and disappear forever from the memories of men; hell will go on as long as God is God.

Will we look the same in heaven ?

I imagine that if the questioner is beautiful he or she is hoping that the answer is yes. If the questioner quite honestly regards himself or herself as not too attractive, I imagine that the answer desired is no. Basically our bodies are beautiful. If there is something about us that is unattractive, that is a defect. We should all have been handsome, beautiful, and attractive had we been born in Paradise. So we have all the necessary equipment for beauty. When our bodies rise on the last clay, blemishes and defects will be removed. We will no longer be capable of sickness or accident, the frequent causes of ugliness. Our bodies will be glorified, and that means that though our friends will still be able to recognize us we will be the kind of people worthy to live in the glorious courts of God .

Is there such a thing as exorcism in the Church today ?

Exorcism, or the driving out of devils, may be practised in the Church today only with the explicit permission of the bishop of the diocese. Yet on his way to the priesthood the young candidate receives as one of the minor offices that, of exorcist. This means that he has been given the power over the evil spirits. In Christian countries and in countries that have long known the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the powerful prayers of the faithful, the power of the devil is much limited. he may still powerfully affect the human soul; he seldom is allowed to express himself visibly by a power over the human body. Yet even in Christian lands the devil sometimes does take possession of an individual, and then exorcism may be practised in that case. But missionaries find that in pagan countries where the Christian influence has never existed or where it has been slight the power of the devil often remains quite strong. He has been served so faithfully in some false religions that he can enter into possession of his worshippers. So exorcism in missionary countries may be more frequent. But always in these days it is exercised with the greatest caution and under the most careful ecclesiastic supervision.

How does the Church feel towards step-parents ?

It feels towards step-parents exactly the way it feels towards all good people who in the kindness and charity of their hearts are serving the needs of others. I have never read anything official about the attitude of the Church towards step-parents. But the Church loves all those who care for its little ones. It admires and praises all those who do the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. So if

the stepmother and the stepfather are doing their best by the children of others they may be sure of full approval from the Church and rich reward from God.

Don't the mysteries of the Catholic religion disprove the theory that our appetite for truth was meant to be completely satisfied ?

No one ever said that our appetite for truth was intended to be completely satisfied in this world. We are tremendously curious about the earth. but we will never see it all or know it all. The scientist is enormously curious about his pet scientific field, but its vastness continues to baffle him. So the mysteries of our religion are enormous truths too vast for our minds completely to comprehend them. We know that there are three Persons in God, but we don't know how such a thing can be. We know that God became man, but we don't know adequately how such a mysterious union could actually have taken place.

So we know the facts that are contained in a great many mysteries, though we struggle to find the explanations. The day will come when in heaven both the facts and the explanations will be ours. We will see the Trinity face to face in the Beatific Vision. The mystery of the Incarnation will be explained to us. Throughout eternity our minds will continue to explore the beauty and the truth that is God. Then we shall know that complete satisfaction of our appetite for truth, an appetite which in this world must be content with morsels.

Can a Catholic justice of the peace marry people in his office ?

When a Catholic assumes civil office, he is expected to carry out his civil duties. Among the civil duties of a justice of the peace is that of marrying those who present themselves with the proper credentials received from the civil authorities. So in marrying couples in this way, a Catholic justice of the peace acts as a civil officer and with full right. Very completely different however is the type of justice of the peace who in certain sections of America has turned into a racketeer his right to perform marriages. There is the justice who actually solicits marriages, who at any hour of the day or night will perform a "hedgerow" marriage for the young couple who come dashing up breathlessly demanding a quick union. There is the justice who makes no effort to discover whether the requirements of the law have been fulfilled and who uses his office simply as an easy way to make money. No Catholic could act in this way; but for that matter no decent man with or without religion could lend himself to so shameless a trading on human emotions.

If all men are basically the same, does the Church oppose marriage between people of different colours ? For example does the Church forbid marriage between a white man and a Negro ?

The Church is so convinced that all human beings are the sons and daughters of God that it has never legislated to forbid marriage between people of different colours. Wisely it has considered that national tastes and customs would determine this factor in marriage. But a man's a man and a woman's a woman regardless of colour, so the Church has never legislated to forbid marriage between people of different colours.

Why do some Protestants distinguish between Catholics and Roman Catholics ?

The word Catholic, as I have often insisted, is really a description. It comes from the Greek word *Katholikos*, which means universal. So a Catholic is a person who believes all that Christ taught and does all that Christ ordered. The Catholic Church is the Church which was intended for all men, all nations, and all ages. In the beginning there was only one Catholic Church. Naturally enough other religions, as they arose, tried to appropriate the name. Some of the Protestant leaders were

honest enough to give up the title Catholic. They ceased to be Catholic, universal; they became Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Christian Scientists, etc..

But some of the churches continued to call themselves Catholic -notably the Greek Catholics of the so-called Orthodox religion. The true Catholic Church, in order to distinguish itself from these others, reminded the world that its head was in Rome. These were the Catholics in union with Christ's Vicar; and Christ's Vicar had established his residence in Rome. This was abbreviated to the title Roman Catholic. Father Conway, in his famous Question Box, says clearly on page 133: "In no official document has it [the Catholic Church] ever styled itself 'The Roman Catholic Church'." He adds that "The English bishops protested against this term at the Vatican Council in 1870." Yet properly the word Roman is in this case only a kind of clarifying distinction. It came into wide use when a group among the Episcopalians [Anglicans] decided that they disliked the name Protestant and very much respected the name Catholic. They began to call themselves English Catholics or Anglo-Catholics, They were, they maintained, Catholics whose superior authority was in England as distinguished from those Catholics whose superior authority was in Rome or in Greece.

We have never worried too much about this distinction. We are Catholics. The others have only a part of what Christ taught and do only a part of the things He ordered. They really don't lay claim to all the world as their flock; and their relatively recent origin prevents them from claiming, as true Catholics should claim, every age since the birth of Christ.

Why should a priest say, "I am sometimes shocked at the number of people who commit objective sins of uncharity; yet they never give a thought to what they have done"? Did he mean that a person can commit a mortal sin of uncharity or any other kind of sin and not know it?

It is impossible for a person to commit a mortal sin if he is really ignorant of what he is doing. But let's say that this completely thoughtless woman tells her friend a secret mortal sin of a third person that she happens to know. She destroys the third person's reputation and commits a kind of social murder. In itself what she has done is a mortal sin. It is an objective mortal sin. She may be saved by her thoughtlessness and ignorance, for it is amazing how thoughtless people can be and how ignorant they can remain in the face of all the effort made to instruct them. Were she to stop to think for just a minute, she would realize the evil of what she is doing But she is excused by her own ignorance. If however a person remains deliberately ignorant, then of course his ignorance doesn't excuse him. Let's take the example of a bank cashier who wants to steal. He knows that the stealing of a certain amount of money constitutes a mortal sin; but he determines not to find out what this amount is so that he won't know and hence will not be guilty of mortal sin no matter how much he takes. Of course he has committed a mortal sin. His ignorance is deliberate, and he hides behind it so that he won't be guilty. But you may be absolutely sure that he has not escaped the guilt - and he, knows he hasn't escaped it.

Is there anything wrong with birth control ?

Of course I am not even going to pretend to answer that question. It has been answered a thousand times. I merely put the question in here to show how little attention some Catholics pay to what the Church teaches over and over again. I merely present this question, which was honestly included in a question box, because it indicates the abysmal ignorance which some Catholics seem to cultivate.

Is Our Lady of Loretto the patron of aviators? If so, why ?

Yes she is. According to the ancient legend in the Church the house of Our Lady in the Holy Land was lifted and carried by angels through the air to its ultimate resting place at Loretto in Italy. This lovely tradition of a flight through the air became the basis of devotion of aviators to Our Blessed Lady of Loretto. They asked that the flight through the air be guarded by angels and by the sweet Lady of Loretto.

How soon after receiving Holy Communion should the Host be swallowed? Is it permitted to keep it reverently upon the tongue ?

One should swallow the Host as quickly as possible. A good rule is to swallow the Host before one leaves the Communion rail or Sanctuary area. If one allows the Host to dissolve upon the tongue, one may not really have received Holy Communion - although it is rather unlikely that the Host would be so completely dissolved that not even a small particle would enter the stomach and thus preserve the nature of the sacrament.

It is possible to offer Holy Communion for others ?

I am a little puzzled at the fact that this question seems to appear so recurrently. Certainly it is possible to offer Holy Communion for others. During the time of Holy Communion we can pray especially for some person and ask the dear Saviour present in our hearts to make our Communion the occasion of His granting great graces to our friends. Or during the time of Holy Communion we can ask the dear Lord to shorten the stay of our friends in purgatory.

When an argument about religion starts, should the Catholic person present remain passive ? Or should he aggressively uphold the Catholic side and take a part in the argument?

If he doesn't take a part in the argument, he is either a coward or too ignorant of his religion to present it in any adequate fashion. For a Catholic to sit passive while his religion is attacked is in the very same category as a son's sitting passive while his mother's honour is attacked. It would seem to indicate either that he believes the charge true or that he himself is too cowardly to enter a defence. But on the other hand I sometimes shudder when uneducated, ignorant, or stupid Catholics rush to the defence of the Catholic religion, make fool statements, say things that are entirely wrong, and leave the non-Catholic worse off than he was before the argument began. All this is just another way of saying that we must defend our religion but that first we must prepare ourselves to be worthy and intelligent defenders.

I have not heard that notoriously immoral books, of which I could give a number of obscene instances, have ever been placed on the Index. How can this be explained ?

The Church very seldom bothers to place frankly obscene books on the Index. In some cases however it has done so, and by name. It is much more likely to place on the Index a book which is not obviously obscene but which expresses a philosophy of life that would be destructive if it were widely followed. It is more likely to place on the Index philosophical works which lay down general principles that are dangerous to society. If a book is frankly immoral, filthy, and obscene, no one in his right mind needs to be warned against it. The minute he picks it up, he realizes that the book is an occasion of sin. But if the book is not explicitly against faith or morals but is subtle and insinuating, then a person in good faith might read it, be harmed by it, be filled with wrong principles, and never guess the harm that was being done to him. This is the type of book which the Index lists, since it is the kind of book whose character is misleading and whose effects are pernicious though often hidden.

So we can remember that: There are general laws which forbid "books which openly deal with, describe, or teach lascivious or obscene matters." This is the canon law. Then there is the Index of Prohibited Books, which is a list of books forbidden by name. Some of these are obscene. Others are dangerous to faith and morals in a more subtle fashion. All books that fall under either of these two classifications are forbidden to decent men and women.

I am a convert and have been in the Catholic Church for nearly five years. Now I find myself remembering sins of my pre-Catholic life. I cannot recall whether or not I confessed these sins at the time of my conversion. Am I obliged to confess them now ?

Most assuredly not. You are never obliged to confess sins about which you are doubtful. If you are not sure whether or not you confessed them, forget them, and don't let them disturb the happiness of your Catholic life. A scrupulous person however under the direction and guidance of a confessor may be permitted to tell these doubtful sins for the peace of his conscience. A person in doubt may wisely take this up with a trusted confessor.

How do you account for the overwhelming numbers of followers who accept Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed ? These religious leaders must have had something to offer, or so many people would not have been duped?

Undoubtedly even false or partially false religions have something to offer. Sometimes they have much to offer. Man is incurably religious. He is always thirsty for religion. So when for some reason he does not find the true religion, he finds one that is partially true and accepts this as a substitute. Confucius and Buddha, men of high moral principles, gave their followers a religion that made demands upon them, lifted their ideals, and put into their souls the ambition to be good and to perfect or improve their natures. Mohammed was wise enough to present a simple form of religion that, though it made few moral demands upon its followers, still had a code, a creed, and the promise of eternity.

It is sometimes surprising and always reassuring to see how much of right and truth is found in even the falsest religions. The better among them seem to be not far away from the true religion of Christianity. So even a false religion may give a man a glimpse of supernatural realities, a sense of his immortality, a faith in some divinity that shapes his end, and the hope of eternity. It may hold him back from vice and form him to virtue. And even the falsest of the false religions proves all over again that man must have some kind of religion. As a general rule the people who accept false religions are likely to be better morally and in their spiritual aspirations than are people who accept no religion at all. Within those religions they find many elements of truth and much of morality.

Yet in the main these other religions make slight demands upon their followers. Conversion to these religions does not demand the great act of faith needed in a convert to the Christian faith. The morality called for by these religions does not impose the need for Christian sacrifice and heroic virtue. The ideals are not so exacting as those of Christ's religion. Hence it often happens that the followers of these false religions find vestiges of religious satisfaction without the stern morality and exacting ideals demanded of Christians.

By what method may a working girl arrive at sanctity ?

No one else should have a simpler route to sanctity than the girl who is working for her living. She can offer up a laborious day in the knowledge that God will accept it gratefully. She can make her work, whatever it is, part of God's plan for the happiness of mankind. She can see in her employer,

however ungrateful and ungracious he may be a substitute whose orders and directions she accepts as if they were spoken to her by Christ Himself. The money that she earns is undoubtedly making other people happy- her family particularly, who most likely depend upon her in some measure for their necessities and comforts. It is possible that because she is working she has an independence that makes attendance at religious services easier. She may even have a little left for charity out of her income or allowance.

She certainly can find during the course of her noon hour a moment to talk to God. No day is so busy that she cannot punctuate it with ejaculations, Short prayers from the heart. Her association with others gives infinite opportunity for charity and good example. Many a Catholic girl in shop or office has been a real apostle to those who knew nothing of religion. Father LeBuffe always maintains that the simple secret of sanctity is this: to do well the job one has in hand. If this girl unites her job with Christ, offers her day to God, continues to be cheerful and smiling, and without ostentation sets herself to be an example of the full Catholic life, she can do marvellous things for God even as she is working for some human employer.

Is there any harm in one's having one's fortune told ?

The other day on a business street I passed a shop that had been taken over by a crew of Gypsies. Two poor, wretched, down-at-the-heels, slightly dirty women were on duty, one seated at the window and one standing in the doorway, soliciting patronage. I wondered how in heaven's name anybody with sense would expect these broken-down failures to be guides to fortune and prophets of the future. Certainly they had not read the future very happily for themselves. They showed no signs of having been able to turn to their own financial or social advantage any foretelling of a rising stock market or the winning horse in the Kentucky Derby.

Of all the silly credulity of human beings, this trust in fortune-tellers is the stupidest. Is it wrong? It certainly is wrong to believe that human beings possess a power which only God can have or God can give to His saintly representatives. It is certainly wrong to encourage tricksters to dupe the ignorant and to deceive the flutter-brained. It is certainly wrong to help maintain and sustain one of the shoddiest of professions and one of the most dishonest. And it is certainly wrong to pay to creatures an awe and a faith that God alone deserves.

I have been wondering about my religious vocation. In fact I have prayed that I might have temptations so that I could overcome them and prove that I have a vocation. A very close friend of mine is praying that if I am not supposed to go to the convent I will meet some attractive person who will want to marry me. What do you think of this whole muddle ?

I think that both you and your friend ought to visit a priest or a doctor, and I am not sure which one. What is the idea of praying for temptations? It's the easiest thing in the world to find out whether or not you have a religious vocation. You don't have to go through the harrowing experience of being forced to choose between the love of a man and the love of God. Clearly this friend doesn't want you to go to a convent; that is her interfering, busybody attitude. But if this attractive person comes along and you do fall in love, you have the choice of two courses. You can decide once and for all that you were never intended to be a religious, and I am not at all sure that that new-born love would prove anything of the sort. Or now with a new chain of love fastening you to the world, you must try to break away and start a new life as a religious. I have never understood why people insist on making things so difficult for themselves.

If you haven't committed a mortal sin and still want to go to confession, what do you confess ?

You may confess any venial sin that you care to tell or any serious sin of your past life - confessed as a sin of your past life. Don't deprive yourself of a confession. Go whenever you feel the impulse. Remember that there is a special grace that comes from your confessing and new strength that you receive with every absolution. If you want to direct your confession constructively, select some venial sin which you especially wish to overcome, and confess it. Or search your soul for that particular sin which is the cause of annoyance and trouble to others, and confess it. Your confession will then serve as an occasion for real character building.

Here is a man who has been a sinner all his life and on his deathbed gets the grace of a good confession. Here is another chap who has led a virtuous life for fifty years, commits one mortal sin, and dies without confession. The lifelong scamp gets heaven; the lifelong saint gets hell.

Of course this is purely an academic question. Did any such instances ever really happen? We know of one sinner, the good thief, who actually reached heaven in one leap from his death. But we don't know positively of a single saint or holy man who went to hell after he had committed a single mortal sin. It may have happened. We have no proof that it did or did not happen, so it would be the easiest thing in the world merely to deny your facts or at least ask you to prove them. Between a mortal sin and a lifetime of mortal sins however there is merely this difference: The lifetime prolongs the single act of the rejection of God. A man who commits a mortal sin tells God to get out of his life. He turns from God to evil and by that very fact chooses hell. If he has done this over a lifetime or if he has done it just once, the act itself is the same. I am very glad that you feel that God is lenient with lifelong sinners. You are probably right. I am sorry if you feel that He is likely to be stern with lifelong saints. We have no proof of that. But any mortal sin is a turning from God, complete and - for the time being at least - final. If death comes before confession or contrition, then hell is the fate of the sinner, the fate he chose for himself. This should give us a healthy respect for God and His Law and should make us careful.

You are evidently strongly opposed to young people's "going steady" until such time as they can think approximately of marriage. Yet you seem to think that a person can fall in love when he is about nineteen or twenty years old. Well suppose that I do fall in love with a boy that I have met recently. How do I know that he is all that he should be? If on the other hand I have known a boy since he was sixteen or seventeen years old and have gone out with him, I could be pretty sure that he is the kind of boy I want to marry. So I think that "going steady" is a safeguard for my marriage.

Yes I frankly dislike to see young people "going steady" until there is some possibility of their considering a marriage in the fairly near future. I think it limits their power of making friends. It makes them socially lazy. Their constant association with one person sharpens their temptations and may, because of the constant opportunity, make their physical urges stronger. Most often the young person who "goes steady" during high school or the early years of college (or at an age that is the equivalent of these stages) does not marry the person he or she went with. Such young people give years of their lives to one person - and at a time when they should be meeting a great many people and learning to be friendly with people of a variety of temperaments and characters. They come to be so narrowed that they cannot dance with anyone but with the one person, who from long practice matches their intricate or off-the-beat steps.

This is just the sketchiest answer, for to me the idea of "going steady" is the prelude to marriage. Otherwise it is the lazy way that a boy concentrates on one girl or a girl allows one boy to monopolize her. It is the failure to develop one's ability to make friends and be congenial with

people. It is a sort of social monopoly, a social exclusiveness. Invariably in later years those who "went steady" wished they had swung out into a wider circle of friends. It is by no means necessary to "go steady" in order to come to know a person. If a young person is a member of your social crowd, your club, the group with which you dance, play, talk, walk, you soon come to know a great deal about him or her. In fact you may eventually know more about him by seeing him in relationship to a crowd than by seeing him in relationship to yourself and your limited interests and taste.

I myself in my salad days was a member of several groups. I knew extremely well both the boys and the girls of those groups. It certainly was not necessary for me to concentrate on one person, go exclusively with her, bar others from that same personal association in order to come to know her well. The girl who in later years I knew best and upon whose family I later exercised the largest influence was during all the time that she belonged to our crowd engaged to a young man whom she eventually married. She was in her twenties though at the time. The smart young man and the wise young woman associate socially during youthful days with a great many young people. They come to know as wide a gamut of personalities as they can. They watch their associates deal, not with a single individual - themselves - but with groups, crowds, individuals of widely varying temperaments and interests. And during all this group relationship they come to know the others in the crowd surprisingly well.

Indeed I believe they know these persons better than they would know the young person to whom they might have given an exclusive companionship, a restricted and a limited kind of companionship, an association certainly not full of varied life. The days of youth are the days for many happy friendships and many charming people. Don't cramp your style by allowing or practising a monopoly.

May a Catholic act as godfather in the baptism of a non-Catholic in a Protestant church ?

It seems to me that the question almost answers itself. A Protestant baptism is a religious service Catholics are not allowed to take part in religious services of other religions. Quite aside from that however, a godparent, by the fact of his being a sponsor, promises that the child will be educated in the true religion. So in the case you indicate you would have this amazingly contradictory situation : You, a Catholic, would be promising God that the child would be educated in the true religion, although at the very time of your promise he was being baptized into a false one. It doesn't make sense, does it?

May a Catholic be godparent for a child who is not likely to be brought up a Catholic?

When a person becomes a sponsor, he undertakes a real responsibility. He agrees as you remember from your catechism, that he will see that the child is brought up a Catholic if the parents decline this responsibility or happen to die. Now if the Catholic sponsors know very well that the parents will make it impossible for the child to be a practical Catholic and will not allow the godparents to enter the picture to fulfil their obligation, naturally enough they cannot accept this office. This simply means that they cannot accept the responsibility, which they could not possibly fulfil. On the other hand if you should happen to know that the parents are weak Catholics but would not object to your educating the child in the Catholic faith you might possibly be doing an apostolic work if you became a sponsor for the child. But you should explain then to the parents that you take your duty seriously and really intend to see that the child is reared a good Catholic.

In this it is more than likely you might be saving the soul of the child. It may be however that the whole question is purely academic. No priest would baptize a child about whose future Catholic upbringing he had serious doubt. . If it should happen that you are sure that the child will not be brought up in the faith, you would be doing your simple duty if you talked it over with the priest who was asked to baptize the child. He probably doesn't know the circumstances. Knowing them, he would take a great many steps to make sure of the child's future Catholicity before he poured the waters of baptism.

I am hoping to become a sister some day. I really love to meet people, but I just can't make myself do so. Will this inability to meet people be an impediment to my future work ?

The inability to meet people is always an impediment. Unless you intend to be a contemplative nun, you are going to spend a large part of your life meeting people and dealing with them. So it is a shame if you let your shyness and timidity get between you and people, whom you should later on influence. I would strongly recommend at least a simple social life. Be sure to drop into the living room when the family has visitors, and meet them- When you are invited out, accept the invitation. If you feel that you are going to be shy, think in advance a little about subjects to discuss, comments to make, or contributions that you can make to the conversation.

Remember that talk is not the only thing necessary to make people feel at home with you. A pleasant smile is often more than an equivalent for conversation. The ability to listen well, to ask the right questions which draw out the other person's spontaneous, interested comments is something that can be developed. But don't let shyness get its grip on you. It is certainly no moral wrong, yet it is or can be a handicap for a religious. You will be very wise quite calmly to appraise your own good qualities. If you have a fair measure of good looks, don't hesitate to cultivate them. If you have a talent, be quite willing to use it socially. Listen to people who talk well, and find out how they do it - with the purpose of doing the same yourself. And cultivate that sweet charity and willingness to do things for others which are far more important than brilliance in conversation or the ability to do parlour tricks.

Few other things are greater assets to religious life than is the ability to deal with people. The happy, socially-minded religious is an enormous asset in a community and a joy in the recreation room. Cultivate that art among your relatives, your friends, and your acquaintances. It will make you a better religious.

I am reading a book that tells "the facts of life" very frankly. I am reading it with the intention to gain knowledge and not for any satisfaction I might get from reading. Is this wrong?

It is impossible for me to answer this question without my seeing you face to face. How old are you? Have you no mother or father or priest friend or nun confidante or family doctor to whom you could go for this information? Is the book Catholic in tone or thoroughly pagan? Are you shortly to be married or is marriage a long way off? Unfortunately during the period of youth many a young person has a quite literally burning curiosity. Millions of copies of these "sex books" are got out, not in any honest desire to give information that will be of help in the living of a rich and wholesome life, but simply to satisfy the curiosity of young people. And even there the word satisfy is incorrect. The proper words would be stimulate, increase, and fire the interests of youngsters in subjects which they need never come close to until they have reached the age when marriage is near at hand.

Do you think it possible for a mature woman who has gone out very little socially to fall in love with the first man who takes her out?

My inclination is to say that it is not only possible but probable. Apparently there is no age limit to love. People fall in love quite late in life and marry sometimes very happily the men or women they meet in their very mature years. It is possible that a person who is destined by God and nature for marriage never during the course of a quite long life meets anyone suitable at the times when marriage was possible. Later on the right person comes along; they fall in love, marry, and spend their autumnal years in deep peace and happiness. Theirs is not likely to be the romantic passion of youth. Instead they may know a very splendid companionship and a deep and contented love.

If you know and go out with young people who drink and "neck", and you don't do these things, is there the possibility that you will be able to reform them ?

It is of course possible; but the chances are ten to one that if any changes are made they will be the changes that the drinkers and the "neckers" will make in you. Good example is in the long run a powerful force. In the short, run bad example seems to have the more immediate effect. I can imagine nothing duller than your sitting sipping a soft drink in the company of those who are getting themselves "high", if not positively drunk. To the drunk all jokes are funny. To the person who is cold sober the humour of a drunk is about the wettest, stupidest drivel in the world. And I should imagine that it would be a little difficult to sit around discussing books, the victory garden, and politics while the rest of the young people were "necking". Isn't it possible for you to find young people who like the things that you like and do the things that you want to do? The world is really full of such people. Why should you go around with a crowd in which you right and decent though you are, are the one who seems to be out of step?

Would a confession be void if the confessor was deaf and the penitent felt that the confessor would as a consequence be easier on him than would the other priests who were hearing confessions in the same church ?

If a priest is allowed to hear confessions, you are perfectly safe to take it for granted that he can hear what you tell him. The confessional is a very intimate place, and the voice carries easily over the brief distance that is marked by the grill. So if the confessor is in his confessional. if you tell you sins in your normal confessional voice, and if he does not show clear signs that he cannot hear you, you don't need to worry in the least. We don't need to worry much about deaf confessors. Seldom does a priest miss anything that is told him in the confessional; and when he does miss something, he invariably asks that the statement be repeated.

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