

## Getting to Heaven

The destiny of man is to know, love and serve God, to share in God's life while on this earth, and to live in eternal union with Him in heaven (cf. CCC 1700-1715, 1021-1022). So, how exactly, should Christians think about getting to heaven? Here are the key aspects of the Catholic view on getting to heaven:

Getting to heaven is not a "point system" where Christians earn points for every good deed that they do, and if they have accumulated enough points, then they get a ticket to heaven. Many people think that just because they did some good things in the past, then they are automatically eligible to enter heaven. People who think that way are in for a surprise: on the subject of being a true disciple, Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?' Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.'" (Matthew 7:21-23) Note carefully how Jesus said, "only the one who **does** the will of my Father;" rather than "only the one who **did** the will of my Father." What counts is the present state of a person, not his past.

Salvation is a free and unearned gift of grace through Jesus Christ. But Christians ought to accept this gift through faith, baptism, and living in obedience to God's will, which includes performing good works. Here's point number 1: Salvation is about God's mercy and grace.



Good works are not meant to be thought of as some kind of currency that one can use to buy heaven; good works are the inevitable fruits of a faith-filled life. Rather than using good works as a means to achieve something, good works is the resulting action of God's grace working in a person.

According to Catholic teaching, in order to enter heaven, one has to die in a state of grace, free from mortal sin (cf. 1023-1026). Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate... how narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few." (Matthew 7:13-14) Here is point number 2: Salvation is not automatic. It requires entering through the narrow gate – which means intentional discipleship, repentance, and consistently choosing God's will. Knowingly and willingly rejecting God's grace through unrepented mortal sin is what separates a person from heaven. A state of grace and friendship with God is achieved through faith in Jesus Christ, reception of the sacraments and living out God's will through love and charity. As Catholics, we are blessed to have at our disposal the Sacramental life: starting with Baptism, receiving the Sacraments (specifically Eucharist and Reconciliation after Baptism) are the ordinary way to receive the grace necessary for salvation. Living in a state of grace means having a genuine and steady relationship with God. To recapitulate, getting to heaven is not about what we have done in the past; rather, it is about what our disposition is in the present. Disposition

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refers to a person's current qualities of mind and character, mood and temperament, a person's tendency and inclination. Ezekiel 18 reminds us: "if the wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed, if he keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live. He shall not die! None of the crimes he has committed shall be remembered against him; he shall live because of the justice he has shown... And if the just turn from justice and do evil, like all the abominations the wicked do, can they do this evil and still live? None of the justice they did shall be remembered, because they acted treacherously and committed these sins; because of this, they shall die." (Ezekiel 18: 21-24)

A lady I knew boasted that she prayed 5 rosaries every day, prided herself for being seen in church all the time, and acted like the morality police, pointing out people's faults and unworthiness with a stern look. It makes me wonder if she thinks she has enough points to get to heaven?

## PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Attention children and parents: We will not have Sunday School class today!

We will have our monthly faith workshop in the Conference Room immediately after Mass this morning.

Did you know that you can make donations to the church directly from your retirement account? Each time you make a distribution from your retirement account, it is counted as taxable income. However, if you make a donation (up to \$108,000), to qualified charities through QCD (Qualified Charitable Distributions), these donations, although not tax-deductible, are excluded from taxable income. Many older retired donors use this strategy to lower their taxable income, but it also satisfies Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) without increasing their adjusted gross income (AGI). Consult your financial advisor or contact your retirement account specialist.

Prayer List: Tan Haiquan, Bian Meiyi, Chen Shupeng, Ni Yufang, Lydia Chen, David Wang, Chen Jianxin, Liang Chenjing and Xu Taicheng.

<b>Mass Schedule</b>	<b>Confessions</b>	<b>Bible Study</b>
Sundays 10:30 AM (Chinese)	By Appointment	Wednesdays 10:00 AM (Chinese)
Sundays 2:00 PM (English)		
	<b>Anointing of the Sick</b>	<b>Eucharistic Adoration</b>
Mondays 12:00 PM (English)	First Sundays after 10:30 AM Mass	Sundays 9:00 to 10:00 AM
Tuesdays 12:00 PM (English)	First Fridays after 7:00 PM Mass	
Wednesdays 12:00 PM (Chinese)		
Fridays 12:00 PM (English)		
First Friday 7:00 PM (English)		