

All This and Heaven Too.

by Father John Catoir JCD-4/25/18

If you're trying to figure out who gets to heaven, consider the passage in the Gospel which recounts the story of the woman washing the feet of Jesus. Remember how the Pharisees condemned Jesus for walking with sinners and being morally lax. He allowed a common prostitute to bathe his feet with her tears.

The point that needs to be taken from this passage is that God alone can judge a person's worthiness. Judging the level of another's is exceedingly unwise. Holiness is often hidden from our eyes. That's why everyone needs to remember the words of Jesus, "The first will be last, and the last will be first." Mt. 20/16. Those who tend to be holier than thou would do well to ponder the dangers of pride.

In her book, The Reed of God, Caryll Houselander wrote, "How is it that some people who do not believe in any creed, and do not recognize charity as necessary for salvation are often conspicuously kind, warm-hearted, and tolerant? Whereas some professing Christians are often notoriously hard-hearted, judgmental and exacting. And how is it that a person known to be 'religious' is often the very last person to whom one would go for help?" How true.

Jesus sees the good in everyone. He is all-merciful, and this my friend is what we call: The Good News of the Gospel.

What about those who die never having heard of Jesus Christ?

In his 1990 Encyclical, Redemptoris Missio, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, "Salvation means that it is granted not only to those who explicitly believe in Christ, and have entered the Church, but also to everyone who is open to receive help from God. Therefore, it is clear that today, as in the past, many people who have not had an opportunity to come to know Jesus, will nevertheless be eligible to receive salvation by virtue of Christ Himself, and His Sacrifice on the cross." (#10 Par.1).

Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI are both saying the same thing. God is all-merciful, and Salvation is only possible through Jesus Christ.

The former Cardinal Ratzinger, who is now Pope Benedict XVI, is telling us that getting to heaven is a matter of receiving Christ's loving grace. The level of our holiness once we get there depends on how much love and consolation we poured out toward others in our lifetime.

Heaven is a place of peace and love where we live intimately with God in a state of bliss. It has to be a 'place' since we will have glorified bodies. We are human beings not angels, pure spirits without a body. Our bodies require a place to live and breathe and have our being.

Heaven is also a Kingdom of Justice. Like the angels and archangels, there will be a hierarchy of holiness among heaven's citizens. The difference will be startling in some cases, like the difference between St. Joan of Arc and a thieving- murderer who repented at the last minute. And yet, "There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one lost sheep who returns to God, than over ninety-nine who never strayed," (Luke 15:7).

May the Lord be your strength and your joy as you make your journey to heaven.