

GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Route B

EDUQAS GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES - ROUTE B
COMPONENT 2: APPLIED CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

THEME 3 - LIFE & DEATH

Author: Patrick Harrison



BIG QUESTIONS

- Is there a life after death?
- Is it possible to die well?
- Do people have a right to choose how and when to die?
- Are heaven & hell real?
- Can a loving God allow hell?
- Does God judge us just on how we treat others?
- Can music help people to pray?
- Is praying simply repeating well-known prayers?
- Should funerals be sad?
- Is there any point in praying for the dead?

AREA OF STUDY - DEATH & THE AFTERLIFE

CORE LEARNING

By the end of this area of study you will know and understand:

- Catholic teaching on death & dying well
- Different attitudes to palliative care, euthanasia and assisted suicide, and the right to die
- Different views about death as the end of personal existence
- Catholic belief about the resurrection of the body

KEY CONCEPTS

Death - the end of physical life. When the physical body ceases completely to function

Eternal Life - the term used to refer to life in heaven after death. Also, the phrase Jesus uses to describe a state of living as God intends, which leads to a life in heaven

Resurrection – the raising of the body to life again after death. Christians believe that Jesus has already experience resurrection and that all people will experience it at the end of time.

Soul – the eternal part of a human being given at conception which lives on after the death of the body. Also a name for a human being's rational nature – their mind

Death is part of human experience. Throughout human history religious believers, as well as those who are not religious, have explored what death means. They seek to offer support to those approaching death and to those who are grieving the death of family or friends. How people respond to the issues of death and the afterlife will be different. Some understand death as simply the end of the life of the human body. In which case life ends once the physical body ceases to completely function (this is usually decided once brain function is no longer identifiable and/or heartbeat and breathing cannot continue without artificial help).

“I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will be changed.” (1 Cor 15:50-51)

“Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?” (1Cor 15:55)

This belief that life is ‘changed not ended’ is part of a Christian way of understanding death. As a consequence, Catholic teaching on death can only be understood in a context of a belief in **Eternal Life**. For Catholics, it is important to help those who are dying to:

- *prepare themselves to die well* – This may include seeking opportunities to spend time with family, to make sure that their Will is up dated to reduce worry about money and inheritance, perhaps discuss what they would like their funeral to be like and maybe even to make peace with some family members or some friends. For those in significant pain ‘preparing for death’ will include seeking palliative care to reduce that pain in the final stages of life.
- *to respect the integral value of their lives until their natural death* – This means that the Catholic Church rejects Euthanasia or Assisted Suicide as appropriate ways of ending a life. Instead they promote the work of hospices and other organisations that provide palliative care when life treatment to cure a medical condition is no longer possible.
- *to provide rituals and liturgies to support the grieving* – This means that the funeral rite includes imagery and symbols that reflect belief and hope in eternal life. Prayers are said for those who have died. Belief in eternal life is explored through music and art.

Palliative Care:

For some people the time leading up to death can be long and burdensome. For those who have a significant illness (such as cancer) or a degenerative condition (such as Motor Neurone Disease) there may be long periods of pain. To control that pain is the aim of palliative care. Medication is provided to reduce pain and to enable the individual to retain as much dignity and quality of life as possible. Hospices, and those organisations that offer similar care, are guided by doctors to provide pain relieving medication, nursing care, supervision and practical help until natural death occurs.

The Catholic Church, along with many other Christians, many people of other religious traditions and those with no religion belief at all, support those who provide such palliative care because it respects the integral value of every person until their natural death. There are objections by some people because occasionally the medication is very strong and in some circumstances make death happen sooner. In 1995 Pope Saint John Paul II published a document called ‘*Evangelium Vitae*’

(Good News of Life) that clearly stated that palliative care is an appropriate way of relieving pain because (a) such care respects the right to reject treatment that is unreasonably burdensome and also that (b) maintaining dignity and some quality is part of the proper processes of care.

Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide:

- *Euthanasia*: The term means a 'good' or 'gentle' death. This term is used to refer to a procedure where a medical professional gives medication to end the life of a person with a prolonged incurable condition who is suffering unbearable pain. Most of the campaigns in support of Euthanasia concentrate on situations where an individual repeatedly asks for their life to be ended. Such voluntary euthanasia is legal in the Netherlands.
- *Assisted Suicide*: This term is used to when an individual seeks help to end their own life in a pain free/reduced process. Some countries have changed their laws to permit assisted suicide.

The Catholic Church maintains a consistent teaching on these matters; these deliberate actions to end a life before natural death are wrong.

"... I confirm that euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person." (Evangelium Vitae #65 - Pope St John Paul II)

This teaching is rooted in the belief that all human life is sacred/holy. Belief in the sanctity of life comes from an understanding that life itself is a gift from God, is precious and should be respected from conception to natural death. Deliberate and unjustified killing, such as euthanasia and assisted suicide, are seen as going against that sanctify of life and against the instruction in the Ten Commandments - 'Do not murder'. There are suitable alternatives available through palliative care. In addition, the Catholic tradition has long held that suffering does have a purpose in helping us to learn about ourselves and others and to understand the human condition. The Church also acknowledges that some people are able to identify with the suffering of Jesus at the crucifixion. *Evangelium Vitae* does point out that 'such heroic behaviour cannot be considered the duty for everyone'.

Is there a right to die?

Catholic teaching on the quality and sanctity of life are based on an interpretation of the basic integral value of all human life from conception to natural death. All human life, however fragile or vulnerable, shares that integral value. Palliative care that supports human dignity is acceptable, while euthanasia and assisted suicide are not. Many other Christians reach similar conclusions.

There is also consistency among other religious people. Islam and Judaism place a similar emphasis on the sanctity of life and on the importance of compassion for those in pain. Euthanasia and assisted suicide should not be an issue for consideration because the focus should be on supporting the dignity of each individual who is suffering and near to death. The instruction not to kill innocent life is rooted in that belief in individual dignity.

However, some religious people across most faiths reach different conclusions on this issue. For example, some Christians within the 'liberal' wing of the Church of England focus on the compassion that Jesus showed in his healing miracles and in his teaching. They look in particular to Jesus' teaching to 'Love your neighbour as yourself' and the Golden Rule ('Do to others as you would have them to do to you'). They would argue that truly loving others would permit euthanasia if an individual feels that the quality of their life has become completely diminished, because it clearly demonstrates loving compassion. Such an argument is used to support voluntary euthanasia and to favour a change to UK law to permit assisted suicide. A further argument offered is that there is a continuing increase in the number of people in the UK who express support for both voluntary euthanasia and for assisted suicide.

A 'right to die' argument

The British Humanist Association (BHA) has a very different approach towards the quality and sanctity of life. Their view is that the decision about quality of life and whether or not life is tolerable, rests with the individual. They reject that sanctity of life is granted by God. Rather, that all humans have dignity and any decision about prolonging or ending a life is part of the individual human right for self-determination. They conclude that legalised assisted dying would ensure that individuals would be free to make their own choices about their end-of-life care. This is not to reject palliative care but to include euthanasia and assisted suicide as patient-centred approaches to end-of-life care.

In 2012, the BHA supported a challenge to UK law on behalf of Tony Bland who had 'locked-in syndrome'. This condition meant that he was unable to move or speak. He repeatedly asked for the right to be able to choose an assisted death. He felt that the law condemned him to live with increasing indignity and misery. A few years earlier, Diane Pretty had asked the courts to permit her husband to be able to take her to a 'Dignitas' clinic in Switzerland, should she make the decision that her quality of life had deteriorated too far. Both of these people died without changes in UK law. Euthanasia is legally permitted in the Netherlands and a few other countries. Assisted suicide is legally permitted in Switzerland and some states in the USA. Since 2010 the Director of Public Prosecutions for England and Wales has said it is unlikely that someone would be prosecuted for helping someone travel to Switzerland for assisted suicide if (a) it was clear the person had reached a voluntary, settled and informed decision and (b) the one helping was wholly motivated by compassion.

The Catholic Church, and others, continue to reject the arguments in favour of right to die.

- *Slippery slope argument:* The worry is that whilst the motivations behind the campaigns to change UK law are reasonable, is it really possible to put sufficient safeguards in place to protect people who may feel pressurised to accept euthanasia or assisted suicide?
- *Quality of life:* There are numerous examples of people who have lived fruitful and valuable lives despite the difficult circumstances they find themselves in.
- *Who decides 'quality of life':* The most common examples in favour of euthanasia and assisted suicide are those with incurable conditions and in unbearable pain. Daniel James was paralysed from the waist down following a rugby injury. He sought assisted suicide because he could not come to terms with what he felt to be a diminished quality of life. On the other hand, many people live productive and valuable lives despite such paralysis.
- *Do Not Resuscitate (DNR);* This is not the same as supporting euthanasia or assisted suicide. Deciding not to resuscitate a person because the resuscitation procedures would be unreasonably burdensome, would be respecting their dignity and value, so many religious people support DNR decisions.

The Resurrection

“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.” (1Cor 15:12-14)

The **Resurrection** of Jesus is an essential part of Christian belief. Each of the four Gospels include scenes of the disciples finding the ‘empty tomb’. The body of Jesus was laid in a tomb on the Friday evening. Early on the Sunday morning some women went to the tomb to anoint the body. This was part of the burial rituals that were not completed in the rush to have Jesus buried before the start of the Sabbath. They found that the tomb was empty and Jesus’ body was gone. The Apostles and some other disciples, tell of events where they met the ‘risen’ Jesus. This led them to proclaim a new message; that Jesus had risen from that dead and that this was a resurrection of the body.

St Paul had an extraordinary encounter with Jesus that reinforced the belief in the resurrection of Jesus. He explained the importance and meaning of this experience in the first of his letters to the Christian community in Corinth.

“For what I received I passed onto you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also...” (1Cor 15:3-8)

It was clear to the Apostles and the early disciples of Jesus that his was a resurrection of the body. Furthermore, this resurrection is promised to all because Jesus has defeated sin and death. In his letter, St Paul offers an explanation. He makes a distinction between earthly bodies and heavenly bodies. The analogies he offers come from nature. The grain of wheat is very different to the fully grown plant. It ceases to be like that seed when it becomes a plant. In a similar way, it is possible to understand a distinction between earthly, physical bodies and heavenly, spiritual bodies.

“So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body, If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.” (1Cor 15:42-45)

The Soul

St Paul has an understanding of the Soul that informs his explanation of what resurrection means. It is clear that he does not think that Jesus' body was simply revived. St Paul also rejected the view that humans are mere physical bodies with a finite existence on earth. There is something about being human that animates our identity, this is what he understood the soul to be. He also rejected the view that eternal life was restricted to 'disembodied' souls. It is not possible to fully understand human experience without a body. So for St Paul, our earthly, physical identify is both body and soul. Our heavenly spiritual bodies are both body and soul.

Did Jesus really rise from the dead?

Various alternative theories have been offered to explain the empty tomb. Belief in the resurrection would be weakened if it were proven that Jesus did not rise from the dead.

- *Jesus' body was stolen:* Could the Romans or some others have stolen the body? Their motivation might have been to reduce the likelihood of Jesus' followers making extraordinary claims about him. This theory is countered by asking why did they not present Jesus body when the Apostles started preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead? There have been some who have said the Apostle themselves stole Jesus' body, although that begs the question why would they have risked their own lives for something they knew to be untrue. The Gospel accounts emphasise that the tomb was guarded to protect it from robbery.
- *Jesus was revived:* Theories have been offered suggesting that Jesus did not really die at all. They suggest that he was given pain relief and that he merely seemed dead. Then perhaps the women were able to revive him when they went to the tomb. This is countered by asking why are there no stories about Jesus' life and death in the years that followed?

Other explanations of life after death

The resurrection of Jesus remains a matter of faith. It cannot be proved beyond all doubt but then neither can it be disproved. What of the claims that death is not the end of personal experience? We have seen that St Paul explained Christian belief in a resurrection of body **and** soul. What are the alternatives?

The Material Body: The view that we are simply our physical bodies. There is no soul or spirit. Our sense of self is found in thoughts, memories and experiences that have a physical explanation through growing understanding of how our brains work. Most non-religious people believe this.

The Soul: The spiritual aspect of being; that which connects someone to God. The Soul is often regarded as non-physical and as living on after physical death, in an afterlife. Hindus and Sikhs believe that the 'soul' is reincarnated in to a new body after death and born again.

For some people there is evidence of reincarnation through memories of past lives. For others there is the phenomenon of 'near-death experiences' (NDE), where some people claim to have temporarily separated from their physical bodies, often during 'traumatic events such as accidents and medical procedures.

SUMMARY

- Death is not the end; Christians believe there is an eternal life after death
- Catholics do not accept euthanasia or assisted suicide; they believe there are alternatives
- There are many different opinions about whether people should have the right to end their own lives
- Due to Jesus' bodily resurrection, Catholics believe that the soul and the body are resurrected
- There are different opinions about Jesus' resurrection and about what happens to us when we die.

AREA OF STUDY - BELIEFS ABOUT ESCHATOLOGY

CORE LEARNING

By the end of this area of study you will know and understand

- Catholics beliefs about judgement by God on the basis of moral behaviour
- Catholic beliefs and Bible teachings about 'heaven' and 'hell'
- Catholic beliefs and teachings about purgatory

KEY CONCEPTS

Judgement – at the end of our life, we will be faced with an ultimate choice to choose God or reject God. The decision we take leads to judgment and decides whether we 'go' to heaven or hell

Heaven – those who have accepted God's grace and forgiveness in this life will enjoy an eternal existence in God's presence in the next life. This face-to-face encounter with God is what is called 'heaven'

Hell – those who through the exercise of their own free will ultimately reject God's grace and forgiveness, will have chosen to live eternally outside of God's presence. This total lack of God for all eternity is what is called 'hell'

Eschatology

This term is used in Christianity for the study of the 'last things' – Death, Judgement, Heaven & Hell.

Judgement

The New Testament has several stories told by Jesus that refer to a judgement being made about how people lived their lives.

In the parable of **The Unforgiving Servant** Jesus tells of a man who owes money to the king. Fearing being put in debtors' prison, he begs for mercy. After receiving that mercy and being free from his debt, the man then finds a man who owes him money. However, he rejects the requests for mercy. The king is furious about such hypocrisy and puts the first man in prison until he pays what he owes! Jesus finishes the story with these words:

'This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother and sister from your heart' (Matt 18:35)

The parable of **The Rich Man and Lazarus** tells how a rich man ignored the needs of the poor, in particular a beggar named Lazarus, who begged outside his house. Lazarus would beg while the rich man enjoyed his luxuries. The parable emphasises the situation by stating that Lazarus would have welcomed even the food that fell from the rich man's table. After death though, Lazarus is taken to be with God, while the rich man has an eternal life of 'torment' and misery. The rich man asks for some comfort, but he is reminded;

"Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony." (Luke 16:19-31)

Catholic teaching about judgement flows from this Christian understanding that each individual will be held to account for the things they do, or fail to do, during our lives. People may be tempted to deceive themselves, but in the end they will stand before God who will judge

Heaven

Those who have accepted God's grace and forgiveness in this life will enjoy eternal existence in God's presence in the next life. This face to face encounter with God is what Christians call 'heaven'. Throughout history, Christians have tried to find language and imagery to describe what this might mean. The language of 'up there', the 'presence of God', 'glorious splendour'; the 'beatific vision'; a 'transcendent place; and the imagery of 'clouds' and 'harp playing angels', all seek to offer ways of understanding a belief in eternal happiness in the presence of God. All such language and imagery are attempts to describe the indescribable. The reward for living correctly is to be eternally in the presence of God. Heaven is to be totally at one with God.

Hell

If being in the presence of God is the reward then being separated from God is the punishment. Those who through their own free will ultimately reject God's grace and forgiveness will have chosen to live eternally outside of God's presence. This total lack of God for all eternity is what Christians call 'hell'. The two parables (The Unforgiving Servant and The Rich Man and Lazarus) demonstrate that it is the free choice to exclude themselves from God that led to the consequences of punishment. It is not that God chooses to punish. It is that the individual chooses to reject love, mercy, compassion and God. The imagery of fire and torture have been used by artists, writers and poets to explore the concept of being separated from God for eternity, but again, these are just attempts to describe something that we cannot fully understand.

Purgatory

This term comes from the same root as 'to purge'. It means to cleanse or get rid of sins. Catholic teaching accepts that people are not perfect. While trying to do their best, there will be people who have been let down and actions that cause some harm. In human relationships people seek to make up for those errors. The same can apply to a relationship with God. Eternal life with God is about being in a state of perfection. Cleansing or purging those mistakes and errors in life enables the person to be fully in the presence of God. That is what the teaching about 'Purgatory' is seeking to help people to understand.

Some art and literature presents Purgatory as a place with fire. This is because the Greek root word for fire is 'pur' and refers to the ancient practice of burning land in an attempt to cleanse it. St Paul uses the same imagery in his first letter to the Christians in Corinth.

*"It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work.
If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward." (1Cor 3:13)*

Although useful for artists, it is not very helpful to see Purgatory as some sort of place half-way between heaven and hell. The idea behind this teaching is that of hope. Hope that the final cleansing and purifying removes the final effects of sin and prepares for eternal life with God. This is why, in the Catholic tradition, people pray for those who have died. Praying for the dead is to join with them in that hope for eternal life.

Other Christian views on Judgement

Catholic teaching focuses on individual (or particular) judgment. Each person is responsible for their own actions. Jesus also talked about a 'final judgement'. This suggests that Jesus will come in glory at the end of time and the whole of creation will be judged. That imagery is in the Parable of the

Sheep and the Goats (Matt 25:31-46) and in the Book of Revelation. Some Christians, such as Anglicans, do not accept the idea of Purgatory. They simply believe that people either accept God and are in a state of grace with God, or they reject God. Some Christians put the emphasis on a final judgement at the end of time, rather than an individual judgement. They believe that Christ will come in glory on the last day for a final day of judgement.

SUMMARY

- 'Eschatology' describes Christian ideas about what will happen at the 'end times'
- Catholics believe in personal judgement; God will judge everyone on the basis of how they have lived their lives
- 'Heaven' is being in the presence of God for eternity and 'Hell' is the absence of God for eternity.
- Purgatory is the Catholic idea that, after death, people will be cleansed of sin before they can enter heaven
- Other Christians hold different beliefs about judgement and about Purgatory

AREA OF STUDY - THE MAGISTERIUM

CORE LEARNING

By the end of this area of study you will know and understand

- The different sources of authority for Catholics
- The different forms of Magisterium
- The significance and impact of Second Vatican Council

KEY CONCEPTS

Magisterium – the teaching authority of the Church, exercised by the bishops in communion with the Pope. The Magisterium is given grace by the Holy Spirit to faithfully interpret the Scriptures and Tradition

The Catholic Church has three distinct sources of authority to support its teaching about Christian beliefs. The Bible as the Word of God is the primary source for all Christians. It was inspired by the Holy Spirit and the Church believes that the Holy Spirit continues to work.

Over the centuries important theologians have explained beliefs to the community. This is called the 'Tradition'.

In addition the leaders of the Church (popes and bishops) have further explored the faith. Their particular authority is called the 'Magisterium'. The Latin word 'magister' means a 'master' or 'teacher'. Catholic teaching is that this particular authority rests with the Pope and bishops. Jesus gave the apostles the authority to preach. Catholics believe that the present Pope and bishops can trace their appointment and ordination back to the first apostles. This is called the Apostolic Succession.

Ordinary Magisterium

Popes and bishops regularly preach the Good News in homilies and in their regular letters to their dioceses. Most often, these are to encourage faith and devotion, clarify a point of faith or to give instructions. The most well known are those written by the Pope. These are called 'encyclicals' and an example is *Evangelium Vitae* (Gospel of Life). This was written by Pope St John Paul II to clarify the Church's responses to a variety of modern ethical issues that affect the sanctity of life.

"Taking into account these distinctions, in harmony with the Magisterium of my predecessors and in communion with the Bishops of the Catholic Church, I confirm that" (Evangelium Vitae #65 – Pope St John Paul II 1995)

The function of the Magisterium is to present Catholic teaching in the modern context with clarity and confidence. It is important for the Church to be able to respond to issues that were not considered by the writers of the Bible (such as IVF and genetic engineering) and to do so in ways that are consistent with that tradition. The authority of the Magisterium gives that confidence to the next generation of Catholics.

Extraordinary Magisterium

General Councils: Sometimes the bishops of the Church are asked to sit in a General Council. This is a special or extraordinary form of the Magisterium. The task of a General Council is to explore matters of significance to the life of the Church. The first record of such a council is in the bible (Acts 15) when the leaders of the Christian community gathered in Jerusalem to decide what procedures were required of new converts to Christianity. The decisions made at these General Councils have particular importance and great significance in the life of the Catholic Church. The decisions of the Council of Nicea resulted in the Nicene Creed, which is still regularly said in churches on Sundays.

Pontifical Magisterium: Another form of 'extraordinary magisterium' are specific and rare declarations by a pope. The rules for such declarations were finally set down by a General Council in 1870. The Pope has the authority to make the final decision on some disputed matters of faith or morals. They are called *ex cathedra* declarations. Before making such a declaration, the Pope is expected consult widely, have discussions with key advisers and spend time in prayer. When a Pope makes an *ex cathedra* statement in this way the teaching is considered to be without error (infallible).

It is important to note that this papal infallibility is limited to faith and morals and use of this form of extraordinary magisterium is very rare. In fact, there have only ever been two; in 1854, before the rules were formalised, Pope Pius IX defined the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Then, in 1950, after those rules were written down, Pope Pius XII defined the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary into heaven.

Second Vatican Council

The most recent General Council was in the 1960s. It was known as the 'Second Vatican Council' (Vatican II) because it was the second one to be held at the Vatican, in Rome. It was called by Pope St John XXIII on 11th October 1962 and completed its work under Pope Paul VI on 8th December 1965. It is important to know the context of this council. The Second World War ended in 1945. In the years that followed there was considerable change in society, technology and in politics. John XXIII became Pope in 1958 and wanted the Catholic Church to respond to these changes and to represent the faith in this new context. The Council published 16 documents. After the Council, Pope Paul established a process for bishops to gather in smaller sessions, called synods. For example, in 2015 there was a special synod on the family.

The Four Key Documents

Four of the Documents of Second Vatican Council were given the title of 'Constitution'. This made them the most important of the 16 documents published. These have been guiding the Catholic Church since 1965.

Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation): This is the document that sets out the relationship between the Bible, Tradition and the Magisterium. It explains how these are each inspired by the Holy Spirit and have authority for the Catholic Church. Of particular significance was the emphasis placed on proper biblical scholarship. Many Catholics at the time did not fully understand the variety of the literary styles within the Bible or the influence of the historical context

on the bible writers. It also encouraged Catholics to use the bible as part of their prayer life. It has led to an increase in specialist biblical scholars and more bible study groups in parishes.

Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy): This document has influenced the reforms to the Church's liturgy. Prior to the Council most people attended Mass that was said in Latin. The focus of that Latin Mass was on the priest and the prayers said at the altar. Everyone, priest and people, faced the altar to emphasise the act of sacrifice. The reforms encouraged by Vatican II were that the people should be more involved, have better understanding of the symbolism and be able to understand what was being said. So the words were translated into the local language and the altar moved so that the priest now faces the people and the actions are more easily seen. In addition, the lectionary has been revised so that Catholics get a richer and wider selection of Bible readings at church.

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church): This document is about the nature and work of the Church. Previous writing on the Church placed the emphasis on the role of the Magisterium and the work of the priest. *Lumen Gentium*, which means 'the light of the peoples', raises the profile of all the people of the Church. All are called to serve Jesus. All are called to live out their baptismal promises to be 'lights to the world'. All are called to be part of the mission of the Church to be of service to others. In this way, the Church is a 'sacrament' revealing God's love to the world.

Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World): This document was published at the end of the Council in 1965. It is the completion of John XXIII's desire for the Church to be a source of 'joy and hope'. In the years before the Council, the Catholic Church was seen as being apart from the world. It was not really how it understood itself but was how it was perceived by some.

Gaudium et Spes was written to respond to the changes in society, the issues of poverty and social justice, the impact of science and technology and, above all, to encourage the people of faith to engage with the modern world. That is how Catholics can be sources of 'joy and hope' in the modern world. It set the foundations and principles that later enabled CAFOD to be established to respond to the needs of the developing world.

The influence of this document has been dramatic. In the years since Vatican II, dioceses and parishes have set up Justice and Peace Groups, international organisations like Pax Christi have been created and national organisations, such as Catholic Association for Racial Justice, have developed.

SUMMARY

- Catholics use the Bible, Tradition and Magisterium as sources of authority
- Magisterium can be 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary'.
- 'Pontifical Magisterium' are rare, but Catholics believe these teachings to be infallible (without error/mistake)
- The last Extraordinary Magisterium was the Second Vatican Council which led to many significant changes and developments

AREA OF STUDY – ARTEFACTS

CORE LEARNING

By the end of this area of study you will know and understand

- How Christian beliefs about eternal life are portrayed in certain artefacts
- How Christian beliefs about resurrection are expressed through the use of the paschal candle at Easter and at Catholic baptism

Artefacts

Humans often use imagery to help explore ideas and to find ways of expressing beliefs. In this section you will be introduced to two artefacts that express beliefs about death, resurrection and eternal life.

Sarcophagi

These are stone coffins that have carved images on them. The images often feature scenes from the Bible, or the lives of saints. One example is the Sarcophagus with Scenes of Jesus' Passion that is now in the Museo Pio Cristiano in the Vatican, Rome. It dates from the 4th Century and has a variety of images that reinforce the belief that Jesus' death and resurrection was a triumph over sin and a sign of hope. The entire decoration is based on the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus.

- On one panel there is the scene of Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross.
- The next panel shows Jesus being given the crown of thorns. The contrast between the suffering of Jesus and the triumph over sin is indicated by the style of crown. It is now longer simply a crown of thorns but a jewel-filled crown.
- Another panel shows Jesus being presented for trial before Pilate.
- Next to it is the scene of Pilate washing his hands.
- For the centre piece there is a formalised cross with the 'Chi-Rho' symbol representing Jesus. The Chi-Rho is an ancient symbol of the resurrection. The title 'Christ' means the anointed/chosen one. Jesus is the one who was anointed/chosen to save people from sin through his death and resurrection. The Chi-Rho is formed from the first two letters of the title 'Christ' in Greek. (Chi = X, Rho = P). When merged together they form the 'Chi-Rho'. To reinforce the theme of victory, the Chi-Rho is placed within a wreath that is held in the beaks of two eagles. The wreath is the Roman symbol of victory. The eagles represent God because in Roman religion they were used to represent the God Jupiter. This cross sits prominently above two soldiers sitting in awe at the symbols of resurrection.

The Paschal Candle

In the liturgical life of the Church it is the Easter (or Paschal) Candle that is most visibly used to present the triumph of the Resurrection. Each year during Holy Week the events of the last week of Jesus' life feature in a series of liturgies. There are three that form the 'Triduum':

- Holy Thursday: Mass of the Last Supper
- Good Friday: Commemoration of the Crucifixion
- Easter Vigil: The Resurrection

At the beginning of the Easter Vigil the church is in darkness. The Easter (Paschal) Candle is lit from that fire and processed into the church. The light of Christ fills and overcomes the darkness of sin. The procession is completed with an ancient hymn, called the Exsultet, that proclaims Christ's triumph over sin because his resurrection defeats death.

The candle itself has a variety of symbols on it to reinforce belief in this triumph over sin:

- The 'Alpha' & 'Omega': These are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. They symbolise Christ as the 'first' and the 'last'; the 'beginning' of all things and the 'end' of all things.
- The Cross: This is the symbol of Christian faith because it is due to the crucifixion of Christ that the resurrection was possible. It is also an acknowledgement that the events of Good Friday did not end but were completed by the resurrection.
- The Five Wounds: The candle has five studs on it to represent the five wounds Jesus received during his crucifixion. Jesus took on sin and triumphed over sin through the resurrection.
- The year: Each year the candle is marked with that particular year. It reminds people that Jesus is the same for all time and that the salvation earned by Jesus is as real now as it was in the past. That candle is to be used by the Church for that year, especially at baptisms.
- In addition, the Easter Candle has a prominent place in the Church throughout the Easter Season. As a reminder of the triumph of the resurrection the Easter Candle is lit at every Mass from Easter Sunday through to Pentecost.

The Easter Candle and Baptism

Historically, baptisms took place at the Easter Vigil. Many parishes still baptise adults during the Easter Vigil. Baptism is the sacrament of entry into the Church. Water is used to symbolise that sin is washed away by Jesus. The water to be used to baptise the new Christians during the Easter Vigil is blessed using the Easter Candle.

The Easter Candle features in other baptisms throughout the year. To remind the people of the resurrection, it is lit and placed near to the font. A smaller baptismal candle is lit from its flame and is given to the baptised person or their family to remind them that the 'Light of Christ' has defeated the darkness of sin. The liturgy encourages them to keep the light of faith 'burning brightly'. A further link to Easter is contained in the instructions to priests that, where possible, baptisms should take place on Sundays. This is because Sunday is the weekly reminder of the celebration of the passion and resurrection of Christ.

SUMMARY

- The Sarcophagus with Scenes of the Passion conveys Christian beliefs about eternal life through the images of Jesus' crucifixion carved on the panels and the 'Chi-Rho' inscribed on it.
- The paschal candle conveys Christian beliefs that the resurrection brought light and hope to humankind. The symbols on it are a reminder of the crucifixion through which Jesus brought salvation
- The paschal candle is used at Easter (the festival that remembers the crucifixion) and at baptisms as a reminder that 'the light of the world' has defeated death and sin and salvation is possible

Area of Study - Forms of Expression – Music

CORE LEARNING

By the end of this area of study you will know and understand

- That Catholic worship includes different types of music
- That people have different opinions about which types of music are appropriate for worship
- The ways in which '*Requiem*' conveys Catholic beliefs about eternal life
- The order of the Catholic funeral rite and how symbols and prayers are used to express beliefs about eternal life

Music and prayer

Prayer can be greatly enhanced by music. Music leads people into expressions and feelings that are not always possible in the spoken word alone. Recorded music can support an individual in prayer by helping with quiet adoration or thanksgiving prayers. Live music is often used in churches to help the community bring their prayers together.

The Psalms

In the Old Testament, the Psalms are ancient collections of prayers and hymns to God. They express emotions from joy and praise, to anxiety and despair. These have been sources of prayer for the Christian community since the time of Christ. This is because Jesus, and most of the first Christians, had lived most of their lives as part of the Jewish community. The Psalms would have been important to their worship and it is no surprise, therefore, that they brought these with them into the Christian story.

The religious communities of monks and nuns built on that prayerful tradition. Their daily prayers were based around the biblical prayer from the Psalms. Gradually they developed ways of singing or chanting the Psalms to add to the beauty of the prayers. The most famous of those styles is known as 'Gregorian chant'. It is a type of plainsong that was developed for them to sing together without accompanying musicians. Singing of Psalms continues in monasteries, convents and cathedrals today.

At the Catholic Mass the Liturgy of the Word includes a Psalm. This is selected to respond in prayer to the main theme in the first reading. Parishes are encouraged to sing the Psalm where possible and many have been set to music by modern composers. Plainsong/chant versions are also available.

Music in the liturgy

The Catholic Mass has several elements which are appropriate to sing.

Alleluia: This is a chant for welcoming the Gospel. To acknowledge the importance of listening to the teaching of the Gospel, the Alleluia should be sung where possible.

Eucharistic Acclamations: These are the chants that the congregation says/sings during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. They are the 'Holy, Holy', the 'Memorial Acclamations' and the 'Great Amen'. They punctuate the great prayer of thanksgiving at which the bread and wine become the 'body and

blood of Christ'. Marking these moments with sung responses highlights the solemnity and importance of that moment in the Mass. There are many settings available from those by modern composers to choral settings in Latin.

The Gloria: This is a great song of praise. The words can bring a greater sense joy or awe/wonder through music.

Hymns: There is a wide repertoire of hymns in the Christian tradition. Many parishes use hymns for the gathering at the start of Mass and for the end of Mass. Hymns can be appropriate to support quiet prayer at, or after, the distribution of communion. Hymns are also used sometimes to accompany the procession of the gifts of bread and wine before the Eucharistic Prayer.

Ancient or Modern?

There is a wide range of styles of music available. There are numerous composers and hymn writers who have supported the community in prayerful music through the centuries. In similar ways to other Christians, there are differences of opinion within the Catholic community about what is the best way to use music in prayer. Some Catholics would say that traditional Latin music is the best way to appreciate the beauty and majesty of the liturgy. Others would say that the older hymns are more appropriate church music and the words of the classic hymn writers are more poetic. Yet others would say that the church needs to sing in the style of the younger generation, otherwise it is not speaking to them at all.

Catholic beliefs about eternal life: Faure's 'Requiem'

'It has been said that my Requiem does not express the fear of death and someone has called it a lullaby of death. But it is thus that I see death: as a happy deliverance, an aspiration towards happiness above, rather than as a painful experience'. (Gabriel Faure)

Many classical composers have used Christian liturgy as a source of inspiration for their work. There are several well-known versions of music composed for funerals. These are known by the term 'requiem', which is from the Latin for 'rest'.

Gabriel Faure (1845-1924) composed a requiem that is full of beautiful melodies. Written just after the death of his Father and first performed just before the death of his Mother, he produced a requiem that brings a sense of serenity, calm and peace. He offered music that acknowledges grief within the context of the hope of eternal life. Faure does not allow the natural sadness of grief to obscure faith in the resurrection. He said that he did want to express a fear of death. Instead he presented a requiem that focused on the aspiration of heaven by using harps, violins and the sound of angelic sopranos. The *In Paradisum* is a version of the Final Commendation in the funeral rite. It is a prayer that asks for the deceased to be welcomed into paradise. Faure's music highlights that faithful hope. The gentleness of the music conveys a final tranquillity as life's trials are left behind and the music rises and soars before fading. The music of this section is lighter and more ethereal in nature than previous sections, and is underpinned by a steady, rhythmic beat. The choir sings in a higher pitch, sounding like the angels in heaven. Like the symbols and symbolic actions in the funeral, his music helps the grieving to have faith, comfort and hope. It does not focus on the

morbid, but on the restful and fear-free nature of death. In contrast, Verdi's Requiem '*Dies Irae*' ('Day of Wrath') has loud, violent music that changes rapidly and conveys restlessness. The singing sounds like wailing and it is very far from conveying the sense of calm and tranquillity in Faure's composition. Faure himself said '*...my Requiem is dominated from beginning to end by a very human feeling of faith in eternal rest.*'

The Catholic funeral rite

The funeral rite has a variety of symbols and actions that remind the family and friends of the deceased person of faith in the resurrection. The purpose is to enable the family to acknowledge their grief, to celebrate the love they have for the deceased and to find comfort in the hope of eternal life.

Symbols on the coffin

The coffin is covered in a white cloth, called a Pall. This is a reminder of Baptism when the newly baptised is presented with a white garment as a symbol of being washed clean of sin. It is sin that separates humans from God. The waters of Baptism are a symbol of being made clean of sin and the Pall is the reminder that, because of Jesus, sin and death have been defeated. It is also a reminder that all are equal in the eyes of God. There is no distinction. All are worthy of salvation through Christ.

The book of the Gospels is sometimes placed on the coffin. This is to remind people that Christians live by the Gospel and that faithfulness to Christ's teachings leads to eternal life.

A cross is often placed on the coffin. The Baptismal rite includes the priest or deacon making the sign of the cross on the person to mark their joining the Christian community. It is through the cross and resurrection that people are saved and can now be sure that death has been defeated by Christ. *"In baptism, (name) received the sign of the cross. May he/she now share in Christ's victory over death."*

The Paschal Candle is often placed beside the coffin as a symbol of belief in the resurrection.

Flowers may be placed on the coffin but in moderation, so that they do not hide these important symbols of faith and hope.

Symbolic Actions

At the beginning and end of the funeral the coffin is sprinkled with holy water. The coffin is also sprinkled with holy water before being buried or cremated. Once again this is a reminder of the waters of Baptism and the gift of eternal life. The accompanying prayer is *"In the waters of baptism, (name) died with Christ and rose with him to new life. May he/she now share with him eternal glory"*.

At the end of the funeral the coffin is incensed as a sign of honouring the person, whose body was a temple of the Holy Spirit. The incense also signifies the prayers of those gathered rising up to God.

Processions are a traditional way of acknowledging importance. It is common for the coffin to be carried out of the church in a solemn procession. It brings the community together to show the grieving relatives and friends that all present are in solidarity with them.

Prayers and Readings

The readings from scripture will be chosen to remind those present of the promise of resurrection and eternal life. Those readings will be a source of comfort for those grieving and a declaration of hope. The prayers throughout the funeral will refer to Baptism, to Easter and the Resurrection, to the sacrifice on the cross and the hope of eternal life. The priest or deacon will use their homily (sermon) to explain the Christian belief that death has been defeated and the Church community has sure and firm hope of eternal life. This should bring further comfort to the family and friends. The prayers of intercession will include prayers for the deceased, for the grieving family and friends and for the wider community.

Although not a requirement of the funeral rite, many funerals in Catholic churches would include the Liturgy of the Eucharist. This would be particularly appropriate if the deceased or members of the family regularly attended Mass.

Some funerals include a short 'eulogy'. This is different to the liturgical homily. This is a where a relative or friend speaks about the life of the deceased person and can be a celebration of their positive contribution to the lives of their family and friends.

Liturgical Colour & Final Commendation

A priest would most often wear white vestments at a funeral, because white is the liturgical colour of the resurrection. As with all the elements of the funeral, the purpose is to express Christian hope in the Easter story and faith in eternal life. Similarly, the prayers of the Final Commendation express that faith with the words *"May the angels lead you into paradise: may the martyrs come to welcome you and take you to the holy city, the new and eternal Jerusalem"*.

SUMMARY

- Different types of music are used in worship, from chanting to using modern instruments such as drums and guitar
- People's opinions about styles of music are different
- 'Requiem' uses serene, calm melodies to convey beliefs about death and eternal life, for example, that the resurrection gives hope and that death is not to be feared. Instruments such as harp and violin and soprano voices give the composition a sense of the 'heavenly'.
- A Catholic funeral uses symbols, prayers and readings to convey beliefs about eternal life

AREA OF STUDY - PRAYER WITHIN CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES

CORE LEARNING

By the end of this area of study you will know and understand

- Why prayer is considered important
- Different types of prayer
- The significance of the Lord's Prayer ('Our Father')
- Why Catholics pray and offer Mass for the dead

What is prayer?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) defines prayer as '... the raising of the mind and heart to God, or the petition of good things from him in accord with his will'. (CCC 534). Prayer can be more than simply asking for something or reciting a well-known familiar prayer. As the definition above indicates, prayer is about setting aside time to be in the presence of God. Regular prayer can become a habit that deepens a relationship with God. This is what 'raising the mind and heart to God' can mean for Christians.

Prayer can be different on different occasions:

- *Adoration*: This is when Christians simply acknowledge that God is wonderful and worthy of praise. Such prayer could be to sit silently to worship God. Other times they may use words or songs to express that adoration. In the Catholic tradition, many parishes (and schools) place the Blessed Sacrament on display for people to pray quietly to adore God present in the Eucharist. The Catholic practice of starting prayer with the formula 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' is itself an act of prayerful adoration.
- *Thanksgiving*: As the term suggests, it is common for people to thank God. People give thanks for the wonderful things that happen, for answers to prayers and simply for the wonder of creation. For Catholics, the most important act of thanksgiving is the Liturgy of the Eucharist during the Mass. 'Eucharist' is a Greek word that translates as 'thanksgiving'. That part of the Mass is a prayerful thanksgiving for the sacrifice of Jesus in his death and resurrection. That is why the Eucharist is the central action of prayer for the Catholic Church.
- *Repentance*: When Christians fall short of the expectations of faith, there is sorrow. That sorrow is expressed through repenting of sins. Catholics repent during the penitential rite of the Mass. For more significant sins Catholics can seek the Sacrament of Reconciliation to experience more personally God's forgiving response to repentance.
- *Intercession*: These are the prayer Christians say that ask God to respond to the needs of others. Most Christians will have intercessory prayer during their regular Sunday acts of worship. At every Mass there are Intercessory (or bidding) prayers.
- *Petitions*: Individual Christians will ask God to help them. They will 'petition' God to respond to their own needs.

Formulaic ('set') Prayers

There are a great number of prayers that have been said by Christians over the centuries. Some have been written down and collected in prayer books. Many Christians like to use the words provided by those who are considered to have been close to God. Some of these 'formulaic' prayers are similar to a 'formula', in that the same words are said in the same way every time. They are often very well known and a source of inspiration for many. For example, The Lord's Prayer (Our Father); Glory Be; the Hail Mary.

Some formulaic prayers have become extended into techniques to support reflection or meditation. There is the tradition of using repeated reciting of simple formula prayers as a way of stilling the mind from distraction and enabling deeper prayer. The 'Jesus' prayer is one example. The person simply repeats the name 'Jesus' or a statement like 'Jesus, I love you'. The Rosary is an example of this technique within the Catholic community. There is a formula for reciting the most familiar prayers ('Our Father', 'Hail Mary' and 'Glory Be') so that Catholics can meditate on the 'mysteries' of faith. More complicated use of formulaic prayer is the Liturgy of the Hours. This involves reciting Psalms, Scripture readings, Canticles (songs from the Bible text) and Intercessions at different times of the day. Priests, nuns and monks promise to say these prayers every day. Some lay people join in with part of these prayers when they can.

Extempore prayers

The risk of formulaic prayers is that the familiarity of them can become simply repetitive. Extempore prayer is when Christians use their own words to speak with God. There will be times when the formulas do not express the feelings and wishes of the person. It is possible for people to use their own words to 'raise their hearts and minds to God' in a more spontaneous way. There are some Christians, including some Catholics, who feel so moved by the Holy Spirit that they worship God with unusual sounds. This is called 'charismatic' prayer or praying in 'tongues'.

The Lord's Prayer

The best known formulaic prayer is the Lord's Prayer (or 'Our Father'). It is called the Lord's Prayer because the Gospels tell us that these words were Jesus' instructions on how to pray (Matt 6:9-13)

***Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Gives us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.***

We can see in this prayer each of the elements mentioned previously:

Adoration: *Our Father..... hallowed be thy name.* To give 'hallows' is to make 'holy'. This prayer starts with a statement of adoration.

Thanksgiving: *Our Father, who art in heaven ...* It is an extraordinary privilege to be able to call God

'Father'. More than that, the Aramaic version of the term used by Jesus is 'Abba' which is closer to 'daddy'. It suggests an intimacy in the relationship with God and it is Jesus who gives us the courage to have that intimacy. The creator God is beyond imaginings, Christians are encouraged to have a personal relationship with him. That is something to give thanks for.

Repentance: ..*forgives us our trespasses*.. There is an acknowledgement of falling short of perfection. The prayer invites Christians to repent. Repentance comes with the challenge to forgive others.

Intercession: ..*Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done*... This is a revolutionary prayer! May the world be transformed into that state of perfection that is understood as the Kingdom of God. May life on earth be as wonderful as being in the presence of God. May there be more peace, more justice, more mutual respect, true equality – and may that be now.

Petition *Give us our daily bread ... deliver from evil*.. Christians ask for their own needs.

Some Christians place an additional formula at the end;

For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory

It is found in some, but not all, of the manuscripts of the Gospel according to Matthew.

Praying for the Dead

Within the Catholic community there is long tradition of praying for the dead. These prayers support the grieving and are consistent with beliefs about salvation, purgatory and the promise of eternal life in heaven. These prayers are intercessions on behalf of the person who has died, asking God to welcome them into His presence. The most commonly used prayer is:

***'Eternal rest grant unto him/her, O Lord. Let perpetual light shine upon him/her.
May he/she rest in peace. Amen.
May his/her soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God,
rest in peace. Amen'***

Another feature of praying for the dead is the practice is asking priests to offer a mass for a relative or friend who has died. On such occasions, the priest will remember that person in his own prayers during the Mass. The person's name may be mentioned during the Eucharistic prayer. Within that prayer there is always a formula of words to remember those who have died and a variation that enables an individual to be named.

SUMMARY

- Prayer is 'the raising of the mind and heart to God'
- Prayers can be 'set' or more spontaneous
- Prayers can have a different purpose, for example, to praise, thank or request
- The Lord's Prayer ('Our Father') was taught by Jesus himself and includes different types of prayer within it
- Catholics believe that their prayers can intercede on behalf of someone who has died and that God can be asked to welcome them in to eternal life

