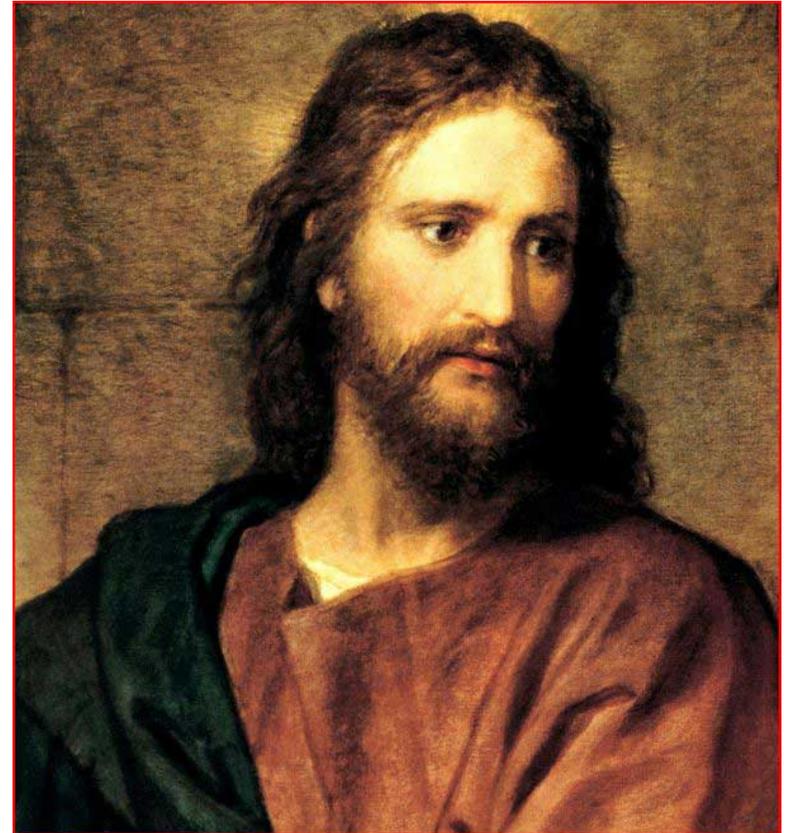


Eternal Life and Common Sense



Eternal Life and Common Sense

Are you looking for lasting happiness?

You are not alone.

Every man, woman, and child is looking for happiness -- not just the happiness of a week, or a year -- but a happiness that will last forever.

Can such happiness be found?

Or is it a fairy tale invented by wishful thinkers?

Take five minutes to read this pamphlet, and you will see that lasting happiness is not a dream.

It is real.

And it can be yours.

Eternal Happiness

Happiness "happens" when you satisfy a desire. If you desire a cool drink on a hot day, a glass of ice water can make you happy. If you desire a million dollars, winning the Jackpot can make you happy. If you desire fame, winning a gold medal in the Olympics can make you happy -- for a while. But eventually a cool drink, a million dollars, or even an Olympic gold medal becomes a memory. None of them lasts forever.

existence of a multitude of different kinds of organisms—such as spiders, reptiles, and human beings—is that each kind of living thing, with its distinctive body plan, was created by a Super-intelligent Creator, instantaneously and fully-functioning. The genetic potential programmed into each kind of organism allowed it to adapt to a wide range of environmental conditions. Thus, for example, it is generally recognized that all of the different breeds of wolves and dogs are descended from a few original wolf ancestors. (For more on this topic, consult the website of the Kolbe Center for the Study of Creation www.kolbecenter.org .)

Lasting happiness can only exist if there is something in this world that has no limits, that can be enjoyed forever. The common name for a Being that has no limits and that can be enjoyed forever is GOD.

But how do we **know** that God exists?

Evidence for the Existence of God

There are many ways to **know** that God exists. Some of them were first written down by Greek philosophers more than 2000 years ago. We will briefly look at six arguments for the existence of that perfect, eternal, infinite Being that we call God.

Argument Number One: The First Cause

Common sense tells us that everything in the universe has a cause. Plants come from seeds. Birds hatch from eggs. Nothing in this world brings itself into being. If we trace everything in the universe back to its source, we find that there must be Something that existed before anything else came to be -- something that gave rise to the whole chain of being -- a First Cause: God.ⁱ

Argument Number Two: The Grand Design

Common sense also tells us that where there is design there must be a designer. Look at an electronic calculator. Could something so intricate and well-organized occur by

chance? Of course not! And the universe contains things a billion times more complex and organized than a calculator! Thus, the design of the world points to a Designer -- God.ⁱⁱ

Argument Number Three: No Effect Greater Than Its Cause

Have you ever read a novel by Mark Twain? If not, you have probably heard about his novel **Huckleberry Finn**. The characters in **Huckleberry Finn** resemble Mark Twain and the boys that he grew up with in Hannibal, Missouri in the 1800's. By reading the novel you can form a good idea of Mark Twain's personality. If someone were to ask whether one of Mark Twain's characters was smarter or funnier than Mark Twain, common sense would tell you that no character can be smarter or funnier than its author! In the same way, we know that nothing in the universe can be greater than its Creator. All the intelligence, beauty, power, and goodness in the universe must come from a greater source of Intelligence, Beauty, Power, and Goodness. Otherwise, we would have to believe that a character in a book could be smarter than his creator, or that an effect could be greater than its cause.

Scientists explain this same truth in fancier words -- by appealing to the Second Law of Thermodynamics. According to this Law, any closed system of energy tends to become **less orderly** when left to itself. In other words, if there were no higher form of Being -- God -- who took matter and organized it into something as complex as a human body, all of matter would naturally tend to become disorganized. The fact that matter in the universe is preserved in complex life-forms like

ⁱ Some popular thinkers, like the late Carl Sagan, believe that the material universe has no beginning—that it has always existed and always will exist. In his book *How to Think About God*, the great American philosopher Mortimer Adler explains why this cannot be. He reasons as follows: 1) Anything that **always** has been **must be** the way that it is. 2) The universe **could be** different than it is. (We could imagine other kinds of trees, flowers, animals, planets and other things.) 3) Therefore, the universe cannot always have existed. 4) Therefore, the universe must owe its existence to Something that has always existed—Something (or Someone) that **must be** the way that It is. 5) God, the Supreme Being, as He reveals Himself to us in the Bible, is a **perfectly unchanging Being, Who must be the way that He is**, and who created the universe out of nothing. 6) Therefore, it is more logical to believe in the existence of a Supreme Being who created the universe than to believe in a universe without a Creator.

ⁱⁱ For more than a century, many scientists have believed that matter has evolved over billions of years from simpler to more complex forms through many changes. The findings of modern science have discredited this theory by showing that 1) there are no “simple” organisms and 2) that there is no mechanism whereby an organism can develop new organs and bodily systems on its own through any natural process. With respect to the first point, the study of molecular biology has uncovered the staggering complexity of the tiniest building blocks of life. Thanks to decades of research and development by the finest engineers in the world, the most sophisticated hard drive on the market, the 2tb hard drive, can hold almost two trillion bytes of information. (A byte is equal to around eight bits of information, the amount of information needed to encode one character of text in a computer.) But one pinhead of the DNA that is found in the nucleus of the simplest one-celled organisms can hold as much information as two million 2tb hard drives! Moreover, exhaustive research has confirmed that the information contained in the genetic code of an organism does not increase by itself in specific complexity so as to produce new organs or bodily systems. Indeed, complex, integrated bodily systems, like the eye, could not have arisen in step-wise fashion through random mutations. In short, the simplest and most logical way to explain the

Catholic Church. If you are a Catholic who has been away from the Church, please say the prayer and email us, indicating that you are a Catholic who has been away from the sacraments.

Prayer for Divine Mercy

Lord Jesus, I believe that You are truly the Son of God who suffered and died to save me from sin and death.

I am sorry for all of the sins of my past life and I forgive everyone who has ever hurt me.

Lord Jesus, I place my life entirely in Your hands.

I want to do Your Will from now on -- not my own.

I want to receive Your divine life by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the sacraments of Your Church.

Give me the grace to love and obey You always.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me now and at the hour of my death.

Amen.

Witnesses for Christ

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human bodies points to the existence of God who organized matter into those life-forms and who holds all things in being - in **spite** of the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

Argument Number Four: The Reason Why

We humans not only ask "Why?" We ask "What for?" From the time we are babies, we want to know the **purpose** of things. If the characters in a Mark Twain novel could speak, they would not be able to tell us the **end** of the story, the **reason why** they were created. Only the **creator** of the story can give it **meaning** and **purpose**. Our desire to know the **purpose** of human life points to the existence of a **Creator** who made us with a purpose in mind.

Argument Number Five: The Witness of Conscience

The fifth sign pointing to the existence of God is the voice of conscience. All human beings possess an inner sense of right and wrong. Almost without exception, every human society on the face of the earth praises bravery, honesty, and loyalty and condemns cowardice, lying, and treachery. For all their differences, every major religion in the world condemns murder, lying, cheating, and stealing. The literature of every civilized nation shows that people who do these actions suffer from a guilty conscience. There is nothing in the material world that can account for this inner sense of right and wrong. If there were no God, it would be impossible to explain the fact of conscience.

One of the main reasons why many people do not believe in a Creator-God is the problem of evil. But notice that only human beings even **understand** the **problem of evil**. We humans have an inner sense that something is wrong **inside of us** and inside of other people -- that causes us to lie, cheat, murder, and steal. There is nothing in matter that points to anything evil in these things. Dogs, cats, and chimpanzees do not worry about the "problem of evil." The fact that all human beings recognize the existence of good and evil shows that our inner sense of right and wrong comes to us, not from the material creation around us, but from the Creator who, being perfect and infinite, must exist above and beyond the things He has made.

Argument Number Six: Desire for God

One last sign pointing to the existence of God is the fact that no human being can be satisfied with any limited, created thing. Power, pleasure, money, and fame -- no matter how great -- eventually wears off and leaves us with a deep desire for something beyond this world -- for something infinite -- for God. Common sense tells us that every normal desire can be satisfied by something real. For example, our hunger can be satisfied by food. Our thirst can be satisfied by drink. Our fatigue can be satisfied by sleep. But what can satisfy our desire for endless happiness? Only the existence of a perfect, unlimited, eternal, and **lovable** God explains the existence of our desire for endless happiness.

To share in God's life before and after death we must believe and obey all of His teachings. In the first century after the Resurrection, the family of the followers of Jesus, united under the Pope and the bishops loyal to him, began to be called the "Catholic Church," from the Greek word "Catholicos," meaning "all." The Church is "Catholic" because it teaches **all** that Jesus taught, to **all** kinds of people, at **all** times, and in **all** places. Through the Bible, which the Church wrote, assembled, and approved, and through Sacred Tradition -- the authoritative teachings of the Popes and bishops down through the centuries -- the Pope and the Bishops in union with him teach the whole truth about God and our relationship to Him. Those who enter the safety of the Catholic Church enjoy the fullness of God's truth and life. They **experience** the fulfillment of God's promise:

Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.
(Matthew 11:28-30)

If you would like to receive the fullness of God's truth and life in the Church He founded 2000 years ago, pray the prayer at the bottom of this page, and e-mail us as soon as possible. We will direct you to a priest in your area who can give you additional information about membership in the

But Jesus came so that you might “have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). No matter what sins you have committed, no matter what abuse you have suffered, no matter what pain you have endured, Jesus bore the pain, the shame, the guilt, and the punishment for you and for all. He is ready and willing to forgive you and to heal you, if you will confess your sins, accept His forgiveness, and declare your willingness to forgive your enemies and to follow His perfect plan for your life.

To everyone who comes to Him in this way, Jesus promises a new life with Him and in Him, a life of love, joy, and peace that passes understanding. St. Paul tells us that we are “God’s masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, that He has prepared beforehand that we might walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Jesus wants to teach you how to become that “masterpiece” that God created you to be. He wants to show you how to live by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, doing everything for the glory of the Father, and offering all of your thoughts, words, and actions to the Father with Jesus, out of love for all mankind. To do this is to “do God’s Will on earth as in Heaven”—it is to experience “heaven on earth.”

Faith and Obedience

Common sense can lead us to believe in God. And common sense can lead us to believe that Jesus **is** God. But common sense alone cannot lead us to everlasting happiness.

How Can I Know God?

"All right," you say. "I believe that a perfect, eternal, infinite Being created the universe. But that doesn't tell me much about God. If my eternal happiness depends on knowing God, how can I get to know Him as He **is** -- not just as some vague force that made everything?"

That's a good question. But don't underestimate what you **already** know.

Suppose you wanted to know more about Mark Twain. The easiest thing to do would be to read all of his books. By reading them carefully, you could learn all kinds of things about his life and personality -- his likes and his dislikes, his strengths and his weaknesses. Through the characters in his novels, you would catch glimpses of the inner workings of his mind.

In the same way, if you want to know God the Creator, study His creation. In the beauty of the ocean, you will glimpse His Beauty. In the force of a hurricane, you will glimpse His power. In the thoughts of a Leonardo Da Vinci, you will glimpse His Intelligence. In the love and the goodness of a Blessed Damien the Leper, you will glimpse His goodness and His love.

Just as every sentence in Mark Twain's novels reflects his character to some degree, so every created thing in the universe reflects God's character -- to some degree. (Even

evil-doers must misuse God's good gifts of life, intelligence and free will to do evil.)

God Reveals Himself To Us

But suppose you finished all of Mark Twain's novels and you still wanted to know him better. What then? Twain's inmost thoughts and feelings are not written in any book. For you to find **them** out, he would have to **reveal himself** to you. If he were able to come back from the dead to answer your questions, you could find out his inmost thoughts.

The same is true of God.

If all that we knew about God were the things that He made, we wouldn't know Him very well. We would only have second-hand knowledge. But God **wants** us to know Him. He wants us to know Him so badly that He became a human being like us so that we could know Him, and love Him, and enjoy His friendship forever.

In this case, the proof isn't an argument.

It's a Person.

A Divine Person.

Jesus Christ.

In Chrismation (or Confirmation), we receive the grace to bear witness to Christ. In Marriage, we receive the grace to be faithful spouses, and to raise holy children for the kingdom of Heaven. In Holy Orders, men receive the power to change bread and wine into Jesus, to forgive sins, and to guide and teach souls. In the Anointing of the Sick, we receive the grace to endure sickness and death in union with Jesus. In addition to the sacraments, through the gift of his Holy Spirit Jesus guides the thoughts, words, and actions of his disciples so that they can bring his divine love, wisdom, and truth to the whole world in their every-day lives. Christ-like acts of love are the infallible sign that Jesus lives in his disciples.

Contrary to the false teaching of reincarnation, Jesus tells us that "it is appointed to man once to die" (Hebrews 9:27) After death, each soul will be judged according to its actions. Those who die with God's life in their souls will go to heaven -- either immediately, or after some period of purification. The joy of heaven will be infinitely greater than any joy we can experience on earth because we will see, know, and enjoy God without interruption. The happiness of heaven will last forever; in heaven, our desire for God will finally be fulfilled. Those who die with God's life in their souls but without having been freed from all the effects of sin and selfishness will go to a place of purification where the human soul is purged of all selfishness. Those who die without God's life in their souls will remain separated from Him forever in eternal misery.

Father begets, or brings forth the Son, who is the perfect image of the Father. And from all eternity, the Father and the Son love each other with a love so real that it is a Divine Person -- the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

One day, Jesus stood by a well in the desert and told a Samaritan woman,

Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again. He, however, who drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst; the water that I will give him will become a fountain of living water, springing up unto life everlasting. (John 4: 13-14)

The "living water" of which Jesus spoke was the Divine Life of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This infinite, eternal divine life is the only thing that can satisfy the human longing for lasting happiness. To give us this divine life, Jesus instituted seven special signs called "sacraments" which fill us with God's life, or "grace": Baptism, Penance, Holy Eucharist, Chrismation (or Confirmation), Marriage, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick.

Through Baptism, men are "born" into the life of grace as members of God's family. Through penance, we renew God's grace within us when we have lost it through sin. Through the Holy Eucharist, we grow in grace by receiving Jesus Christ Himself under the appearance of bread and wine.

Jesus Christ: True God and True Man

Many people think that Christians believe that Jesus Christ is God by a leap of blind faith. But Jesus did not expect people to believe in Him **blindly**. (Once we have the gift of faith, we must **trust** in Him blindly -- but that is another matter.) Of all the prophets and religious teachers who ever lived, Jesus is the only one who ever claimed to **be God and** who backed up his claims by **doing things that only God can do**.

Faith in Jesus is a gift. But it is reasonable to **ask** for the gift of faith because of six simple facts.

- 1) We have reliable first-hand records of a man named Jesus who lived 2000 years ago in the Middle East. The authors of these records were willing to die rather than deny the truth of their statements.
- 2) Jesus claimed to speak for God and to be one with God.
- 3) Jesus proved His divinity by performing public miracles.
- 4) After announcing that He would suffer for the sins of mankind and rise from the dead, Jesus suffered, died, rose from the dead, and appeared to more than 500 witnesses.

5) Jesus made Peter and the Apostles -- and their successors -- the leaders of His family, the Church. He gave them the power to teach, rule, and sanctify the Church in His Name.

6) Jesus promised eternal happiness to **all** who believe and obey His Teachings.

Let's examine these facts, one at a time.

Reliable Records

Our records of the life and teachings of Jesus are reliable for several reasons. First, we know that three of the four Gospels were written within thirty years of the Resurrection and that they were based on eyewitness testimony. Second, there exist copies of the Gospels that date to within a hundred years of the Resurrection. The most ancient copies of the Gospels differ only in minor details from later versions, proving that the records of the life and teachings of Jesus were carefully preserved. Third, the men who wrote or supplied the information for the Gospels believed that their eternal happiness depended on their telling the truth about the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus. Non-Christian historical records prove that the writers and preachers of the Gospel gave their lives rather than deny the truth of their testimony.

not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:18-19)

Later, Jesus gave Peter and the Apostles an additional share in His divine mission by giving them the power to change bread and wine into Himself (a mystery, yes, but not an impossibility for God!) (Luke 22: 19-20), the power to forgive sins (John 20: 22-23), and the power to give other men of their choosing these same powers by laying hands on them (2 Timothy 1:6; Titus 1:5). By the laying on of hands, these same powers have been passed from Peter and the Apostles to the present Pope, Benedict XVI, and to the bishops in union with him.

Eternal Life

Among the many truths that Jesus revealed is the truth that God is Love **because** He is a Trinity of Persons Who share the same divine nature. (By way of explanation, a **nature** is **what** someone is; a **person** is who someone is. For example, if I asked, "Reader, **what** are you?" the answer would be "A human being." If I asked, "Reader, **who** are you?" the answer would be "John Foltz" or "Mary Garcia.") God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons who share the same divine Nature. From all eternity, the

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world. (*Matthew 28: 18-20*)

With these words, Jesus gave His Apostles the power to give men a share in His divine Life through Baptism. He also promised to be with the Apostles and their successors, the bishops, until the end of time. In this way, people could share His Truth and Life by obeying Peter and the Apostles -- and their successors, the Pope and the Bishops loyal to him. During the first centuries after the Resurrection, God guided the Pope and the Bishops in deciding which of the many books and letters written about Jesus contained the pure Truth. In a series of councils, or general meetings, the Popes and the bishops loyal to them approved the 27 books of the New Testament which, together with the books of the Old Testament, make up the Holy Bible.

The Rock of Peter

Jesus made sure that all of His followers understood Peter's special role as Pope, or leader of the Apostles. In the presence of all the Apostles, Jesus told Peter:

I say to you, Peter, you are rock, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall

The Claims of Jesus

Jesus made no secret of His claims. The Gospels are full of them:

The Father is in Me and I am in the Father. (*John 10:38*)

Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you. (*John 6: 54*)

The Father and I are one. (*John 10:30*)

If you have seen Me you have seen the Father. (*John 14:9*)

Before Abraham was, I AM. (*John 8: 58*)

There is no way to "tone down" or "explain away" these claims. There are only two choices. Either Jesus is God as He said He was. Or He is a fraud.

The Miracles of Jesus

Jesus did not expect people to believe in Him blindly. He performed miracles as proof of His claims. Before hundreds, and sometimes thousands of witnesses, He raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, cured lepers and paralytics instantly, calmed storms, multiplied loaves and fishes, and brought His mutilated Body back to life after a barbaric death by crucifixion. No wonder Jesus told His critics:

If you do not believe Me, believe the works that I do. The works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, these very works that I do, bear witness to me, that the Father has sent Me.

The down-to-earth men who recorded the miracles of Jesus demanded facts, reported facts, and gave their lives in witness to those facts.

The Resurrection

Most of the Apostles and Gospel writers were simple, plain-speaking men who did not believe in the **possibility** of Jesus' Resurrection until He **proved** it to them. On Easter Sunday, none of the Apostles **wanted** to believe in the Resurrection. When they were told that Jesus' Body had disappeared, their first reaction was to dismiss the report. Jesus appeared to the Apostles and disciples when **he** chose to

do so, **never** at their request. According to St. Paul, over 500 people saw the Risen Jesus at one time. On several occasions, Jesus ate and drank with His Apostles, and even allowed them to put their hands in the marks of His glorified wounds. The fact that the Apostles later testified to the Resurrection and suffered torture and death for their testimony proves that the Resurrection was not an hallucination, but an objective FACT.

Jesus and the Church

By His Miracles and His Resurrection, Jesus proved His divinity. Since Jesus is the source of all Truth and Goodness, it is reasonable to trust Him completely. (In fact, it is **unreasonable not** to trust Him.) Jesus invited all people to believe in Him, to repent of their sins, and to accept the forgiveness that He won for them by His suffering and death. To all who would accept Him as Lord, Jesus promised a share in His own divine life, so that they could follow His commandments and enjoy eternal life with Him after death.

Jesus did not ask His disciples to place their trust **exclusively** in Him, however. On the contrary, He gave His divine authority to Peter and the Apostles, the leaders of His community, the Church. Before His Ascension into Heaven, Jesus told Peter and the Apostles:

All power in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the