

Blessed Sacrament Parish, Regina, SK – [blessedsacramentregina.ca/lorraine-vincent/](http://blessedsacramentregina.ca/lorraine-vincent/)  
 CATHOLIC TRADITIONS, COLUMNISTS, LORRAINE VINCENT, SACRED SCRIPTURE,  
 TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

## THE PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE



By Lorraine Vincent  
 August 29, 2016

### *Why am I here?*

Where do we come from? Where are we going? What is life about? It is not uncommon to wonder about the meaning and purpose of life. Also, people may want to know more about God. That is because we all have a natural inclination, an inborn desire that is spirituality oriented towards the One True God. We have a feeling that there is some higher power. If human beings can't learn of the One True God, they make up one or many gods. It's a need to worship. "*My soul thirsts for God, for the living God*" (Psalm 42:2). Our soul yearns for God, and drives us to search for Him.

### *Creation of Human Beings*

The Judeo-Christian religion teaches us about the One True God, all knowing, infinitely wise and powerful. He created Heaven with all the angels, the universe and the Earth with all life including human beings. God created us with the highest intelligence, higher than any animal on earth. Our life is a gift from God. "*When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. Male and female He created them, and He blessed them and named them Man when they were created*" (Genesis 5:1-2). **We are made in the image and likeness of God** (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC, 2319*). At conception we are given an immortal soul that lives forever, a divine spark, a little piece of God within us.

### *Life is Short*

Many people on earth are puzzled by death, wondering if there is life after death. Some believe in Reincarnation, that after death they will awake with a new body, be someone else, and over many successive lives become a god among many gods. Once again we see the yearning for God—that innate drive. The Truth is that we have only *one* life here on earth and our destiny is to be with the One True God in Heaven after we die. Human life on Earth may be really short or very long—over 100 years in length. Even at that, 100 years is short in comparison to life after death in eternity. God decides when we are conceived (when our life begins) and when we die. We have no control over when we will die, even though we try to extend our lives as much as we can. We know we must look after our health and care for our body (see *1 Corinthians 6:19*). But our body is not to be our idol. It is a gift from God. It is God alone that we must adore. Even the most healthy, physically fit muscular person will die.

### **Created for God**

We were created *by God for God*. God created human beings through an exuberance of love, so that after our death He could have all of us with Him in Heaven in everlasting joy, forever—our love joined with His love. God loves us infinitely. Heaven is our *real* home. St. Paul wrote, “*Our citizenship is in Heaven*” (*Philippians 3:20*). Therefore, the purpose of life is to develop a personal relationship with God, become holy in union with God here on earth; and after this short life on earth, have *everlasting life* with God in Heaven in happiness for all eternity. St. Augustine of Hippo wrote, “For Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts were made for You, O Lord, and they are restless until they rest in You.”

“*Human life is sacred* because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end” (*CCC, 2258*). Therefore, to deliberately kill an innocent person (abortion, euthanasia, etc.) is always a very serious wrong-doing, contrary to the will of God. In committing murder we reject the dignity of the human being and the holiness of our Creator (see *CCC, 2261*).

### **Free Will**

Since our goal is to be in Heaven after we die, how do we get there? All human beings are gifted with *free will* by God Himself. He wants us to come to Him willingly and joyfully. During this life on earth, God wants us to love Him and obey His will—to love Him enough to do whatever He wants. There are two pathways in life. One is a self-centered do-whatever-we-want path, that leads to Hell with the devil and his demons. The other path is a more difficult do-the-will-of-God path, the only path that leads to God in Heaven (see *Matthew 7:13,14*). Using our free will, the choice is ours to make. This is serious, because God created us with an immortal soul, and life after death lasts *forever!* So where do we want to be forever?

### **Search and Find**

A good conscience isn’t automatic, it needs to be developed. Our task then is to try to deepen our faith—learn about God, believe in God, and learn what He wants us to do in life. To begin with, we have the *Holy Bible*, a gift from God, which contains the Ten Commandments in *Deuteronomy Chapter 5* that give us the basic truths of the will of God. Both the Old and New Testaments contain holy spiritual wisdom throughout. The New Testament of the Bible, based on the life of Jesus Christ, is something we all must read and study. Jesus said, “*I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life*” (*John 14:6*).

Also, we have the spiritual wealth of the Holy Catholic Church created by Jesus Christ, 2000 years ago, which teaches us the Truth in order to save souls. God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit guide the Church and its teaching Magisterium in the Vatican in Rome which publishes official documents and papal encyclicals. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is an excellent resource. It contains a lengthy detailed Subject Index of over 100 pages, to assist us in finding helpful information. Reading the lives of the saints is also very helpful. Another suggestion is to become an active part in the Church community: join parish group activities, Bible study, etc. Then we can make friends with other good Catholics, the Body of Christ, to help us along the way. We could also get to know some priests and find one in particular to be our spiritual director and confessor.

### Live and Learn

We need to discern the will of God at every step of the way throughout our lives to serve Him and obey Him because God is all knowing and all loving, and knows what is best for us at every moment of every day. Jesus said, *“Whoever serves Me, the Father will honour”* (John 12:26). Our life is a journey, full of ups and downs. This life on earth is our testing ground to see if we can stay on the right path that leads to Heaven. To help us, God created us with an inner sense of what is right and what is wrong—the natural moral law (see CCC, 1951). When making serious decisions, a good question to ask ourselves is: What would Jesus do? Jesus said, *“I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life”* (John 8:12). St. Paul wrote, *“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication [act of sexual intercourse between people who are not validly married], impurity [e.g. pornography], passion [obsession], evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient (Colossians 3:2,5,6). [S]eek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1). For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:21).

Each day we have a new chance to try to put God first in life, in doing His will. But we are often tempted to do what is wrong. St. James wrote, *“No one, when tempted, should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’: for God cannot be tempted by evil and He Himself tempts on one. But one is tempted by one’s own desire”* (James 1:13,14). We need to constantly ask God for help. We often fail because we are all sinners. But our past is not our future. We can learn from our mistakes and proceed from there. Live and learn. We must never give up; take small steps consistently with faith in Jesus and never quit. If we stop, we will slide backwards. Jesus said, *“Walk while you have the Light, so that the darkness may not overtake you”* (John 12:35). Be courageous, Jesus is very compassionate and merciful and will forgive even the greatest sinner who repents! The Sacrament of Confession (Reconciliation) is a powerful gift of grace from Jesus, Who forgives our sins through the Catholic priest in the confessional. In this way we can be open to a lifelong call to conversion through Christ. Please read *1 Timothy 1:12-17*, St. Paul’s personal experience from great sinner to servant of Christ.

We all have a different mission in life. Cardinal Newman said, “God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I am a link in a chain. I am a bond connection between people. He has not created me for nothing. I shall do good. I shall do His work.” In humility we must ask God to give us all we need to accept our way of life, and to live it well. Life is a learning experience. We will never “know it all”. Have you ever noticed that when you read a familiar Bible passage that you have known for years, you suddenly see a phrase and understand a truth that you have never experienced before? This is similar to events in our whole life. If we are open to receiving graces from God, we will constantly learn and improve in our spiritual life and behaviour. We can start each day with this positive thought and thank Jesus for the gift of the new day.

### Prayer

Prayer is communication with God, the foundation of spiritual life. Jesus is our Best Friend. We can simply *talk* to Him and ask Him for help to discern what we should do, or for help in what we are about to do. The simplest prayers to say throughout each day are: Jesus I love You, Jesus help me, Jesus thank You. The *Catholic Dictionary* defines “Prayer” as: “The voluntary response to the awareness of God’s presence. This response may be an acknowledgment of God’s greatness and of a person’s total dependence on Him (adoration), or gratitude for His benefits to oneself and others (thanksgiving), or sorrow for sins committed and begging for mercy (expiation), or asking for graces needed (petition), or affection for God, Who is all good (love). In other words, Prayer is a *conversation* with God, as stated

above, by verbally or silently *thinking of God and our relationship with Him.*” *The Lord’s Prayer* (The Our Father) is particularly special as it was given to us by Jesus Himself. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the most powerful prayer. It encompasses all of the above and more.

In order to be united to God in all that we think, say or do, we have to pray every day, in silence, in meditation for at least an hour a day—even if we have to get up in the middle of the night to be alone in silence. In this way, with our hearts and minds lovingly fixed on Him, we can be open to what Jesus inspires us to do. We can also ask Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and the angels and saints to pray (intercede) for us. There are many prayers written for us throughout the centuries, for example I particularly like *The Holy Rosary* and *The Stations of the Cross*.

We must also **pray for other people**—those struggling here on earth and for the souls being purified in the fire of Purgatory. I like to pray the *Novena of Chaplets to The Divine Mercy* for all people. St. James wrote, “*The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective*” (James 5:16). In the Lord’s Prayer we pray, “*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*” Jesus said that we have to pray for the souls of the people who have sinned against us. “*I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven*” (Matthew 5:44,45). On the Cross Jesus prayed for His enemies, “*Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing*” (Luke 23:34). Our *Catechism* tells us, “It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession [prayer]” (CCC, 2843). Therefore, we should pray fervently for the souls of people who have hurt us; and in this way we will forgive them from our heart.

### ***The Meaning of Human Suffering***

God did not promise us a life without suffering. In fact, God disciplines us for our own good, to purify us and guide us to do His will. St. Paul wrote, “*Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ...knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope*” (Romans 12:12, 5:3,4).

God also shows us how to make good use of our suffering. “In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption. Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ” (*Salvifici Doloris, The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering, Part V-19*, by St. John Paul II). Jesus spoke to St. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938) about Redemptive Suffering—how by an act of the will, we can use our sufferings and trials to save souls. He said, “You will join prayers, fasts, mortifications, labors and all sufferings to My prayer, fasting, mortification, labors and sufferings and then they will have power before My Father” (*Diary, Divine Mercy in My Soul, 531*). Therefore, we can offer our sacrifices and sufferings to Jesus on the Cross to cooperate in the redemption of mankind as we pray for souls.

Jesus said, “*If any want to become My followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for My sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life [in heaven]*” (Mark 8:34-36). St. Peter wrote, “*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings (1 Peter 4:12,13). [I]f you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God’s approval (1 Peter 2:20). For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the Righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God (1 Peter 3:18). Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you. Discipline yourselves; keep alert*” (1 Peter 5:7,8).

### **Helping Others**

“One cannot adore God without loving all men, His creatures” (CCC, 2069). Jesus said, “*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you*” (John 15:12). We can love others by recognizing the dignity of every human person, and lift up each person as the image of God in front of us. During our journey of life on Earth we will be inspired by God to help others, to perform good deeds. By doing what He asks of us, we give glory to God. St. Alphonsus Liguori wrote, “For our works to be good and perfect, they must be done for the sole purpose of pleasing God”. The Corporal Acts of Mercy are: Feed the Hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty, Clothe the Naked, Visit the Imprisoned, Shelter the Homeless, Visit the Sick, Bury the Dead.

### **Proclaim the Truth**

We should ask ourselves this question: Are we unnoticed in the world as being different? If not, then we are not different enough! “Our duty toward God is to believe in Him and bear witness to Him” (CCC, 2087). We, who have grown in knowledge in the teachings of the Holy Catholic Church and grown in our relationship with Christ, have a responsibility to be a good witness in our society, and help restore a Christian way of thinking and living. Mother Angelica of the Poor Clares, said, “God wants you to be in the world, but so different from the world that you will change it. Get cracking.” This requires some effort on our part. Our labours will involve some trials and suffering to save souls. It can be difficult. Temptations to quit trying and give up are always swarming around us. The devil does not want us to promote the Word and Christian values. Perhaps we would rather go down the easy path, turn our back on God and prefer to “fit in” with our secular society. Jesus warned us, “*Those who are ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels*” (Mark 8:38). God wants good people to go out into the world and proclaim the Truth. Those who have been given much, much will be expected. But take heart, God will reward us for our efforts.

The Spiritual Acts of Mercy are: Admonish the Sinner, Instruct the Ignorant, Counsel the Doubtful, Comfort the Sorrowful, Bear Wrongs Patiently, Forgive All Injuries, Pray for the Living and the Dead. It is too little just to get to Heaven ourselves. We need to work at bringing others to Heaven, too. Life, therefore, becomes joyful, despite sufferings and trials. We will die with a smile on our lips and be welcomed into Heaven, into the arms of Jesus!

### **Conclusion—The Purpose of Human Life**

“God, infinitely perfect and blessed in Himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in His own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek Him, to know Him, to love Him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of His family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son as Redeemer and Savior. In His Son and through Him, He invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, His adopted children and thus heirs of His blessed life” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1).