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| KAI: | Hello? |
| DEATH: | It is I … Kaiser Johnson. Remember that you will be called to your judgment. |
| KAI: | What? Me? Not yet. I'm young and I'm healthy. I'm in my prime. See. I can do burpees too. I'm not going to … |
| DEATH: | For all earthly mortals, the earthly pilgrimage comes to an end. |
| KAI: | Where am I going? Is heaven for real? Where is it? What about my unbelieving friends? Will Jesus judge me? Am I going to the other place? |
| DEATH: | Those are good questions, Kaiser Johnson. But it is not I who can answer them. Maybe you'll find out more on this episode called Life After Life. |
| KAI: | Life after life? Maybe I can finally jump through walls. |
| DEATH: | You're not dead yet. Ouch.CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES |
| LIBBY: | Hello. I'm Libby. |
| KAI: | And I'm Kai. |
| LIBBY: | And welcome to Catholic Central. Today we're exploring life after life. |
| KAI: | To be, or not to be. |
| LIBBY: | Is not really the question because we believe we be forever. We never stop existing. The question is, what is it like to be in the next life. |
| KAI: | Good point. What did Hamlet know? |
| LIBBY: | That's not what I was ... |
| KAI: | Most people who grew up in the Catholic faith were taught that when we die, we go to Heaven, Hell or Purgatory. |
| LIBBY: | Yeah, depending on whether you were really good, really bad or, eh. |
| KAI: | The theology of the afterlife is much deeper than that. Eternity's not so much a long stretch of time after we die, but eternity exists in a kind of forever now. There isn't a before or after. |
| LIBBY: | Yes, time is an earthly construct. There's another dimension beyond. |
| KAI: | So, if Heaven and Hell exist, does that mean they're real places? |
| LIBBY: | The Catholic answer is absolutely, yes. But not like physical spaces on Earth, like you could locate on Google Maps. |
| KAI: | And when Catholics speak about the resurrection of the body, they don't mean your current flesh and bones will be the same. |
| LIBBY: | It's a different kind of real, but it's totally real and really you. |
| KAI: | But let's get to the burning questions. How good do you have to be to get to Heaven and how bad do you have to be to land in Hell? |
| LIBBY: | Why don't we start with Heaven? |
| KAI: | Heaven. A heavenly place where we live with God, and all the souls who've gone before you, like Grandma, who's singing only slightly off-key with the angels. |
| LIBBY: | It's great, and by great, I mean so boring. |
| KAI: | We have to ditch our Sunday-school images of Heaven. It's not about harps and people in sheets. The truth is, we are being invited to be one with the Creator of the galaxies, and in communion with all the blessed people who ever were. |
| LIBBY: | And while we don't really know what Heaven looks like, we were told what it feels like, coming home. |
| KAI: | Never lonely, always loved. Every human feels that restless longing for a home that doesn't fully exist here on earth. |
| LIBBY: | But Jesus also said the Kingdom of Heaven is within you. We can have a taste of eternity now. |
| KAI: | Now? |
| LIBBY: | Jesus said, love the Creator of the universe, and your neighbor as much as you love yourself. Is life all about me, or can I give up my self-centeredness? That's what it takes. |
| KAI: | That's all. OK. Well, yeah. |
| LIBBY: | Exactly. Which is why we tend to want to put off heaven’ til we die. |
| KAI: | Which I guess brings us to Purgatory -- the place for people not quite ready for primetime heaven. |
| LIBBY: | The word Purgatory is not found in Scripture, but the idea of an in-between place does have a scriptural basis, a place where people are purified and healed from what the Church calls the enduring effects of sin and a life of self-centeredness. |
| ST. PETER: | Welcome. |
| LIBBY: | Am I really going to get into Heaven? |
| ST. PETER: | Sure, kid. You're metaphorical inches and/or minutes away from entering into the ultimate, totally awesome beauty of the mystery of the universe, the Holy Trinity. Will you give me your cards? |
| LIBBY: | Oh yes. Here are my sins and my bad stuff: my greed, my vanity, my fears, my mistakes. |
| ST. PETER: | Jesus is already working on those. He judged you, and if you asked him, he forgave all that. |
| LIBBY: | I did. So why am I being sent to purgatory? |
| ST. PETER: | Because sins have consequences, even after they're forgiven. |
| LIBBY: | What? |
| ST. PETER: | OK. Think of it this way. I'm in bed with a terrible illness. The day comes when the germs are gone, and I'm healed from the disease, But I'm still weak, maybe from the lingering effects of it, and I need time to recover. The same with sin. |
| LIBBY: | I get it. Purgatory. Purged, purified completely. |
| ST. PETER: | Yes, but there's more. Your other cards? |
| LIBBY: | These. Oh yes. The things I value most about myself and what I love. I have my hometown, my collection of miniature horse figurines, my regular church attendance, my career. |
| ST. PETER: | Very good, but I need those too. |
| LIBBY: | Why? |
| ST. PETER: | Give up all earthly attachments, good and bad and enter freely, with pure love for God. |
| LIBBY: | I do love God, but these cards are good things. I can't imagine myself without them. |
| ST. PETER: | Purify. Complete surrender. Your choice. Purgatory's that-a-way. |
| LIBBY: | OK, good. Well, that sums up today's topic. |
| KAI: | Libby. |
| LIBBY: | We've all got some letting go to do, I imagine. |
| KAI: | Libby. We still haven't discussed the Final Destination. |
| LIBBY: | Oh, Hell. I was hoping we could skip that. |
| KAI: | Hell, Hades, Sheol, the inferno, fire and brimstone, pitchforks, devils in red pajamas. |
| LIBBY: | Wrong. If Heaven is being at one with God, and communion with all good things, for Catholics, Hell is utter isolation, being totally separated from love, from God and all others. |
| KAI: | Eternal solitary confinement, with me, myself and I. |
| LIBBY: | When Jesus spoke of hell he used the term Gehenna, a place near Jerusalem, of pagan child-sacrifice and fire. |
| KAI: | These images aren't meant to be literal, but to illustrate how a soul must feel when it's outside Jerusalem. |
| LIBBY: | We've all had a sense of that feeling, being outside of Jerusalem, separated from people you love, especially when you've been betrayed, or you have betrayed someone. |
| KAI: | It's Hell. |
| LIBBY: | The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes Hell as, "A state of definite self-exclusion from God and from those who love God." |
| KAI: | Self-exclusion, which means that God doesn't send anyone to Hell. A person chooses Hell by absolutely rejecting God through his or her words, actions and attitudes towards God and towards other people. |
| LIBBY: | The question is, have a person's words and actions in this life, made them ready for the next? Of course, even if people do reject God, God still loves them. The Church teaches that Hell exists, but that God created everyone for Heaven. |
| KAI: | Finally, you might be asking, what of the person who's never heard of Jesus? |
| LIBBY: | Catholics believe that salvation is only possible through Jesus, but also that God reveals Jesus to everyone by whatever means possible. |
| KAI: | So. those who've never heard of Jesus may have honestly sought the truth and lived lives of self-giving love and good will to all. It's like they were followers of Jesus without even knowing it. |
| LIBBY: | The Church says that through God's grace, the possibility of Heaven is open to them too. |
| KAI: | And maybe even to that unbelieving friend you lost in a balloon accident. A really great guy, cared about everybody, would give you the shirt off his back, but you did have to wonder about the whole ballooning thing. |
| LIBBY: | As for believing Christians, they have the gift of added confidence because of their faith and life in Christ. |
| KAI: | But it's still up to each one of them to choose to follow Jesus daily; not always the easy thing. But, as Jesus promised them, a chance to really matter, to push the world forward, a path to the fullest life possible and beyond. |
| LIBBY: | Choice. It always comes back to choice. |
| KAI: | So today we presented the Catholic view of life after life. Heaven, Hell and Purgatory. |
| LIBBY: | We talked about eternity, where our transformed bodies exist outside of time and the physical world. |
| KAI: | We talked about Purgatory, where you can finally let go of all earthly attachments. |
| LIBBY: | We talked about heaven and Hell, not as some place out there based on a reward or punishment system, but as a part of an eternal invitation from God to eternal communion. |
| KAI: | So that's it for this episode of Catholic Central. I'm Kai. |
| LIBBY: | And I'm Libby, and remember eternity is a state of being you can begin to live now, day by day. |
| KAI: | Absolutely. My thoughts exactly. No worries. I'm ready. |
| DEATH: | What were you saying? |

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