

## Crying about the Afterlife

Sometimes at night I cry about my own death and the afterlife. At 17, I don't want to make wrong choices (especially about chastity). Why am I so worried about death and the afterlife?

Thanks for writing. I hope you find this reply helpful.

As someone who taught high school students for 16 years full-time and three more years part-time, I appreciate that you find death scary. At age 71, I'm probably closer to death than you are.

Death is the passage into the life with God that we have always been intended to share. I hope that you have known some older people who have faced death calmly. If you haven't had that experience, you might consider volunteering at a nursing home near you. One run by Catholic sisters might be ideal.

Developing one's conscience and sticking to it are not easy. In a sense, you can ask about any action: Is this who I am before God? Would I have to lie to myself to find this action OK?

Every sin begins with a lie to oneself because every temptation to sin suggests that the proposed action or inaction is a shortcut to something good, that God's ways are too difficult, take too long, etc.

God created each of us in order to share divine life with us—and that includes the freedom to tell ourselves the truth consistently. Nothing good can be built upon a lie of whatever kind. I encourage you to seek help from a mental health professional.

May the Lord help you to experience the peace, joy, and freedom that are your birthright.



We wish you  
**Christmas**  
blessings  
and thank you  
for your support!



Your contributions to our Jamaican mission helped Gifford "Bam Bam" Whyte graduate from high school and begin college.

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## Quick Questions and Answers

**Because Protestants don't believe in purgatory, can they go to purgatory?**

Yes, they can. Purgatory is a place of purification. At the moment of death, not everyone is ready to be in God's loving presence forever. Why not? They may still hold, for example, racist ideas. Such people would immediately be in conflict with the saints because these newcomers would probably have countless areas to "improve" on what God is providing—for example, the seating arrangements!

**How are the feast days of saints determined? I see different days linked with the same saint, including on your Internet feature *Saint of the Day*.**

Often a saint's feast day is the day that person died. St. John Paul II died on April 2, 2005, but his feast is on October 22. The Catholic Church has a worldwide liturgical calendar, but a country or a diocese may have permission to publish its own. For example, St. Clare is celebrated on August 11 on the worldwide calendar but on August 12 in the Diocese of Assisi because August 11 has been celebrated there for centuries as the feast of St. Rufino, one of its bishops and a martyr.

Our online *Saint of the Day* feature ([SaintoftheDay.org](http://SaintoftheDay.org)) is based on the Roman (worldwide) calendar, but there are some variations because that calendar does not have a saint for each day and has several dates on which two or more unrelated saints are celebrated. The diocesan Ordo (approved liturgical list) is the final authority. SAM