

WHY
are we
HERE?

BOOKET No. 1

You have found
favour with
GOD

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BOOKLETS EXPLORING PARTS OF CATHOLICISM IN A SIMPLE WAY

PREFACE

Some Catholics only receive refresher education about their religion from sermons their parish priest gave during Sunday mass.

This booklet attempts to correct this possible lack of knowledge and understanding about some important Catholic topics. The ones to be covered are:

- Is there a God?
- Why did He make us?
- What are the implications of Free-Will?
- How does Jesus Christ fit into all this?
- The Catholic Church's role.

It's hoped that the information covered will give lay Catholics a better understanding of their religion, encourage them to talk to other Catholics about it, and encourage them to practice it more earnestly and with increasing regularity.

What's covered will not be the most comprehensive or only answer, but it's all in a very easy-to-read manner and free from theological terms where possible.

IS THERE A GOD?

This booklet may be of help if you want to be more aware of:

- The existence of God.
- Why we exist.
- Why it's great to be a Catholic.

Catholics believe in God; some without any need for proof, others because of some event in their lives or because it's the religion of their parents. All of them have that wonderful gift of FAITH, but sometimes, our busy lives and social media cause us to waver in our Faith.

As for atheists, one of their favourite reasons for not believing is:

'How can there be a God, when throughout history people have suffered famines, pestilence, wars, and there are terrible pains and fears in the wild animal world between predator and prey?

A benevolent God would never allow these terrible things to occur.

At first sight, this appears to be a good argument, but when looked at closely, what these people are saying, no matter how they put it, is that

'God does not come up to their idea of how God should behave'.

This is arrogance.

Ask them, WHO ARE THEY TO SAY HOW GOD SHOULD BEHAVE?

Throughout the ages, people have believed in gods of all kinds, so how do we know that the Christian God is the true, real one?

THE GOD OF THE CHRISTIANS

The following is just one of many answers to this question. The earliest known and continuous writings about a God are those by a man named Moses, a prophet of the one God believed in by the ancient Hebrews (Israelites).

A prophet was a holy person selected by God to help Him communicate with the Hebrews. Through prophets, God told them how to behave and do what He wanted.

Moses was the first of many prophets to write down how this one God had communicated with him. There had been previous prophets, but their instructions from God had been carried down the ages by word of mouth. Moses recorded these 'word of mouth' revelations, as well as the ones that happened to him and the Hebrews of that time.

After Moses, the prophets also recorded their communications and instructions from God.

At the time of Moses, the Hebrews were slaves of the Egyptians, and according to his writings, God told him to go to Pharaoh, the leader of the Egyptian empire and demand the release of His people.

Moses eventually succeeded and led the people to the promised land. During their travels to this 'promised land,' God gave them laws to live by called:

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

If people obeyed these, God would reward them, but if they didn't, He'd punish them.

The writings of Moses and other prophets, plus the commandments, were known to the Israelites as the SCRIPTURES and THE LAW. Today, Christians call these writings the OLD Testament of the Bible, but it is the NEW Testament of the Bible that helps us prove that the Christian God is the true God.

The prophets in the Scriptures tell us that God had promised the

Hebrews a special saviour they called a MESSIAH, and they eagerly awaited his coming.

It was the writings about the life and teachings of this messiah that would form the NEW TESTAMENT.

THE MESSIAH

When He arrived, the Israelites were under the yoke of the Roman Empire and believed their Messiah would deliver them from Rome's subjugation and make Israel a great nation.

According to the New Testament of the Bible, this didn't happen. Jesus of Nazareth was this Messiah, but all He preached was LOVE. Love God and our neighbours as ourselves, even our enemies.

When asked what His mission was, he said in different ways:

HE'D COME TO SAVE SINNERS.

(What this means will be covered later.)

The Messiah gathered followers called disciples and twelve were special, which were called Apostles.

They all listened to Him preach his words of love and watched Him work miracles such as walking on water, controlling the weather, raising the dead and many others..

As a final proof of His divinity, Jesus told them He'd be put to death but rise from the dead after three days. How could this happen? If you're dead, how can you make yourself come alive again? If it did happen, it would be a miracle of all miracles.

His message to all men was simple. He said He'd come to show and teach them how to love and worship God and become his friend so that when they died, their immortal souls would live with God in Heaven **for all eternity**. He told His disciples to carry this message to all peoples of the world, not just the Israelites.

As He prophesied, He was crucified, died and was laid in a tomb under guard. He did rise three days later from the dead and visited His disciples who were hiding in a room, afraid in case they were recognised as His followers and put to death.

Being human, cynical and very sceptical, when Jesus did appear, they weren't sure if this was the Jesus they knew risen from the dead. He could be a double or a twin they knew nothing about.

After He'd left them, Thomas, one of the Apostles arrived. When he heard that Jesus had risen he said that unless he could put his fingers in the holes of Jesus' hands and feet made by the nails during crucifixion, he would not believe it was the Christ.

When Jesus did appear to the disciples again, Thomas was present. Jesus told him to put his fingers in the holes of His hands and feet caused by the nails during His crucifixion and to put his fist in the hole in His side caused by a Roman soldier's spear thrust.

Seeing these wounds from the crucifixion convinced Thomas and even the hardest sceptics among His disciples that it was Jesus. He'd indeed risen from the dead. They now knew beyond any doubt that he was the Son of God.

Jesus continued to visit his disciples, finishing His instructions for them and making Peter, one of his Apostles, the head (Pope) of His new church.

He then had them filled with the Holy Spirit, giving these ordinary men, who could only speak Aramaic, the means to communicate with knowledge and conviction in the language of whatever country they visited. This could only be a God-given ability.

These are not fancy stories or wishful thinking; they did happen and were witnessed by many people. This is why we know that the God of Christians and Jews is the true God.

When all Jesus's actions were recorded in what we know as the New Testament of the Bible, within forty to a hundred years of His lifetime, by people who witnessed them, not one person who had also witnessed them is known to have come forward to dispute them.

Apart from John, all the Apostles and many early Christians died horrible deaths rather than deny Jesus.

Rome's ruthless governing of the Hebrews meant that Jesus' preaching of love was anathema to them.

It's only when we understand what God wants from us and how we can achieve this that His teachings become clear. Why did God create people?

When God created the universe, including people, the most important thing He did was give individual men and women **FREE-WILL**.

Having Free-Will meant they could choose to obey His laws or not. To realise how important this is, we need to understand two things:

- **ETERNITY**
- **GOD'S WISDOM**

ETERNITY

When people are asked 'what is eternity'? The normal answers are usually a simple phrase such as 'For ever', 'For all time' or 'Never ending'.

When we consider our lives to have lasted a hundred years, we tend to consider this a long time, and we look at two thousand years since the time of Jesus the Messiah as a very long time.

What about the lifespan of our solar system or even our universe? Millions and billions of years. The thing to realise here is that these so-called vast times of the solar system and universe are nothing, not even a spec in time compared to eternity.

Eternity is endless, and as we have already seen, God is eternal; He's always existed. Jesus died and came back to life. This means he could do it again, and again, and again and forever. He, that is God is therefore eternal. Never trivialise eternity to simple definitions, it's far too important for that as we'll see later.

GOD'S WISDOM

What is wisdom? Whenever theologians are asked this question, they tend to define it as the ability to make the best decision regarding a person or group's problem.

To do this effectively, they need to understand and have experience with the things involved in the decision-making process. In simple terms, two of the major raw materials used in wisdom are:

- **Knowledge.**
- **Experience.**

Since God created all things, He must have absolute knowledge and experience. This must make His wisdom total, well beyond our understanding. It also means He is incapable of making any form of mistake.

ALL THIS BRINGS US TO THE CREATION OF PEOPLE

God made the first two human beings, Adam and Eve. Whether they existed or not may or may not be true, but it's a good example of His creation and Free Will.

When God created them, we're told He put them in an idyllic place

called The Garden of Eden. Here they would live forever, never suffer pain or anxieties of any kind, but when looked at closely, this type of existence has no real purpose, and God is all-wise, so there must have been something else.

There was; we call it FREE-WILL, and free will implies things we forget. When God gave human beings free will, this first implied that people would need some challenge from God upon which to use their free will.

Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden, but God set them one challenge. It was very simple: "Do not eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge." Using their free will, they ignored God's challenge and ate the forbidden fruit. This leads us to the next implication.

If people use their free will to obey or not obey God's challenges, then there must be some reward if they follow Him or punishment if they don't.

In Adam and Eve's case, they were cast out of the Garden of Eden, and from then on, they and their descendants would have all the problems we face today as human beings and eventually die. This, again, meant another implication.

If everything ended when a person died, what was the point? We know that God cannot make mistakes; therefore, there must be more.

There is. When God creates a human being, He gives that person a mortal life and an IMMORTAL SOUL. What happens to this immortal spirit when we die is very important.

We've already seen how God gave Moses and mankind a set of challenges to live by called THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. If we obey these laws of God during our short life, then the reward is for our **IMMORTAL SOULS TO LIVE WITH GOD IN HEAVEN FOR ALL ETERNITY.**

If we do not obey them, then our souls will perish in Hell for all eternity.

God is so loving and merciful that He sent His only Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, to tell and show us how to achieve life for our souls in heaven for all eternity. When asked what His mission here on earth was, His simple answer was "**To save sinners**".

By this, He meant people's souls to live with God in heaven for all ETERNITY. We are now left with one final implication. How do we know all this?

There's only one possible answer. Only God knew about this, therefore He must have **REVEALED** it to us.

One of God's main sources of revelation is the Bible. This is why it is very important to own, read, and understand the Bible.

ALWAYS REMEMBER

THE BIBLE IS A GREAT SOURCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT GOD'S REVELATIONS TO MANKIND.

To Recap: God created man.

- He had to give people free will for his creation to make sense and laws on which people could use their free will.
- He must, therefore, reward or punish people based on how they used their free will.
- None of this is of any use if it all ends when our mortal bodies die.
- As well as a mortal body, God gave us all an immortal SOUL. It's what happens to this when we die that is very important.
- God has promised that our souls will live with Him in Heaven for all eternity when we die, but only if we've used our free will to obey His laws while alive. If we haven't, then our souls will perish in Hell for all eternity.
- For it to work, mankind must know all about it, but HOW?
- God reveals it all to us via the Holy Bible.

WHERE DOES IT ALL LEAD?

God wanted all men to gain His great promise of eternal life for our souls in heaven when we died and sent Jesus to us in human form to help us understand how to do it. This is why His mission was '**TO SAVE SINNERS**'.

What the Hebrews were suffering at the time of Jesus due to Roman oppression, even if it was for a lifetime, was nothing when compared to ETERNITY in heaven for their souls.

GOD'S GRACE

We have already seen how human beings, since the beginning of time, have all been given an eternal soul by God, and for it to get to heaven when a person dies, it has to be acceptable to God.

Theologians call it being in God's favour and we can only get our soul into this state through God's Grace, but what is grace?

When we were children, our parents never stopped loving us, even when we were 'naughty'.

When we were, we lost their favour but not their love. When this happened, we were punished somehow, such as being grounded or having our pocket money reduced or stopped.

To win their favour, we would try to do what we knew would impress them, such as cleaning our bedrooms, helping with household chores, and doing what they asked. When we were back in their favour, they were pleased and would usually reward us.

When we think about it, we could only get back in their favour because they'd always provided us with the ways to do so, shown us how, and urged and prompted us to do them continually. This was their grace at work, helping us become God-fearing, trustworthy citizens.

God works similarly. He never stops loving us, but when we sin, we fall out of His favour, and He punishes us.

When we obey him, we gain His favour, and He rewards us. His love is so great that He provides us all with His grace even when we don't deserve it. It's free to us and boundless, but what does it do, and how does it all work?

God is always willing to forgive and forget our offences against Him, just like our parents, and years ago, to help us understand His grace, the Catholic Church described it as consisting of two main types, although there are others:

- **SANCTIFYING GRACE**
- **ACTUAL GRACE**

SANCTIFYING GRACE resides in the soul but can only do so when the soul is free from mortal sin. It is the free gift of friendship with God, the supernatural life that is a sharing in God's own life.

This used to be defined by the church as being in a '**STATE OF GRACE**'.

Should we die with our soul **not** being in a 'State of Grace', that is, having been stained with mortal sins and not being in God's favour, then it will go to hell for all eternity.

God is aware that man can use his free will to offend Him and sin, but because He's so forgiving, He's given us the means to get Sanctifying Grace back into our souls. We do this using the other main type of grace called God's '**ACTUAL GRACE**'.

ACTUAL GRACE

Actual Grace is a gift from God showing His love for us by providing this special spiritual help. It uses God's love and friendship to urge and show us how to get our souls back into His favour. Examples of this are:

- Baptism **clears our soul of all our sins**, including Original Sin, and replaces them with Sanctifying Grace.
- The 'Sacrament of Reconciliation' **clears our soul of all our sins** and restores Sanctifying Grace.
- Going to mass earnestly adds to the Sanctifying Grace in our souls
- Holy Communion also adds to the Sanctifying Grace in our souls.
- Praying adds to the Sanctifying Grace in our souls
- Helping others less fortunate than ourselves adds to the Sanctifying Grace in our souls.
- And many other acts of mercy.

We're prompted by God's grace to do things that help our souls stay in a 'State of Grace', or as it is currently defined, to keep our soul in His favour. It also strengthens us morally so we are less likely to offend Him.

Other types of grace exist, such as Sacramental Grace, which we receive when we receive the Sacraments. These help us achieve the special benefits bestowed upon us by each sacrament.

Our Lord Jesus Christ knew that the length of our lifetime here on earth was nothing compared to the ETERNITY we could spend with God in Heaven. That's why he replied, "I've come to save sinners" when asked what his mission was.

Jesus wanted all men to refrain from offending God so their souls would always be acceptable to God when they died.

He's shown his unending willingness to forgive us by providing us with His wonderful spiritual helping hand, which we call GRACE. Don't waste your free will offending God. Use it to obey Him and gain his favour and eternity in heaven with Him.

THIS IS WHY WE'RE HERE, WHY WE EXIST.

Since Our Lord Jesus Christ founded the Catholic Church, its main aim must be the same as His: to save sinners. One of the greatest gifts Jesus Christ gave His church to help us in this way:

'THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION',

THIS IS BECAUSE IT REMOVES
ANY STAIN OF SIN,
VENIAL AND MORTAL FROM OUR SOULS.

IT KEEPS IT ACCEPTABLE TO GOD

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

This sacrament, which allows priests and bishops to forgive sins via the Holy Spirit, is called 'The Sacrament of Reconciliation', 'The Sacrament of Forgiveness', or simply 'Confession'. 'To keep things simple, we'll use CONFESSION.

Before we look at it, we need to remember the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. When we look at the end of our arms, we see a thumb, fingers, and a palm, making up a hand. Each of these three parts has its own very special abilities and functions, but together, they make up one extremely useful thing we call a hand.

In a similar way, God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit each have their own very special, separate functions, but together, they are the One True merciful and compassionate God. We should never forget this, especially when considering sacraments such as Confession, which is all about the forgiveness of sins.

When we talk about forgiveness, what exactly does it mean? If someone in a room slapped you across the face and someone else in another part of the room said, "I forgive you for slapping that man." What would you, who'd been offended, do or say? Probably, "Hang on a

minute. I'm the one who's been slapped, and if there's any forgiving to do, I'll do it".

No one has the right to forgive someone if they are not the offended person. It's the same when we offend God by sinning. Only God can forgive us, so what's Confession all about, and how does it work?

It's a magnificent gift from God, given to us by his Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ (John 20:19.23), who, being one with God, has every right to do what he did. It shows that our ever-merciful God wants every man and woman;

TO KNOW THAT THEIR SINS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN.

We can pray earnestly and ask God to forgive us our sins, go to mass and take part eagerly and earnestly, during which we ask for our sins to be forgiven. When we do these things, our ever-merciful God will probably have done so, but we can never be sure.

ONLY BY GOING TO CONFESSION EARNESTLY CAN WE BE SURE.

When Jesus instituted this sacrament, he breathed on his Disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven....".

A priest or bishop can ABSOLVE us of our sins, and when they do this, God forgives them.

This sacrament is truly a unique, magnificent gift that we should grasp with both hands. When we take part in it in a sincere and earnest manner, we **know** that God has forgiven us our sins.

SHARING HIS FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE.

We know that our existence here on earth is to prove to God that he should accept our immortal souls to live with him for eternity in heaven when we die. How many of us actually think about this with our busy lives and social media doing everything they can to make us forget?

Our so-called busy lives are finite, so small compared with eternity, that we should never forget what awaits our souls when we die.

Confession is an authentic and remarkable gift from God that some Catholics either ignore, or can't be bothered to go to, yet it is such an easy sacrament to take part in.

When people haven't been to confession for some time, it's usually

because it's such a long time since they attended that they've forgotten what to say and do, or they're embarrassed to tell their priest some of the things they're ashamed of doing.

If you've not been for a long time and have forgotten what to do, it's all explained in a simple manner at the end of this chapter.

If you're ashamed of what you've done and are afraid of what the priest may think of you, then go to one who doesn't know you, but go.

Priests and bishops know all the sins that man can commit and you can never surprise them. You may shock them if it's something like murder, but you'll never surprise them.

They're only interested in absolving you of your sins so that God himself will forgive you as he promised if you are earnest and sincere.

**Confession is a unique,
soul saving gift to mankind
that should be grasped with both hands.**

If we use it regularly and with sincere repentance, we stand a great chance of achieving God's great promise because our souls will probably be acceptable to God when we die, **which can happen at any time.**

To understand more about this sacrament, we need to know about mortal sins. Many people believe they have committed them when they probably haven't. Mortal sins are grave or serious.

We know when we've committed grave sins by thought, word or deed, but to be '**classed as mortal**'; they have to satisfy three principles set out by the church.

The three principles are:

- **Its subject must be a grave (or serious) matter.**
- **It must be committed with full knowledge, both of the sin and of the gravity of the offence**
- **It must be committed with deliberate and complete consent.**

HOW OFTEN WHEN WE SIN GRAVELY
DO WE FULFIL THESE THREE PRINCIPLES?

We have to remember that these principles are man-made; therefore, like everything else that's man-made, they're not perfect and, on rare occasions, may not necessarily apply, but they are still a great guide.

Everyone sins, including bishops and priests. They know of all the temptations people face every day because they have experienced them, and they, too, have to go to a priest to receive this special gift to

mankind.

Go and tell the priest if it's been a long time since your last confession; he'll be eager to help. A priest is always happy to help during this sacrament. Remember what Jesus said about sinners:

**That he'd come to save them.....
The joy in heaven over one repentant
sinner.....**

It is sometimes difficult for people to go to Confession because they've forgotten what to do. Today, things have changed slightly.

When you go to this sacrament, you can elect to do so in private behind a screen, that is, in a confessional, or you can sit openly in front of him. The priest doesn't care which.

**His primary concern is
the ABSOLUTION he can extend to you.**

Once in church, you should prepare yourself to make a good confession. This means making your peace with God by admitting to him that you have sinned and are truly sorry and wish to make a good confession.

Before you go to the priest, spend time reviewing all the sins, mortal and venial, you know you've committed and try not to forget them.

When the priest has absolved you from your sins, it's a great feeling. Go back into the church and do the penance (usually one or more prayers) he's given you. It isn't challenging to go to this Sacrament, and once you start, you'll find it easy to continue regularly.

**The process
of going to Confession
is on the next page.**

ACTUALLY GOING TO CONFESSION

When you are with the priest and ready to begin your confession:

- Bless yourself and then say how long it is since your last confession.
Father forgive me for I have sinned, It's (n) [days, weeks, months, years] since my last confession."
- If it's been a long time, the priest will know that it must have been

difficult for you to come to this sacrament, so he'll be very happy to help you.

(The joy in heaven over one repentant sinner).

- Tell the priest all the sins you've committed - both mortal and venial; and when you can remember no more say to the priest something like:

“Father, for these and all my other sins which I cannot now remember I humbly beg your pardon, penance and absolution.”

- Listen earnestly to any advice the priest gives, he'll want to help you. He'll now give a penance for you to do after you leave; usually some prayers.

- Now he'll ask you to make a 'Good Act of Contrition', and if necessary help you with it. An example is:

“O my God because you are so good I am very sorry that I have sinned against you and by the help of your grace I will not sin again”

- **THE PRIEST NOW ABSOLVES YOU FROM YOUR SINS.**

Bless yourself and thank the priest. You can now leave.

- **YOUR SOUL IS IN A 'STATE OF GRACE'; it's regained it's friendship with and is in favour with God.**

SOME NOTES TO REMEMBER

When we go to confession once or twice a year, we only tend to remember our sins when we prepare to go to this sacrament. Could this length of time be just one of many reasons we commit so many mortal sins between confessions?

When we go to confession regularly, say once every month, give or take a week or two, we tend to remember sins when we're about to commit them and, therefore, stop committing them. This reduces considerably the number of sins we commit.

Going to confession has tremendous benefits where our soul being acceptable to God's is concerned. Never underestimate it. To work out

how many times a sin has been committed, you have to estimate how many times a day, on average, you've committed that sin and multiply this by the number of days since your last confession.

SOME SINS TO CONSIDER

The list of possibilities below can help us remember the sins we've committed before we actually go to confession, a process called 'examining our conscience'.

It's not a complete list, but ask yourself, "Have I.....?"

Taken the Lord's name in vain?

Kept holy the sabbath day?

Been to mass on Sundays and Holy Days?

Paid attention at mass?

Made sure my children receive religious instruction?

Broken any solemn promises or vows?

Abused my body in any way?

Shown due respect to my parents?

Been angry with others and my family members?

Revengeful, Envious Impatient

Lazy Proud Greedy

Had impure thoughts?

Willingly looked at impure pictures of any kind?

I been racial in any way? Stolen any things?

Spoken about anyone behind their back?

Wished ill on anyone for any reason?

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic Church has taken up Our Lord Jesus Christ's quest to save **sinners** and provides many strategies for attaining God's great promise.

Some of these are:

- The Sacraments, especially:
 - Baptism.
 - Holy Eucharist.
 - Reconciliation.
- Praying.
- The Mass.
- Keeping God's commandments.
- Helping people less fortunate than ourselves
- And many others.

We've looked at the Sacrament of Reconciliation, so we'll now look at

- BAPTISM.
- INDULGENCES.
- THE MASS (Not mentioned in this booklet)

OUR SOUL BEING ACCEPTABLE TO GOD IS SO IMPORTANT THAT A BOOKLET IS AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE COVERING ALL ASPECTS OF:

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

BAPTISM

The Sacrament of Baptism forgives all the mortal and venial sins of people being baptised, especially Original Sin.

It cleanses our souls of all sins, making it acceptable to God if we die in this state.

By Baptism, we belong to Christ and one another as members of his body, the Church.

INDULGENCES

The Sacrament of Reconciliation clears our souls of all sins, but to remove all our guilt, we must also be punished for the sins we've committed. The church calls this temporary punishment. This is where **INDULGENCES** come in.

What are indulgences, who created them, what are they for, and why are they so important?

To understand all this, we need to recognise that for God to exonerate us entirely of our sins, we not only have to have them forgiven but also have to endure the punishment due to them.

There's a good example of this in the Bible's Old Testament. (See 2 Samuel 12.)

It's all about the story of King David and how he organised the death of Uriah, one of his generals, so that he could have that general's wife. This was a great mortal sin.

He eventually and earnestly repents, after which the prophet Nathan tells him that God knows he is sincere and has forgiven him, but he still has to be punished. God's punishment for this great crime was the death of David's own son.

ALL SINS REQUIRE BOTH FORGIVENESS AND PUNISHMENT.

In very simple terms, indulgences are prayers and actions devised by the church to reduce or get rid of completely the PUNISHMENT we owe God and have to endure because of the sins we've committed. The church calls this:

TEMPORAL PUNISHMENT

It's called this because it can all be forgiven over time, either here in this world by doing what the church advises, or in a state after death where we have to wait before we can enter Heaven, even though our sins have been forgiven.

We call this state **PURGATORY**, during which we endure punishments due to our sins.

Purgatory is like waiting at the gates of heaven and not being able to get in. Not being able to enter and enjoy heaven is itself a punishment, and we have to endure it until we have been punished enough; then, because our sins have also been forgiven, our souls can enter heaven for all eternity.

Indulgences can only be used if we have already had our sins forgiven, such as by going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and can only be granted through the ministry of the Church

From the Catechism (1471) of the Catholic Church, the definition is:

*"An indulgence is a remission before God
of the*

TEMPORAL PUNISHMENT

due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven”,

A remission is simply a method of reducing something. As an example, in English law, a Judge may reduce a person’s prison sentence by stating that there will be a remission of the sentence to 4 years from 10 years if the criminal shows honest regret and takes on the tasks ordered by the court.

The indulgences that we can earn here on earth to rid our souls of temporal punishment are called:

- PARTIAL indulgences, which remit only **part** of our temporal punishment.
- PLENARY indulgences, which remit **all** of our temporal punishment.

The official list of these prayers and good works through which we can earn partial or plenary indulgences is contained in a papal document called ENCHIRIDION INDULGENTIARUM.

(See Appendix C for definitions of indulgences.)

Finally, the HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS is one of the great Catholic religious services that help us keep our souls acceptable to God. The booklet available on this website explains this service in detail.

WHAT GOD WANTS FROM US

This book shows us in a simple way that the God of the Christians exists. It explains why He created people with free will and the implications resulting from using it to obey or not to obey His commandments.

It explains the reward that God promised if they obeyed them and the punishment if they did not.

To help us all, God sent His Son to show and tell people how they could achieve His great promise of eternal life in heaven for their immortal souls when they die.

We also see how Jesus created the Catholic Church, which has continued His work and that of His apostles to SAVE SINNERS down through the ages with such things as:

- God's Grace.
- The Sacrament of Baptism.
- Indulgences.
- Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- The Mass.

The church has done much more, but this booklet is a simple reminder for lay Catholics to consider these things.

If you like what you read here and would like to see other topics covered as individual items, then visit our website and download the ones you want and would like to use, all free of charge:

www.catholicismrefreshernotes.co.uk