

only the love of them. We must persevere in faith, hope, and charity.

Christ calls us to perfection. Matt. 5:48 – “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Can we be perfect? Most would say no, but why would Christ set a goal for us that is unreachable?

We must understand the definition of perfection, Luke 10:25-28 – “And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? How do you read?’ And he answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.’ And he said to him, ‘You have answered right; do this, and you will live.’”

He who loves God fulfills the precepts, which relate to the first tablet of the law, the Ten Commandments; and he who loves his neighbor fulfills all the commandments, which relate to the second.

At the same time, He also wished to teach us what virtues are necessary to attain perfect justice. 1 Cor. 13:9-13: “For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

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Heaven and the World

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In Lewis Carroll's, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice comes to a crossroad and is confused; she sees the Cheshire cat up in a nearby tree and asks him which way she should go. The Cat asks, “Where do you want to get to?” Alice replies that it really didn't matter. Then the Cat says, “Well, if you don't know where you're going, then any road will get you there.”

We have to have a destination in mind and the proper road map to get there. All who follow the map are sure to arrive at the place of destination; while on the contrary, those who lack direction or wander from the right path may never arrive at their journey's end.

What will heaven be like? The prophet Isaiah, quoted and amplified by Saint Paul, has told us, in words that should be familiar to all, that “What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2:9).

Saint Paul, however, qualifies the saying of the Prophet, at least so far as it applies to the knowledge of Christians; for he adds in the very next verse, “This God has revealed to us through the Spirit.” In his *Epistle to the Romans*, Paul tells us that, “Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made” (1:20).

Saint Paul wants us to understand that if we look at the visible things around us we might gain a tiny glimpse of the invisible things of heaven. Elsewhere Paul compared our earthly knowledge of God and heaven with the vision enjoyed by the blessed, "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood" (1 Cor 13:12).

The beauty of God's creation surrounds us each and every day; all that is required is eyes to see. Yet, the most majestic scene of nature, or even the love in the heart of the Blessed Mother while gazing on the face of her infant Son cannot begin to compare with heaven. God is love. In heaven there is perfect love. We will become "deified," in other words, we will be absorbed into the pure love of God, and we will spend eternity getting to know Him. As Saint Paul understood, there are no words in any language that will adequately describe heaven.

How many of us really want to go to heaven at journey's end? Recently, while addressing a group of about 65 teenagers on this subject of salvation, I asked, "How many of you want to go to heaven when you die? Every hand was raised. I then asked, "How many of you want to be living saints." Two hands went up. Many were disappointed when I told them that they had to be a saint to get into heaven, as nothing imperfect can be in God's presence. Few of these young men and women realized that there were certain qualifications that had to be met in order to enter into the majesty of God.

Saint Paul refers to Christians as saints. While we are on earth we are imperfect saints striving for perfection. Heaven is the domain of perfected Saints.

The general rule is: "He who lives holy will die holy." The most dangerous thing in this world is to defer our conversion from sin to virtue.

All who live in the world are dead to God. In order to get to heaven we must die to this world before we die in the body. What happens to us when we die is dependent upon the state of our soul at that moment. If our love of God and man has been perfected by our submission to the will of the Holy Spirit, we will enter Heaven.

Saint John the Evangelist, quoting Christ, said, "The ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me." How could Saint John say those words? Because he had Christ in his soul.

The "ruler of this world," refers to Satan, who is the king of all the wicked; and "world" is understood as the company of all sinners who love the world and are loved by it.

Saint John also adds in his first Epistle: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever" (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

Saint James speaks in his epistle chapter 4, "Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a

friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us'?" But he gives more grace; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (4:4-7).

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul says: "You must go out of this world"; and in another place in the same letter: "But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world."

Here we are clearly told that the whole world will be condemned on the last day. But by "the world" is not meant heaven and earth, or all those who live in it, but only those who love the world. The just and the holy are in the world but not of the world. The wicked are not only in the world but are of the world. The people are filled with the pride of the Devil rather than the humility of Christ.

Our Lord when asked, "Are they few that are saved?" replied, "Strive to enter the narrow gate"; and more clearly in Matthews Gospel does he speak: "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Mt. 7:13-14).

To live in the world and to despise the pleasures of this world is very difficult. The good things in life, riches, honors, pleasures, are not entirely forbidden to Christians, but