

THE MAGDALENE

**From the Desk of
Fr. Neil...**



OUR CONCERN FOR THE SOULS OF OTHERS

A friend asked me what my opinion was about a person who has gone from being a professing Christian to a professing atheist. Is this person lost forever? Is there hope? Her questions were obviously personal. This was a close friend. My friend knows her Bible well, and yet still wanted to know if there was some sort of salvation possible even if that person never came back to the faith. This, I thought, was a very challenging question. The first two were easy to answer. Is the person lost forever? Only God knows. Not necessarily. Is there hope? The same answer goes for this one. Only God knows, and yes, there may be hope.

The point at which the Christian gives up on someone who has fallen away from the faith will vary. Some will never give up hope on a person they desire to see saved. Others will give up on

someone fairly easily. St. Augustine's mother Monica followed him around, even to other countries, being a constant presence in his life, determined by her prayers, supplications and perseverance, that she would see her son become a Christian. In her situation, Monica's prayers were answered in the affirmative and God saved Augustine. The latter method is almost always the best approach. We should do what we can to see unbelievers convert to the faith. But just as important, we should certainly do all that we can to see a fallen away Christian restored to the faith.

To try to answer this we have to look at what the Bible says about the saved and the lost and those who we are not sure about. The first question we should ask, is, "Was this person truly a Christian in the first place?" In a case like the one we are addressing, it is not easy to answer. The difficulty for us is trying to read the heart of another person. Some people can look and act very devout and yet they are not truly Christians at all. Others struggle in their faith, show little fruit at times, yet, they are certainly to be counted among the saved because they still exercise some small but real faith.

As Christians who are concerned for people like those we are talking about, our best option is to assume that they began as Christians, and have fallen away from the faith and we must do what we can to bring them back, for fear of losing them forever. They may be in a season of difficulty or their faith has been challenged in such a way that they are now questioning Christianity. Even if they deny the faith outwardly and publicly, we should pray that God would restore them.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews writes, "For it is impossible, in the case of those who

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**Sunday Services:
8am Mass
10am Choral Mass &
Children's Sunday School**

**Wednesday Service &
Anointing of the Sick: 9am**

have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.” (Heb 6:4-6, ESV)

Jesus says in Mark 4:17, speaking about the seed that landed on the rocky ground., “...these have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.”

What are these two passages teaching us? According to Jesus it sounds as if some can be Christians for a while and then fall away. The author of Hebrews says that it is impossible to restore someone to repentance if they fall away. Of course, there are some people who do not inherit eternal life in the end. There are some people who will never accept Christ and they will die in their sins...but these passages are not talking about them. If you continue to read on, verse 9 shifts the tone and says, “Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. (Heb 6:9) “Yet, IN YOUR CASE, BELOVED...” Those who taste the things of God but fall away were never truly Christians. They were allowed to experience certain blessings from God, but ultimately, they were never converted by a sustaining desire for them. They were privileged to participate in some way in the graces of God, but they never truly were converted to the Christian faith.

On the other hand, The New Testament is very clear that those whom God calls, and truly regenerates to be His own, will be preserved by His divine grace to the end. They cannot be lost. Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will

snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.” (John 10:27–30) Paul says, “...I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil 1:6) and, “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Eph 1:13–14) So we are chosen, sealed, and safe in the hands of God as true Christians.

Of course we should never take the falling away of a Christian lightly. The reality of losing someone for all eternity should add great weight and concern to how we care for others. Cain, in an off-handed remark to God when asked where Abel was, replied, “I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?” (Gen 4:9) This remark shows the callousness of Cain toward others. On the contrary, we are in fact in many ways our brother's keeper. We are to pray for one another. We are to encourage and build one another up (1Thess 5:11). We are to stir one another up to love and good works (Heb 10:24). We are to bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2). So caring for someone who has drifted from the faith is our duty as Christians. We are in sin if we let people wander from the faith.

Our concern should not be to try to look into the heart of another, or do the work of God, but rather, do all we can to bring people into (or back into) the saving knowledge of Christ.

REMEMBER ST. JAMES ON JULY 25th

The Scribes and Pharisees began to stone James but he knelt down and said, ‘I entreat thee, Lord God our Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ Ref: Eusebius Pamphilus (4th century historian), Church History, Chapter XXIII

Acquiring Truth

“Why does Jesus teach us to call no man on Earth “Father?”

In light of Matt 23:9, consider the following responses to the charge that (in this case) Anglicans are “unbiblical” in calling their ministers “father”.

First, scripture makes abundant use of the analogy of God as “Father.” In fact, if we forbid the application of the word “father” to clergy, we lose an important biblical concept of love, protection, and guidance attributed to clergy. To eliminate the ability to call Anglican clergy ‘father’ would be to make the concept of God’s role as ‘Father’ virtually meaningless. Yet we see in Gen 45:8; Job 29:16; Isa 22:20-21; II Kings 2:12 & 6:21 that this title is perfectly normal and not prohibited.

Second, this usage cannot be restricted to the Old Testament as if it were solely an Old Testament principle which changed with the coming of Jesus and the New Testament. First, the prohibition doesn’t apply to “biological” fathers – it doesn’t apply to ancestors (Acts 7:2 or Romans 9:10). Second, the term ‘father’ is used numerous terms as a form of address and reference – even of those who have no biological relationship to each other.

Third, the context of Matt 23 must be kept in mind. The beginning of the chapter must be included in the discussion because it is to that which Jesus is making his statement. Read Matt 23:6-7 then read vs 8-10 in reference to and context with 6 – 7. Notice also that Jesus prohibits calling someone a “teacher.” Are we to also cease calling people ‘teacher?’ What about the Apostle Paul’s statements in I Tim 2:7; II Tim 1:11; I Cor 12:28; and Ephesians 4:11 where Paul identifies himself and others as “teachers.” Was

he sinning under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit using that term.

What Jesus was condemning was the Pharisaic use of “Rabbi” as the equivalent of a Hindu Guru - “the one who is, in and of himself, the source of religious knowledge”. Ref: History of the Jews by Emil Schürer or Henrich Graetz

If one is to be consistent, we would have to ask, “How do you refer to your religious leader. What do you call him?” Mister is merely a version or form of “Master;” “Doctor” is Latin for “teacher” or “Rabbi;” “Reverend” means one who is to be “revered;” “Sir” is shorthand for “Sire” or “Father” or “Pastor” is a form of “Shepherd” but Jesus is the only TRUE Shepherd. In fact, if consistent, we would be required to exclude all titles.

Finally, there is the actual Scriptural issue to be considered. Paul considers his ministry as being a “father” in the faith to those to whom he ministers. He calls Timothy and Titus, “sons in the faith” (I Cor 4:15); and St. John calls the Church elders “fathers” of the Church in I Jn 2:13-14.

Acquiring Truth is your link to get answers to questions about Christianity, faith, and practices. Our clergy will answer you an answer in the Magdalene or on Facebook at Acquiring Truth. Drop your question in the fish bowl or email to: info@stmarymagdaleneacc.org.

CURRENT EVENTS

ANNUAL CHURCH BARBEQUE

Sunday June 24 at 11:30am, SMM’s parking lot will be converted into picnic grounds complete with Gas Grills for a good old fashioned Barbeque with Pot Luck contributions from the congregation. Music will be provided by the Laren Koval Trio.



There will be lots of fun for the kids. Parents should bring the kids in swimsuits or shorts. The water slide will be up and water squirt toys for the kids.

JOIN THE "BROWN BAGGERS"



Fr. Neil has organized a wonderful "brown bag lecture series" this summer. Topics will include Anglican worship and its origins, Anglican liturgical worship and other exciting topics. Speakers include Fr. Neil, Fr. Paul and Mike Cochrane.

You can pre-order a brown bag lunch for only \$5.00 which includes a sandwich, chips and fruit. Look for the sign-up sheet in the Narthex.

LOOKING FOR A BIBLE STUDY GROUP ANYONE CAN JOIN?

St. Mary Magdalene church has a walk-in Bible Study every Wednesday from 10:00am–11:30am in the Parish Hall (front building). Anyone can join. You don't even need to own a bible.

Fr. Neil also holds a "Bible For Everyone" Study every Thursday from 10am–11am at the Orange Senior Center. This is a great way for all of us Christians to come together to talk and learn a little at the same time.

MEET THE BISHOP ON JULY 8TH

Bishop Scarlett will be with us at the 10am Mass for a visit and to perform a Confirmation.

Anyone transferring to St. Mary Magdalene and wishing to be received into the Anglican Catholic Church, please check the Narthex for an "Inquiring to be Received" sign-up sheet or notify Fr. Neil.

NEWS

FANTASY TEA

The Women's Guild Fantasy Tea on Saturday, May 5th raised \$1,400 for our Outreach Missions Program. Our thanks to all the hostesses, entertainers and guests for making the day so special.

13th ANNUAL MEN'S CHILI COOK-OFF



The winners were:

"BEST" CHILI - Lou Carlson

"ALMOST THE BEST" CHILI - Carl Stronach

Thank you to Jonathan Tucker for his great work on chairing this event, and the 13 Chili Cooks for the absolutely best chili ever.

"ACQUIRING TRUTH" IS ON FACEBOOK

Check it out everyone! Fr. Paul is spearheading the Facebook Page. There are lots of interesting topics to read. Check it out and chat a little.

DIOCESE OF THE HOLY TRINITY ANNUAL SYNOD

The Diocese of the Holy Trinity Annual Synod is scheduled for June 22nd at St. Matthew's Church. The cost is \$50.00 per person.

All our permanent and visiting clergy will be attending. The delegates representing St. Mary Magdalene: Brian Lee, Violet Younis, Sharon Edlin, Mark Talley and Elizabeth Sneddon. A report on the Synod will be posted two weeks following the day.

Contact Sharon Edlin for additional information.