

Faith Tidbits..
a little food for thought
and some knowledge
about your
Catholic faith

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This monthly series will answer questions you always wondered about or questions you never even thought to ask... all about our Catholic Faith.

If you have a question you want answered, call Diane Hardick at 633-3672.

1. What is the Catholic teaching on the “Rapture”?

First of all, what do we mean when we talk about “Rapture”? For many American fundamentalist Christians, the “Rapture” forms part of the scenario of events that will happen at the end of the world. The common view is that Jesus will come on the clouds of heaven and the righteous will be *raptured*, that is caught up into the air with Christ. They will be separated from sinners who will remain on the earth to endure a period of great suffering (the Tribulation). After this, Jesus will rule on earth for 1000 years. Finally then, Jesus will come a third time at the end in judgment and will inaugurate the new heavens and the new earth. This scenario appears nowhere in the New Testament. It was “put together” through a particular interpretation of various and scattered texts and *invented* less than 200 years ago by a British religious figure! The recent *Left Behind* series of novels has raised more discussion and questions on this fundamentalist doctrine in recent years. The Catholic Church rejects the teaching on the “Rapture” for several reasons. First of all, it is not biblical, but a recent “invention.” Secondly, it is an extremely pessimistic view of the end times when sinners are *left behind* to be subjected to great violence and extreme anguish. It puts God in the role of the avenger, inflicting great suffering on sinners. Did he not send Jesus into the world to save the world and show us the way of life? And did not Jesus seem to prefer the company of sinners over the self-righteous, who often criticized him? Over and over again the New Testament scriptures tell us that “[the Lord] is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9-10). Does not God, through his Son, Jesus Christ, will that all should be saved?

So, then, what is the Catholic teaching on the “Rapture”? There is none. Will Catholics be *raptured*?

No, but then neither will anyone else.

2. What is “biblical fundamentalism?”

“Biblical fundamentalism” is the belief that states that every word in the Bible has been dictated by God, and thus should be taken literally. It does not recognize that every word in the Bible, even though inspired by God, has been written by human beings who had limitations. Raymond Brown, a well known Scripture Scholar states, “The message of the Incarnation is that there is no way to avoid the interplay of the divine and the human in approaching God.” The Catholic Church teaches that the Bible communicates without error that truth which God intended for the sake of our salvation. Too often we confuse our 21st century understanding of history with truth. Truth is far greater than and cannot be limited by how we “tell the story.” Human beings, within their faith communities used the life experiences of their time and place to tell the story of salvation. Scripture scholars over the past 50+ years have helped us learn what the author intended in his times as a communication of the truth that God wanted for the sake of our salvation. The power of God’s word is that its truth is for all people, in all places, and in all times. To read it literally distorts and destroys the very nature of the Bible as a human expression of divine revelation.