

Study Guide for
Infinite Space, Infinite God
By
Karina and Robert Fabian, editors

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If you find this guide helpful, please let us know: karina@fabianspace.com.

General Information about Infinite Space, Infinite God

Synopsis: Interstellar exploration. Genetic engineering. Time travel. Alien abduction. The Vatican.

Explore the possibilities with *Infinite Space, Infinite God*, an anthology of fifteen stories about the future Catholic Church. Experience the Church's struggle to evangelize aliens and lost human colonies and to determine the soul-status for genetically modified humans, genetically-designed chimeras, and clones made from the Martian sand. Discover religious orders devoted to protecting interstellar travelers or inner-city priests. Experience technical advances that allow monks to live in solitude on the Moon and help one criminal learn the true meaning of Confession. Learn about the present and future advances that will affect Catholic doctrine in introductions by the editors.

Is there religion in your SF or SF in your religion? Either way you look at it, *Infinite Space, Infinite God* is fast-paced, absorbing fiction that makes you think. If you're tired of science fiction that ignores human faith or religious fiction where the technical elements are sacrificed for "the message," then ISIG is the book for you.

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2007 Preditors and Editors Poll--#2 Best Anthology

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General Questions for Discussion and Study

1. A common observation by many reviewers has been that you do not need to be Catholic in order to understand and appreciate the stories in *Infinite Space*, *Infinite God*. Do you agree? Why or why not? How important is the understanding of the Catholic faith to the understanding of the conflicts in the stories?
2. (For Catholics) How does being a Catholic add to your reading experience? Are there stories you think you appreciate more because of your faith? Are there some you like less? Why?
3. The editors of this book (Karina and Robert Fabian) have said that their intent was to portray a more realistic interaction between faith and science. Did they succeed? Explain.
4. Did the stories you read cause you to think about anything differently, challenge your understanding of a subject, or question your assumptions about something? If so, what assumptions did you find yourself revisiting and why?
5. Think of the story that "stuck with you" the longest. What elements of the story did you find most thought-provoking?
6. Did you find that your emotions and intellect were engaged by different stories or story elements?
7. Which stories did you "carry away" with you more--the ones that engaged your intellect or the ones that engaged your heart? Why do you think this is so?
8. What role do you think speculative fiction should or could play in literature? In faith?

The Harvest, by Lori Z. Scott

Synopsis: Barry Martinez, a doctor-turned-priest, has the distasteful duty of harvesting the organs from a dead HuNome, a genetically engineered chimera used for work on the moon and for replacement parts for humans on Earth. HuNomes, made by combining human and animal DNA, are considered less than human; even the Church has remained undecided on just how human these workers are. Can Fr. Martinez see past the strange cat-like eyes into the souls beyond? And if he does, will he champion their freedom as Moses once championed God's Chosen?

Questions:

1. List some qualities you think distinguish humans from other creatures. What differences does God make about animals (think about their role in Creation and the status of their souls.) How does this apply to the human attitude toward the HuNomes? The Church's initial indecisiveness about their "humanity"?
2. When Fr. Martinez met Seventeen, he judged her based on his preconceived notions of HuNomes. Why did that change? Sometimes when we meet new people, we approach them with a preconceived notion of what they will be like. Where do you think these ideas come from? How does God see people? Does that alter your perspective? Why or why not?
3. Seventeen and her kind felt abandoned by their creators--and apart from God. After working with Fr. Martinez, however, Seventeen turns to God for comfort. Why? Describe a time when you've felt angry with or abandoned by God. How does prayer help you deal with these spiritual challenges?
4. List some things that you think de-value human life. What are some steps you can take to help restore the dignity of life?
5. Do you believe putting the clones on the moon is a plausible reaction? Did it solve the problem? Why or why not?
6. Fr. Martinez came to the conclusion that clones, even though not fully human, nonetheless have souls. Do you agree? How far can you change a human before it stops being human?

Hopkins' Well, Adrienne Ray

Synopsis: Private Oscar Talbot is an ordinary soldier with an ordinary mission: to scout the defenses of the town of Hopkins' Well in prelude to attack. Sure the mission means using transporter technology to get to Mars, but the tax break is great and what's the big deal? When the mission goes wrong, Talbot discovers that his government doesn't want to subdue the colony, but destroy it; that the sands of Mars are haunted by the last battalion sent on the mission, and that he, himself, is no longer human but made from the sands of Mars itself.

Questions:

1. Some philosophies link sentience with the soul. What does this story say about that? Do Bethesda and Talbot hold the original souls of their previous bodies? Do they have new souls? Do they have souls at all?
2. If this technology should ever be developed, could a Catholic use it, or would it be considered suicide? Would the new form of the person require baptism as a separate being? How might this attitude differ for non-Catholic Christians?
3. How likely is it our world will ever become like that in this story? What part of the story's Earth seem plausible to you and why? Which are improbable and why?

Reference for Questions 3-6: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Article 8 The Eighth Commandment

2467 "Man tends by nature toward the truth. He is obliged to honor and bear witness to it: 'It is in accordance with their dignity that all men, because they are persons...are both impelled by their nature and bound by moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth once they come to know it and direct their whole lives in accordance with the demands of truth.'"

2469 "'Men could not live with one another if there were not mutual confidence that they were being truthful to one another.' The virtue of truth gives another his just due. Truthfulness keeps to the just mean between what ought to be expressed and what ought to be kept secret; it entails honesty and discretion. In justice, 'as a matter of honor, one man owes it to another to manifest the truth.'"

4. Why was it necessary for Talbot and Bethesda to believe talking to the Wellers would drive them insane?

5. Was Father Augustine being dishonest when he did not tell the other Wellers that Bethesda had a gun? Why?

6. Why did Bethesda need to follow Riggins' March?

7. Why didn't Fr. Augustine agree to give the Sacrament of Healing to Bethesda when that form of Bethesda seemed to believe and was seeking reassurance?

Brother John, Colleen Drippe'

Synopsis: Humans have spread across the galaxy, yet internal strife had caused it to lose track of many of its colonies, which subsequently lost much of humankind's most basic knowledge, including knowledge of the True Creator. However, the intergalactic government, secure in its role as savior of the race, would just as soon see the archaic Christian faith die. As Brother John and his fellow priests land on Rythar to evangelize, they risk their lives for their faith and for those to whom they would bring faith.

Questions:

1. The main character, Brother John, is a man with a past. In what ways does he resemble the disciples? Is he anything like St. Paul?
2. When the trooper in the parachute fell into the hands of the Rythans--would they not have been justified in killing him? We are permitted to defend ourselves--there is such a thing as a just war. Why, in this instance, was it so important that he be spared? What victory did Brother John win--for himself and for the Rythans?
3. How do we know that Graf Third-Blade was a man of good will? Would this have been enough for his salvation? What more does baptism give him?
4. What elements of the Faith would most appeal to the Rythans? What sort of Christian civilization would you expect them to build?
5. The author, Colleen Drippe', said the Rythans are intended to show the "nobility of the 'unspoiled pagans,'" and asserts that their baptism as a race will not take that away. Do you agree? What must Brother John and other missionaries like him do to ensure this?

Interstellar Calling, Karina L. Fabian

Synopsis: A different take on evangelism. When aliens abduct Francis Marie, an average teenager, they're not interested in scientific studies. They want this Catholic schoolgirl to return to their planet and explain this faith that has captured their hearts.

Questions:

1. One criticism of this story is that Frankie dishonors her family by disappearing with nothing but a mysterious note saying she "Can't explain." What are your thoughts on this? Is there any way Frankie could have made her parents understand her unusual Calling?
2. Frankie seems as unlikely a candidate for interstellar missionary as one can get. Assuming that God does everything with a reason, why was she chosen? Do you think she'll do a good job?
3. What do you think about Frankie's parents and how they've treated their marriage? Have they been honest with each other? With their children? With God?
4. What do you think will be the hardest thing for Frankie to adapt to in an alien culture?
5. How does Frankie's situation parallel those of other missionaries? How does it differ? (Look beyond the obvious.)

Our Daily Bread, Karina and Robert Fabian

Synopsis: Spending six months a year in space mining asteroids is tough, but for Personnel Supervisor Ray McHenry, there are compensations. His role as a Catholic deacon means the majority of the strong Catholics in the Company have flocked to Blair Asteroid Mining Station--the only station in the Company where weekly Eucharist provides solace and strength. When Blair's shipment of Host is lost in an accident, Ray is ready for tough times--but not nearly as tough as when the Host start mysteriously multiplying!

Questions:

1. Why is Deacon Ray so cautious about the mysteriously multiplying hosts? How does his attitude--a reflection of the Catholic Church's cautious attitude toward miracles--apply to the Ganywater scandal?
2. Do you think the Spacer's Code that says one can only discuss politics or religion in a friendly invited discussion is a good one? Why or why not?
3. Ceremonies such as the Communion services, the Adoration, and the Perihelion Party, are an important part of life on Blair Station. Why is that? Why do people need ceremonies?
4. Does the mining station at Blair strike you as realistic? Why or why not?
5. It's said that some women marry men with the same faults that they saw in their fathers. Has Connie done this? How is her relationship with Ray different from the relationship her parents have?
6. Sometimes a negative example of a religion--like the Ganywater cult--turns people off all religion. Why does this happen?

Brother Jubal and the Womb of Silence, Tim Meyers

Synopsis: Brother Jubal finds tranquility and peace in the barren landscape of Oceanus Procellarum and dreads the days when he must visit the station for air and other supplies. Yet God often calls us to new avenues of service, and Brother Jubal must tremblingly open himself to a wilderness far more intimidating than the desolation of Luna.

Questions:

1. In the story, Brother Jubal dislikes all the commotion and din of Drake Lunar—yet in a way this is an "irreligious" response. How is he improved spiritually by becoming a counselor at the lunar base?
2. Brother Jubal quotes or refers to the Old Testament, St. Benedict, St. Thomas, St. Francis, St. Basil and Simone Weil—but also Shankara, the Upanishads, and a Zen koan. What does this say about his spirituality?
3. In some ways, this story is a re-telling of the story of Jonah. Explain.
4. What does the character of Ronnie suggest about human nature?
5. Find evidence to support the idea that Diggins, supervisor of Drake Lunar, is living a spiritual life.
6. Why is the moon an excellent place—scientifically speaking—for a spiritual hermit?
7. What is the lunar terminator, and how does it function as a metaphor in the story?

Mask of the Ferret, Ken Pick and Alan Loewen

Synopsis: An agent of the Order of St. Dismas is on the trail of an ancient artifact that can destroy minds psychically. Fr. Eric Heidler's faith and training are his shield against the artifact's attack, but in the end, it's also his insight and ability to accept a genetically-engineered passenger for both her human and animal aspects that saves them all.

Questions:

1. Nuyann, Melanai, Chokonnu, "Mr Pitter", and the anonymous Selkie at the end are all non-human. And three other non-human peoples are mentioned in passing. Are they people, as we are? Are they part of God's creation, or "did someone pull off another Creation over in the next county"?
2. In his exchange with the crewman, Fr Heidler muses on several alien religions--Khluuth, the Eternal Dance, the Way of the White Prophet--are God's revelation to these species of non-humans, tailored for their biology and psychology. Could God manifest/reveal Himself to non-humans in a different way than He did to us, or would they have to have a similar salvation story to ours?
3. Jill is semi-human, a hybrid of ferret and human, with the characteristics and behavior of both -- a human intellect overlaying a ferret's instincts. Is she people or animal? Do her human genes "grandfather" her in as human under the "Seed of Adam" principle? Is it right and morally licit to create someone/something like her?
4. Fr Heidler is a recognizably Catholic priest -- how much would the Church change in the intervening centuries? Would it be recognizable to Catholics of today, living on the eve of what history books in that future call "the Islamic Wars period?"
5. How is Fr. Heidler's Catholic faith important to this story?
6. Many Christian SF writers assume their present-day Christian faith will continue as-is, whether "Latin Mass" or "altar call." In some way, this is understandable -- a story is written for present-day readers, and the fictional future has to "map into" the reader's present. How much can change over such a length of time? And would the result be recognizable to us today? How can a faith adapt to changing times while still keeping its core intact? Can it adapt at all without losing itself?

Little Madeleine, Simon Morden

Synopsis: Is there a place for an overly strong, genetically mutated girl from a broken home in the slums? Madeleine may find her answer in the Order of St. Joan, a group of nuns with the special calling of acting as bodyguards for priests who live in areas too dangerous for even the most holy of men.

Questions:

1. Madeleine considers herself a mutant. How tolerant are we as a society of those who are very different from 'normal?' Should the Church be a safe haven for such people?
2. The Church in the story views the Order of St. Joan as a purely defensive measure, to provide the round-the-clock protection to priests and property when the police are unable to. How do you think they would be viewed by the wider population?
3. The world described in Little Madeleine is very bleak, but hope is still present. What do you feel hopeful about for the future?
4. Do we all have a gift to offer God?
5. Madeleine abandons her mother. What do you think of her decision in light of the commandment: "Honor your father and mother?" How is her situation different from that of Frankie in "Interstellar Calling?"
6. Are we more tolerant of physical differences or differences in social status? How might Madeleine's life been different if she's been born in a middle class family in the suburbs?

The Hosts of the Envoy, Alex Lobdell

Synopsis: After nearly starving to death on his damaged spaceship, Luke Kittery thinks he's found salvation--or at least survival--on the *Envoy*, a multi-generational ship which had been lost in space itself for 120 years. However, in their despair, the people of *Envoy* have turned to a false god--the earth itself--and the leaders see Catholic Luke as a threat to their religion and their power. Only two children who were raised in isolation by the deposed Catholic priest know the true faith, and Luke must depend on them to save him from the wrath of the Hosts of the *Envoy*.

Questions:

1. Should Fr. van Aert have lied about the parentage of Alpenglow and Equinox? How would the situation have been different if he'd told the truth and demanded to adopt the children instead?
2. Father van Aert saved the two children, but at the cost of many of his followers abandoning their religion. As a priest, did he do the right thing? What do you think of the faith of the followers who left?
3. In the chapel, Luke admits to himself that he had gone there in search of people, rather than in search of God. Do you think that this is a common motivation for going to church?
4. Did Alpenglow and Equinox make the right decision to stay on the *Envoy*? Why or why not? What would you have done?
5. If *Envoy* did make it back to Earth, what do you think would happen to the ship's Earth-worshipping religion?
6. In John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*, Satan states, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heav'n." Do the leaders of the *Envoy* seem to share that sentiment?

Understanding, J Sherer

Synopsis: When Detective Tack was a child, he saw his father endure the pain of being excommunicated from the Catholic Church he loved--not for something he did, but for what he was--a genetically engineered human. Even worse, it was only after his death that the Church issued an edict proclaiming all humans--engineered or not--welcome. So when a serial killer starts targeting priests and women religious, he's none too happy about being on the case. However, as the case unfolds, and he discovers that all the targets were genetically engineered in the womb, Tack must confront his feelings and come to an understanding that will allow him to solve the case and forgive the Church he loved and hated for so long.

Questions:

1. In "Understanding" by J Sherer the world (including the Catholic Church) has accepted the practice genetic engineering and cloning. Do you feel that the world will accept genetic engineering or cloning in your lifetime? What do you think the implications of that kind of acceptance might be?
2. The genetic engineers in "Understanding" have altered DNA instead of combining animal and human DNA. How does this make the engineered humans different in regards to their souls?
3. J Sherer writes about genetically engineered and cloned members of the clergy. Do you feel that the Catholic Church should ever allow a genetically engineered human or clone to be a part of the clergy?
4. Errius lashes out against the Church as an expression of his own self-hate. What about Tack? How are their struggles similar to those of people today?

Stabat Mater, Rose Dimond

Synopsis: A complex story about the joys and trials of two children, now grown, who were visited by the Blessed Virgin. One, who has died a painful death from cancer, is being considered for sainthood, while the survivor's faith is being rocked in a world turned upside down by war and the personal challenges of the untimely death of her husband and the estrangement of her violent son. Where is the assurance Mary had given her? How can Her promises come true when so much has changed? When the Pope himself comes to her to take her away on a colony ship, she must decide--follow the command of God's earthly representative, or the directions of God's own mother?

Questions:

1. Teresa's and Pia's lives were affected by their mistaken interpretations of their visions. How could they have avoided the pain caused by these mistakes?
2. Do you hold beliefs or interpretations that have damaged or have the potential to damage your life? What is the difference between being a steadfast Christian and clinging to error, as did Teresa and Pia?
3. What are ways to live secure in faith in uncertain circumstances?
4. Although no Pope has spoken *ex cathedra* on the subject of ordaining women as priests, in 1995, Cardinal Ratzinger, with the knowledge and approval of the pope, declared that the Catholic Church's teaching concerning the ordination of women is infallible in its second sense--it belongs to the Catholic Church's infallible deposit of faith. Was Pope Gregory correct in ordaining Teresa as the only priest to a space colony?
5. Teresa's brother was molested by a pedophile priest. She blamed all gay priests for her brother's pain and death, and her feelings spilled into her relationship with Father Hugh. Do you have a resentment similar to Teresa's, where your anger covers a group of people rather than being directed just towards the guilty person? What is the spiritual way to handle such feelings?
6. Before the 1930s, visionaries traditionally entered religious life, such as Sister Lucia of Fatima. None of the children of Beauraing did so, however, nor have present day visionaries. Albert (The future St. Albert for whom Teresa named her son), for instance, became a member of the Resistance in World War II and helped to save the lives of many Jews. His sisters married and raised children. Did Teresa's life reflect her early spiritual experiences? What other ways could someone serve God after mystical encounters?
7. Would you have expected Teresa's and Pia's lives to have been smoother because of their early relationship with the Blessed Mother? Why or why not?

8. While people often claim to desire a mystical experience, what burdens might such an experience bring, as shown in Teresa's and Pia's lives?

9. Do you think a universe where human population is divided according to religious or sexual preferences is feasible? Why or why not? Do you think it's fair to then require all colonists to follow those strict guidelines--such as Fr. Hugh marrying and raising children against his preference to remain chaste?

Canticle of the Wolf, Alan Loewen

Synopsis: In this new take on the old legend of St. Francis, St. Francis goes to confront the Wolf only to discover he is a genetically engineered traveler from a future in which his kind are enslaved. As he unfolds his story, St. Francis sees his calling, and in the end, the tender saint's efforts lead to a future of peace between humans and lupines.

Questions:

1. The wolf that Saint Francis encounters is actually a time traveler. If it would be possible to travel back in time, what are some of the possible problems or contradictions caused by such a possibility?
2. The wolf is also a genetically modified creature. If your favorite pet could talk and reason how would you treat it differently than now?
3. One of his most famous prayers of Saint Francis is "The Canticle of Brother Sun." (See Next Page.) What does this canticle tell us about Francis' view of creation and nature? Did the author effectively communicate Francis' view of nature in Canticle of the Wolf?
4. Why could Francis so readily accept a genetically engineered being, when it is so alien to his experience? Do you think that such an accepting attitude would have been possible? Why or why not?
5. What moral was Alan Loewen trying to express? Do you agree or disagree with it?

The Canticle of Brother Sun

-Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)

*"Laudato si mi signore per sora nostra morte corporale. da la quale nulla homo uiuente po skappare.
guai a quelli ke morrano ne le peccata mortali beati quelli ke trouara ne le tue sanctissime uoluntati ka
la morte secunda nol farra male."*

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
All praise is Yours, all glory, honor and blessings.
To you alone, Most High, do they belong;
no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.

We praise You, Lord, for all Your creatures,
especially for Brother Sun,
who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
of You Most High, he bears your likeness.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars,
in the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.

We praise You, Lord, for Brothers Wind and Air,
fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
by which You cherish all that You have made.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Water,
so useful, humble, precious and pure.

We praise You, Lord, for Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night.
He is beautiful, playful, robust, and strong.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Earth,
who sustains us
with her fruits, colored flowers, and herbs.

We praise You, Lord, for those who pardon,
for love of You bear sickness and trial.
Blessed are those who endure in peace,
by You Most High, they will be crowned.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Death,
from whom no-one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in their sins!
Blessed are those that She finds doing Your Will.
No second death can do them harm.

We praise and bless You, Lord, and give You thanks,
and serve You in all humility.

These Three, Karina and Robert Fabian

Synopsis: A freak accident has sent the space freighter *Poubelle* on a collision course with the L5 station. Tumbling wildly and without a distress beacon to alert the busy facility, it may be too late for the sisters of Our Lady of the Rescue to get a tow on it and pull it to safety. Peter, the sole survivor on *Poubelle* is badly injured, yet must make a long and painful trek across the internal chaos of the ravaged ship to auxiliary control. Fortunately, he is not alone; he has the prayers of Mary Elizabeth, a young nun of the "Rescue Sisters," and the very personal intervention of the Blessed Gillian of L5. Faith, hope, and love--these three pull him through the physical and mental hell to a salvation both corporeal and spiritual.

Questions:

1. We often think of nuns only as teachers or nurses, yet they are involved in many fields of work and sometimes in dangerous areas. Is an order of nuns devoted to the dangerous work of space search and rescue feasible? Why or why not?
2. The authors have received some criticism because the Order's "habit" is t-shirt and loose pants over a skinsuit that's the inner lining of the space suit. Why do the authors insist on this non-traditional garb? Does it still fit the Decree of the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae caritatis*: "The religious habit, as a symbol of consecration, must be simple and modest, at once poor and becoming. In addition, it must be in keeping with the requirements of health, and it must be suited to the times and place and to the needs of the apostolate. The habits, both of men and women, which are not in conformity with these norms, ought to be changed (17)"?
3. Gillian is called "Blessed," meaning she's under consideration for sainthood and has fulfilled some of the requirements. Does Gillian seem like saint material to you? Why or why not? How is Gillian representative of the women in the Order of Our Lady of the Rescue?
4. Gillian quotes the Blessed Theresa of Calcutta when she urges Peter to let God use him without his permission. What does that mean to Peter? What does that mean to you?
5. In the end, Peter takes a job in the waste processing center--not a glamorous job, but one he's willing to take in order to achieve his dream. How has Peter's attitude changed in the course of the story? Why did it change?

Far Traveler, Colleen Drippe'

Synopsis: Special Agent Mark Kendall is sent back in time to witness the crucifixion of Jesus. A lapsed Catholic, he feels he's been made the butt of a sick joke by his Jewish supervisor, yet when he is there, he discovers the truth of Jesus' sacrifice: that He died not to change the world, but to change us.

Questions:

1. Kendall, Silverstein, and Bell each represent a "failed" member of their respective faiths – a Catholic, a Jew, and a Protestant. While Kendall was redeemed, what do you think are the chances for the other two? How would they have to change? Is this likely?
2. Based on Kendall's childhood memories, did he have an "excuse" for falling away from the Faith?
3. Why do you think the "time travel" was presented in such hazy and dream-like terms? And why did Kendall assume that only Our Lord and His Mother would be able to see him? Was it because they were in actuality outside of time? Do you think true time travel may be a philosophical impossibility?
4. At the end, Kendall looked into the face of Our Lady. She was the one he spoke to as he died and he asked that he might be like her Son. What is the theological implication of this scene? Why didn't he seek out Jesus directly? What did Our Lord mean when he gave His Mother into the care of the disciple? To whom was He actually giving her?
5. The author, Colleen Drippe', has said that time travel as most of us consider it, makes her uncomfortable. She does not believe it is possible. Do you agree? What are the theological implications of being able to go back in time?
6. Nonetheless, Mrs. Drippe, asserts that Catholics time travel with every Mass. What does she mean by this? (Hint--think about the Eucharist.)

Cruel and Unusual Punishment, Maya Kaathryn Bohnhoff

Synopsis: Liam Connor, a member of an IRA splinter group, considers himself a freedom fighter and true Catholic, willing to make any sacrifice to further his cause--including blowing up a busload of Protestant schoolchildren. After being convicted, he is given the choice: capital punishment or participation in a highly experimental rehabilitation program. When modern technology makes him confront his sin, Liam finds that the only way to save himself from insanity is to move from justification to true remorse, and finally, this "true Catholic" learns about the nature of Confession.

Questions:

1. There are three conditions for making a good Confession and receiving Absolution: recognition of your sin, true sorrow for your sin, firm conviction to try to avoid sin in the future. Where and how does Liam come to each of these conditions?
2. Which seems a crueler punishment--the death penalty or living with an awareness of the true consequences of one's sins?
3. If you were among the demonstrators in the prison forecourt, which side would you be on? Why?
4. Who did Liam Connor sin against?
5. What central commandment of Christ did Liam violate?
6. Christ states that the consequence of breaking His commandment to love one another is to be cut off from the True Vine as a dead branch. Do you feel that Liam's spiritual and emotional state reflected this?
7. What were some of the consequences in Liam's life of having violated Christ's commandment?
8. What would be worse: to suffer physically or to be cut off from God?

Definitions of Catholic Terms, Dr. Robert Sungenis

*Robert A. Sungenis, Ph.D. is President of Catholic Apologetics International,
<http://www.catholicintl.com/>*

Absolution: An ecclesiastical power whereby an ordained priest absolves a Catholic penitent from venial or mortal sins after the sincere confession of the penitent to the priest. The priest does not forgive sins by his own authority; rather, standing in the place of Christ, he channels the forgiveness of Christ to the penitent (cf. John 20:23; Matthew 16:18-19).

Baptism: One of the seven sacraments of the Church in which, by the application of water in some form to the penitent's body, and the recitation of the baptismal formula (namely, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit") the penitent has Original Sin, inherited from Adam, and all other sins, removed from his soul (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38-39), thereby making him fit to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Catechism: An official document of the Church, usually in book form, that explains all of the doctrines and practices of the Church. The latest official catechism was published by the Vatican in 1994, authorized by Pope John Paul II (cf. Matthew 16:18-19; 18:17-18; 1 Timothy 3:15).

Communion: One of the seven sacraments received during the Catholic Mass in which the communicant receives the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ into their own person by consuming bread and/or wine that has been consecrated, or "transubstantiated," by an ordained priest. The appearance of bread and wine remain, but the substance of each has been changed into the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ, the second person of the Trinity (cf. Matthew 26:26; John 6:54; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34).

Confession: One of the seven sacraments whereby the Catholic penitent confesses his sins to a Catholic priest for the purpose of receiving forgiveness from God through the action of the priest, for the specific sins confessed. Catholics may confess venial (or small) sins to God without the mediation of a priest, but mortal sins (major sins against the law of God) can be confessed only to a priest who must authorize the divine absolution (cf. John 20:23; Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 5:1-11).

Eucharist: Identical to "communion" noted above. The reception of the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ to the Catholic communicant at the Catholic Mass (cf. Luke 22:14-23). "Eucharist" originally comes from the Greek word for "thanksgiving."

Host: The actual wafer of bread that is consecrated or "transubstantiated" into the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ, but which remains in the appearance of a wafer after being consecrated.

Mass: A solemn and official ceremony conducted by an ordained priest by which he and the Catholic people come together to pray and worship God. In the Mass, we join in the sacrifice in which Christ, through the priest, offers himself to God in the unbloody manner of bread and wine. Through this sacrifice, we unite our love with the love of Christ and receive God's love and

graces in return. The highlight of the Mass is the consecration of bread and wine into the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ, which is the sacrifice that is offered to God the Father, and then consumed by the people (cf. Hebrews 9:23-26).

Papal Authority: Refers to the authority vested in the supreme head of the Catholic Church, the pope. The pope has the final say on all matters of faith, morals and discipline. All his decrees are authoritative and demand the assent of the Catholic, but his special decrees, which are “infallible” because they do not contain any possibility of error, bind the Catholic to eternal damnation unless the decree is believed and/or practiced. (cf. Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 15:1-12; John 21:15-17).

Prayer to Saints: Saints are those who, by the official determination of the Church, presently live in heaven with Christ. Because they are holy and have proven their faithfulness, saints possess special favor with God; thus, they can pray to God on behalf of the penitent’s physical or spiritual needs. In order to seek the saint’s prayers, the Catholic penitent “prays” to the saint--in other words, asks the saint to pray to God for the special need (cf. James 5:18-19; Matthew 21:31-32; 1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Purgatory: A place in the afterlife, prior to heaven, of purgation from (removal of) venial sins that have not been confessed, forgiven, or disciplined, while the person was living on earth. Once cleansed of these venial sins, the person may go to heaven (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:15; Matthew 5:26; Apocalypse 21:27). Those who die in mortal sin cannot go to purgatory, but are sent immediately to hell.

Rosary: A set of traditional prayers consisting of the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, and the Hail Holy Queen that are recited by Catholics for any physical or spiritual need. Most Catholics use a chain that contains approximately 50 beads to help them remember what specific prayer should be said at a given time (cf. Matthew 6:8-15; Luke 1:46-55; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). While praying, one also meditates on certain events in the life of Christ, often as witnessed by his mother, Mary.

Sacraments: The means by which the Church dispenses the graces of God for either the forgiveness of sin or the spiritual help needed for a certain state or condition of life on earth. There are seven sacraments (Baptism, Confession, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Extreme Unction, also known as Anointing of the Sick and less accurately as Last Rites). They are administered by a priest or bishop, except in cases of emergency for some sacraments if an ordained cleric is not available (Baptism, Confession, Matrimony).

Saint: In accord with “Prayer to Saints” noted above, a “saint” is someone who has been officially determined by the Church to be in heaven presently. The Church determines its judgment based on the exemplary life the person lived on earth for God and the Church. Christians on earth are also referred to as “saints” in ecclesiastical parlance, although the Church makes no guarantee that each Christian will go to heaven, since “saints” on earth could fall from their salvation (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2; Matthew 22:31-32; Apocalypse 6:9-10; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31).

The above are short and concise explanations of Catholic terms for the purpose of educating non-Catholics to the basic concepts of Catholic doctrine and are not meant to be detailed or exhaustive definitions. For permission to use these definitions elsewhere, please contact Dr. Sungenis at Cairomeo@aol.com.

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