

What does the Glory Be mean by 'world without end'?



Question: In the end there will be heaven and hell. So where will be the “world without end”?

– James Jeson, Milwaukee

Answer: The English rendering of the “Glory Be” from which you quote is a bit misleading. The Latin phrase translated to “world without end” is *et in saecula saeculorum*. This is more literally rendered, “and unto the ages of ages.” Hence the Glory Be speaks of God’s glory as perduring from the past until now, and unto the ages of ages.

That said, Scripture does foresee that the earth will be transformed at the second coming. While some texts hint at an annihilation of the present universe and of its replacement with a new one, others speak of a renewal of all things. For example: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out. ... But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pt 3:10, 13). So this seems to describe an annihilation and replacement. However another text suggests a renewal: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ... [for] the old order has passed away.” The one who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new’” (Rv 21:1-5). Here, while some sense of annihilation seems evident, the Lord describes his action as a renewal, not a replacement.

But either way, the world, the created universe, will be part of the age to come. There will not be just heaven and hell. Somehow the created world will be part of the heavenly reality, but in a transformed state of perfection.

Kissing the altar

Question: Why does the priest kiss the altar at Mass? A non-Catholic friend attending with me thought that looked strange.

– **Anne Smallwood**, Washington, D.C.

Answer: The altar represents Christ, who is our rock in a weary land and who feeds us from the sacred altar. Hence, the priest greets Christ. Most altars also contain relics of the saints, thus he also greets the saints.

In person vs. virtual blessings

Question: On a televised Mass, do those who watch derive the same benefits from the blessing of the priest as those present for the Mass?

– **Deacon Bill Thome**, Allen Park, Michigan

Answer: Not usually. Occasionally there will be a special indulgent granted by the pope or a bishop so that those watching on television can also partake of a special blessing. However, the usual norm of sacramental theology is that physical presence is essential in order to derive the full fruits of such a blessing. All the sacraments somehow touch the body and cannot be received virtually. Blessings are usually considered in this way as well. That said, some benefits do accrue to those who watch. Clearly they can pray with the Church and hear the readings, as well as a homily.

How do the saints hear our prayers?

Question: I thought only Our Lord can know our thoughts. If

so, how can the saints and poor souls in purgatory hear our prayers?

– **Sisto Sandoval**, Lake Havasu, Arizona

Answer: The saints and the poor souls know of our prayers through Christ. The Church is one body with one head, Jesus Christ. And, just as my right hand can “communicate” and work with my left hand, but only through the head, so, too, in the mystical body of the Church can all the members be connected to one another and thereby be in communication. If I stub my toe, the whole body knows about it. But again this involves the central nervous system working in and through the head so that this happens. So, the essential point is this: Christ facilitates the communication needed so that those in the heavenly realms can hear us.

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