

FAITH CHAT

with James & John

What Must We Do To Rise With Christ?

Know This...

When Adam sinned, death entered the world. When Jesus suffered, died, and rose from the dead, He conquered death for ever. If we die in the grace of Christ, we participate in His death and share in His resurrection. St. Paul proclaimed, "If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him." ^{2 Tim 2:11} "To rise with Christ, we must die with Christ." ^{ccc 1005} Our faith and good works determine whether or not we have died with Christ and will rise with Him into His heavenly kingdom.



John: It has been said that there are two realities: death and paying taxes. I say there is one reality: death. I know a 50 year old man that has never paid taxes; but he will die.

James: Those with little or no faith often face death in fear and with despair. While many faithful Christians also fear death, they can welcome it with anticipation and hope in the resurrection.



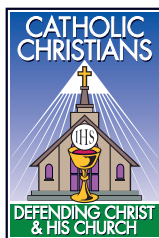
John: When we take our last breath, our earthly pilgrimage ends as our souls separate from our bodies. So the most important thing about death is our readiness to meet the risen Lord.

James: How does the Church encourage us to prepare for our death? Through the grace of Christ, we must detach ourselves from earthly things and focus on the will of God.

John: It is natural to fear the unknown; and death is the greatest unknown. If we die in a state of grace, having lived our lives for Christ, we will rise with Him.

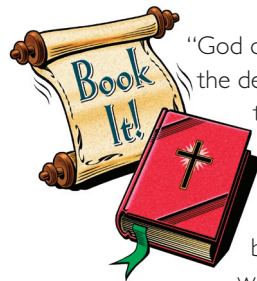
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Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." ^{Jn 5:24} "For this is the will of my Father; that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." ^{Jn 6:40} Jesus said, "Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted." ^{Mt 5:4} "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be." ^{Jn 14:1-3}

"To the good man to die is gain. The foolish fear death as the greatest of evils, the wise desire it as a rest after labors and the end of ills." ^{St. Ambrose} "The Christian meaning of death is revealed in the light of the *Paschal mystery* of the death and resurrection of Christ in whom resides our only hope." ^{ccc 1681} The following beautiful words are spoken by the priest at a funeral Mass. "In Him, who rose from the dead, our hope of resurrection dawned. The sadness of death gives way to the bright promise of immortality. Lord, for your faithful people life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven." ^{Roman Missal, Preface of Christian Death I}



"God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living." ^{Wis 1:13} "One man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men." ^{Rom 5:18} "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." ^{Rom 6:3-4} "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep." ^{1 Thess 4:14} "We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." ^{2 Cor 5:8}

Father of mercy and God of hope, Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection destroyed death and restored eternal life for those who die in His grace. Be my source of strength and lift me from the depths of fear and grief that I experience in this life. I pray that You will give me the grace I need to fulfill Your will for me in this life and to share eternal life with You upon my death. I ask this through Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

