



Heaven sent

When we were children, most of us would have been frightened of death. When we grow up, however, and mature in our faith, it's not the thought of death itself that continues to disturb us – but the way by which we will die.

How – when – where . . . ?

It's frightening, partly because despite the day-to-day challenges that present themselves, when the subject of death is raised, we remember that we're actually rather fond of living (!), and realise that by dying we'll be missing out on great things to come.

Praying for a happy death can be both comforting and healing – indeed a *good thing* to do.

Pray that your death will be timely and gentle, and that when the time eventually comes, you will know that the Lord is there with you.

***we're actually rather
fond of living!***

The scent of heaven

If heaven were to be featured in holiday programmes and in brochures of destinations, I expect each of us would be tuning in and scouring the pages eagerly to see what was on offer.

We'd dive into the various descriptions and swim around the lavish colour illustrations, fervently searching for the website address or 'phone number to call for a booking.

It's understandable that we wouldn't be quite so keen to go out of our way to find out more about hell!

Heaven – means living eternally in God's presence. To do that, we need to be in love with him, but – like all people we love – we often hurt God in our selfishness, greed and pride.

God forgives. That's his slogan – his promise.

But if we don't go to him to ask forgiveness; if we don't realise that we crave to be close to him – if we live a life that is ignorant of the love that awaits us, then what can he do?

He promises forgiveness and love – and heaven. Do we want it?

Excluding God from our lives is up to us. That's free-will. That's also hell.

Ezekiel 37

Thus says Yahweh: I shall establish a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant. I shall settle them and they will increase and I shall put my sanctuary in their midst forever. I shall make my home at their side; **I shall be their God and they will be my people** ⁽¹⁾. Then the nations will know that I am Yahweh who makes Israel holy, having my sanctuary among them forever."

John 8

Jesus, went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak Jesus appeared in the Temple again. All the people came to him, and he sat down and began to teach them. Then the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They made her stand in front of everyone. "Master," they said, "this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now the Law of Moses orders that such women be stoned to death; but you, what do you say?" They said this to test Jesus, in order to have some charge against him. Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. And as they continued to ask him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who has no sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And he bent down again, writing on the ground. As a result of these words, they went away, one by one, starting with the elders, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Then Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one." And Jesus said, "**Neither do I condemn you; go away and don't sin again.**" ⁽²⁾.

getting there

I'm sure that we're all aware that death is an inbuilt part of our lives here on earth.

Thinking of our death is a + exercise, not a – one, as it helps to build us up spiritually.

The question is – **do we think we're keeping our side of the agreement with God?** ⁽¹⁾

If we do – **then does the way we live now affect where we go next?** ⁽²⁾

On Ash Wednesday, we accepted the ashing because it reminds us that we are mortal – as sure as we came into this life, we shall go from it. We were marked with the sign of the cross on our foreheads – to show that we are sorry for doing, saying and thinking wrong things. A proper commitment to God means giving time to him on a regular basis – both in worship and in works of charity. St Michael's provides plenty of opportunity for worship and service – making God's kingdom come *on earth as it is in heaven* . . . **getting there**. Join in – let's get there together.