



WILL NON-CHURCHGOERS WHO ABIDE BY THE REST OF THE COMMANDMENTS AND LIVE GOOD LIVES GO TO HELL? WHEREAS, PEOPLE WHO BROKE MANY COMMANDMENTS ALL THEIR LIVES AND REPENT ON THEIR LAST DAY ARE SAVED?. IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE GOD WILL CAST THESE GOOD ONES TO HELL.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC #1037) affirms the teachings of the Council of Orange II (529 AD) and the Council of Trent (1545-1567 AD) that God predestines no one to go to hell. The Council of Lyons II (1274 AD) declared that “the holy Roman Church firmly believes and confesses that on the Day of Judgment all will appear in their own bodies before Christ’s tribunal to render an account of their own deeds”.

The Catechism (CCC #1057) defines *hell* as the punishment of eternal separation from God, in whom alone we can have the life and happiness which we desire and for which we long. The Catechism (CCC #1058) further states that the Church prays that no one should be lost: (“*Lord, let me never be parted from You*”).

While it is true that no one can save himself, it is also true that God “desires all men to be saved” (1 Timothy 2: 4) and that for God “all things are possible” (Matthew 19: 26). For one to be condemned to hell, a willful, unrepented and unforgiven turning away from God, which the Church calls *mortal sin*, is necessary. A mortal sin is one that involves gravely serious matter, is committed with full knowledge of its seriousness, and which is committed deliberately and willfully. This is why we often hear the saying that God condemns no one to hell, but rather that we condemn ourselves to hell. In the Mass and the daily prayers of the faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, Who does not want “any to perish, but all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3: 9). Although the Church affirms that Christ won Salvation for all by His death and Resurrection, it also recognizes that this gift of salvation must be accepted in order to be effective, and human beings, having free will, may choose to reject or ignore so great a gift of salvation (Hebrews 2: 3).

The Church also accepts Christ’s declarations about Himself that “no one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14: 6) and “whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me” (Luke 10: 16). If Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation, and the Church is his Body on earth, it is easy to see why the Church Fathers often declared “Outside the Church there is no salvation.” However, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965 AD) made the following affirmations about the possibility of salvation outside the Church:

- “Those who know that God founded the Catholic Church through Christ as the necessary means to salvation, yet still refuse to enter it or remain in it, cannot be saved.” (Lumen Gentium 14)
- “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too **may** achieve eternal salvation.” (Lumen Gentium 16, **emphasis added**)
- “Although in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own are ignorant of the Gospel, to that faith without which it is impossible to please him, the Church still has the obligation and the sacred right to evangelize all men.” (Ad Gentes 7)

Finally, we must remember that God is both infinitely just and infinitely merciful, and that his ways are not our ways. With trust in God’s mercy and love, we believe that nothing is impossible for God.