

GOOD AND EVIL



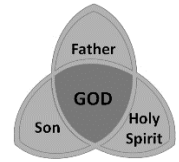
Simplified key term definitions

Conscience	Human reason making moral decisions; the God-given knowledge of what's right and wrong
Evil	The absence of good and the urge to pursue our own selfish desires at the expense of others
Free-will	The ability to choose right from wrong without being controlled by other forces
Goodness	The quality of being like God: seeking the well-being of others selflessly
Incarnation	'Made flesh' – the Christian belief that God became man in the person of Jesus
Natural Law	The moral laws of right and wrong which apply in all times and places and are not dependent on human laws
Privation	The loss or absence of something (evil is a privation of good)
Suffering	Pain or loss which harms humans – moral evil is caused by other humans, while natural evil is not

Sources of authority:

<i>The Enchiridion</i>	A work by St Augustine in which he states evil is a privation of good and that God can bring good out of evil
<i>The Suffering Servant</i>	A passage from Isaiah about a man who will suffer for the sins of others. Christians see it as about Christ – Jews think it's about Israel
<i>The Nicene Creed</i>	A prayer declaring belief in the Trinitarian nature of God and the reality of the incarnation
<i>De Trinitate</i>	A work by St Augustine in which he compares the Trinity to the lover, the beloved and the love between them
<i>John's Prologue</i>	The opening of John's Gospel in which the incarnation is described as the 'Word' becoming flesh and dwelling among us
<i>The Kenosis Hymn</i>	A passage from St Paul's letter to the Philippians in which the incarnation is described as Christ taking the form of a slave rather than clinging to his divinity
<i>Salvifici Doloris</i>	An encyclical by John Paul II which suggests the cross answers the question of the meaning of suffering and that suffering helps produce endurance+character
<i>The Sermon on the Mount</i>	A collection of Jesus' teachings in Matthew's Gospel in which he claims moral authority and describes those who suffer as 'blessed'

2.1 - The Trinity



- The Trinity is the Christian concept of the one God in three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)
- It has been compared to the shamrock by St Patrick, and H₂O by others, yet the Trinity remains a mystery beyond words and images
- References to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together appear in the Bible (e.g. at Jesus' baptism and at the end of 2 Corinthians)
- The Nicene Creed states that while there is only one God, all persons of the Trinity share the same divinity, with the Son and Spirit co-equal ('consubstantial') with the Father
- This Creed describes the Father as the 'maker of heaven and earth', the Son as 'God from God, Light from Light' and the Holy Spirit as 'the giver of life', and all three as 'worshipped and glorified'
- In *De Trinitate*, St Augustine used the idea of the lover, the beloved and the shared love between them to illustrate the Trinity
- In 1 John 4:16, it says 'God is love', and St Augustine figured that since love cannot exist on its own (it also needs a giver and receiver), the God who is love must also exist in three parts
- Jews do not believe that Jesus was God's son, nor in the Trinity
- Jews would say that the idea of the Trinity challenges God's oneness
- God's oneness is made clear in the Torah's Ten Commandments and the *Shema* (Judaism's most important prayer), and the Trinity is seen by Jews as going against monotheistic ideas

Strengths (+) / weaknesses (-) of above ideas (useful for (d) task conclusions)

- + Jesus himself said, "I and my father are one" in John's Gospel, suggesting divine unity among separate persons
- The term 'Trinity' is not Biblical (it was first used by Tertullian in the 2nd century)
- + A strength to the Jewish approach is that it offers a straightforward interpretation of monotheism, while Trinitarian beliefs complicate it
- A weakness to the Jewish approach is that by saying one God cannot exist as three persons places a limit on God's omnipotence (couldn't an all-powerful God exist in three forms if He so chose?)

Possible/past exam questions:

- (b) Describe the teaching of St Augustine/The Creed/Catholicism regarding the Trinity. [5]
- (c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about One God in three persons. [8] **2019 exam question!**
- (d) 'One God can't be three persons.' Discuss. [15] **2021 exam question!**

(c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about One God in three persons. (The first paragraph of this answer would also score full marks for a (b) task that asked you to describe Catholic beliefs about the Trinity.)

Catholicism teaches that three distinct, divine persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) make up the one God. While these persons share the same essence and are all God, they are not the same as each other and form only one God, not three. The Nicene Creed states that the three persons of the Trinity are co-equal ('consubstantial'). St Patrick compared the Trinity to the shamrock (one leaf in three parts), while in *De Trinitate*, St Augustine compared it to the idea of the lover, the beloved and the love between them, but all analogies are inadequate because the Trinity is a mystery beyond words and images.

Jews do not believe in the Trinity. They do not believe that Jesus was God's son nor God on earth. To Jews, the idea of the Trinity challenges God's oneness. Belief in the oneness of God is important to Jews as monotheists. This is because God is declared to be one in the *Shema* (Judaism's most important prayer) and the *Torah's* Ten Commandments.

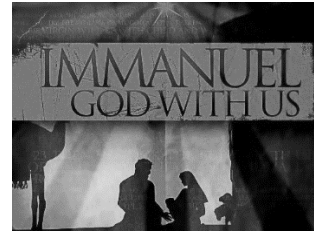
(d) 'One God can't be three persons.' Discuss. (The answer below uses 2xPEE ideas in each of the two main viewpoints – this is a straightforward way of presenting a developed viewpoint that allows examiners to award higher marks.)

Catholics would disagree with this statement. One reason is because belief in the Trinity is made clear in the Nicene Creed. For example, it describes the Son and Holy Spirit as 'consubstantial' (co-equal) with the Father, with all three being 'worshipped and glorified'. Since the Nicene Creed is a prayer that outlines core Christian beliefs, Catholics would say One God can be three persons. Furthermore, Trinitarian ideas have been forwarded by various saints. For example, St Patrick compared the Trinity to the shamrock (one leaf in three parts), while in *De Trinitate*, St Augustine compared it to the idea of the lover, the beloved and the love between them. Since the teachings of saints from one part ('tradition') of teaching authority in the Catholic Church, their teachings on the Trinity would lead Catholics to disagree with the statement.

Jews would agree with the statement. One reason is because they would say Trinitarian ideas go against the Ten Commandments. In Exodus, God says, "I am the LORD your God, you shall have no other gods before me." Jews would say belief that God is three persons goes against this. Moreover, Jews place a lot of importance on the Shema. This is a prayer from Deuteronomy that says, "Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one." This prayer emphasises Judaism's monotheistic belief, which the 'threeness' of the Trinity is seen to go against.

In conclusion, I disagree with the statement. I find the agreeing view weak because to say that the one God can't be three persons seems to challenge God's omnipotence – couldn't an all-powerful deity be three persons if He so chooses? I find the disagreeing view strong because Jesus himself said "I and the Father are one" in John's Gospel, hinting at the divine unity among separate persons that the doctrine of the Trinity suggests.

2.2 - The Incarnation



- The incarnation = God becoming man in Jesus Christ
- The doctrine of the incarnation teaches that the eternal Son 'became incarnate of the Virgin Mary and was made man' (Nicene Creed)
- So Jesus was both God and man - fully human and fully divine
- The idea of Jesus being God in human form is found in the Prologue of John's Gospel
- Referring to Jesus as 'the Word' (which is how God creates in Genesis 1), the passage states: 'In the beginning was the Word...and the Word became flesh' (John 1)
- St Paul's 'kenosis hymn' appears in his letter to the Philippians and suggests the incarnation sets an example of humility
- The hymn says Christ 'emptied himself' of his equality with God by 'taking the form of a slave' (Philippians 2:7 – kenosis means 'emptying')
- As God in human form, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross breaches the gap sin places between God and humanity (see The Fall story)
- This self-giving act of love points to Christ as the 'Suffering Servant' described by Isaiah, and shows humanity the supreme example
- The subsequent resurrection offers one solution to the problem of evil: ultimately, love is stronger than death and can transform suffering
- Jews reject the doctrine of the incarnation because it is seen to go against their monotheistic beliefs (see 2.1 for more detail)
- They would also see Jesus' crucifixion as evidence against his divinity since the Torah (Deuteronomy) states that anyone left to hang from a tree is cursed by God

Strengths (+) / weaknesses (-) of above ideas (useful for (d) task conclusions)

+ Belief in Jesus' divinity is supported by the Bible's accounts of his frequent miracles (e.g. raising Lazarus from the dead)

- But throughout the Gospels, Jesus prays to the Father, and if Jesus is God, why is he praying at all?

+ A strength to the Jewish approach is that it offers a straightforward interpretation of monotheism, while belief in the incarnation complicates it

- A weakness to the Jewish view is that it sees Jesus' crucifixion as evidence of his rejection by God, even though Isaiah's Suffering Servant passage elsewhere in the Tanakh speaks of God favouring one 'despised and rejected by men'

Possible/past exam questions:

(c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about the incarnation. [8] **2018 exam question!**

(d) 'Jesus was no more than a very good man.' Discuss. [15] **2019 exam question!**

(c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about the incarnation. (The first paragraph of this answer would also score full marks for a (b) task that asked you to describe Catholic beliefs about the incarnation.)

Catholics believe in the incarnation (God becoming man in the person of Jesus) as it forms part of the Nicene Creed (a prayer declaring belief in the reality of the incarnation) and is mentioned in the Bible. St Paul teaches about the incarnation in the Kenosis hymn. This is a passage from the letter to the Philippians in which the incarnation is described as Christ taking the form of a slave rather than clinging to his divinity. The idea of the incarnation is also found in John's prologue. This is the opening of John's Gospel in which the incarnation is described as the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us.

Jews reject the idea of the incarnation. They find the idea of a human being God a challenge to their monotheism. This monotheism is central to Jewish belief as one of the Ten Commandments states there is only one God and not to worship false ones, while the Shema is a prayer from Deuteronomy that declares 'the LORD our God, the LORD is one'. Jews might find the idea of Jesus being God on earth especially difficult as the Torah suggests anyone left to die from a tree is cursed by God, and Jesus was crucified on a tree (cross).

(d) 'Jesus was no more than a very good man.' Discuss. (The answer below uses 2xPEE ideas in each of the two main viewpoints – this is a straightforward way of presenting a developed viewpoint that allows examiners to award higher marks.)

Catholics would disagree with this statement. One reason is because of their belief in the incarnation, as made clear in the Nicene Creed. For example, it describes how the eternal Son 'became incarnate of the Virgin Mary and was made man'. Since the Nicene Creed is a prayer that outlines core Christian beliefs, Catholics would say Jesus was divine and not just a very good man. Furthermore, they would say this belief is supported by the Bible. For example, the idea of the incarnation is also found in John's prologue (the opening of John's Gospel in which the incarnation is described as the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us). Since Catholics believe the Bible contains God's revelation to us, they would say this account of the incarnation shows Jesus was more than just a very good man.

Jews would agree with the statement. One reason is because they would say the doctrine of the incarnation goes against their monotheistic beliefs. The Shema (a prayer from Deuteronomy) says, "Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one." This prayer emphasises Judaism's monotheistic belief, which the idea of a God walking around in human form challenges. Moreover, they would say the manner of Jesus' death undermines belief in his divinity. In the Torah it states that anyone left to hang from a tree is cursed by God. Since Jesus was crucified on a 'tree', Jews would say that far from being God, he was more likely rejected by Him.

In conclusion, I disagree with the statement. I find the agreeing view weak because to point to Jesus' crucifixion as evidence of his rejection by God is to ignore what it says in Isaiah's Suffering Servant passage about God favouring one who was 'despised and rejected by men'. I find the disagreeing view strong because there are frequent descriptions in the Bible of Jesus performing miracles (e.g. the raising of Lazarus), and this ability to perform miracles would support belief in the incarnation.

2.3 The Origin of Evil



- Christianity distinguishes between natural evil (suffering caused by nature, e.g. floods) and moral evil (suffering caused by deliberate human action, e.g. murder)
- Catholicism teaches the doctrine of original sin (the sin which is passed on to all humans), which the Catechism defines as 'a deprivation of original holiness and justice'
- Catholicism teaches that this is metaphorically explained in the parable of The Fall (Gen. 3), in which Adam and Eve eat fruit forbidden by God
- Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden symbolically shows how sin separates us from God, who is good
- This leads to a privation (absence) of good, which is how St Augustine defines evil in *The Enchiridion*
- He argued that because we are made *imago Dei*, we know what goodness is - that's how we recognise its absence (evil)
- Augustine also says that God might sometimes use evil for good purposes
- + A strength of this idea is that we see examples of it every day (e.g. the goodness seen through charity in response to natural disasters)
- A weakness is that it could seem unfair or cruel to allow some to suffer so that others can show goodness
- St Pope John Paul II wrote about a 'Gospel of suffering' in *Salvifici Doloris*
- He encouraged Christians to accept suffering patiently, reminding us that Christ accepted the suffering of the cross lovingly
- + A strength of this idea is that Christians are supposed to try to be like Christ
- A weakness is that some suffering exceeds that described in the Gospels, or is inflicted on people (e.g. the very young) unable to relate their experiences to Christ
- Judaism has the story of the Fall, but not the concept of original sin - rabbis have instead referred to *yetzer ha'ra* (a tendency to sin)
- In the Tenakh, Psalm 51:5 says, 'I was born guilty, a sinner from the moment of conception'
- In the *Torah* (the most important part of the Jewish Bible), it teaches that God has given humans freedom, and that evil/suffering results when people abuse it

Possible/past exam questions:

- (b) Describe Catholic beliefs about original sin. [5] **2023 exam question!**
- (c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about the origin of evil. [8] **2020 exam question!**
- (d) 'All evil is created by humans.' Discuss. **2022 exam question!**

(b) Describe Catholic teaching on original sin.

The Catholic Church teaches in the Catechism that original sin is 'a deprivation of original holiness and justice.' The origins of this deprivation are metaphorically explained in the parable of The Fall (Gen. 3), where Adam and Eve's sin of disobedience (eating forbidden fruit to try to know what God knows) is what leads to pain, toil and exile from a suffering-free paradise on earth (Eden). Original sin, then, results in separation from the pure goodness of God, and the absence (privation) of good is how St Augustine defines evil. As such, original sin - at least in part - accounts for the existence of evil and suffering, which was not created by God, since all that God made was good (Gen. 1).

(b) Describe the difference between moral evil and natural evil.

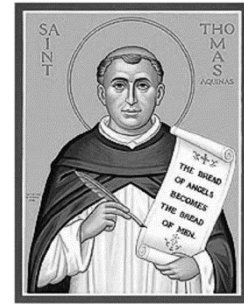
Natural evil refers to the suffering caused by things beyond human control. Examples often given include natural disasters (such as floods and earthquakes). Moral evil refers to the suffering caused by immoral human actions (e.g. murder and stealing, which are forbidden in **the Bible**). Sometimes moral evil can compound the suffering initially caused by natural evil (for example, when people go looting in the aftermath of an earthquake). However, sometimes what appears to be natural evil may have a human cause. For example, flooding is generally thought of as natural evil, but if it results from climate change caused by humans generating too much carbon dioxide, then it could be said to be the result of moral evil (in this case, poor stewardship).

(c) Explain from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about the origin of evil. (The first paragraph of this answer would also score full marks for a (b) task that asked you to describe Catholic beliefs about the origin of evil.)

Catholicism teaches that evil and suffering originate in the decision of humans to commit sin. Catholics believe that this is symbolically shown in the story of The Fall (Gen. 3), with suffering entering the world when Adam and Eve disobey God by eating from the forbidden tree (referred to as original sin, which is defined by the Catechism as 'the deprivation of original holiness and justice'). As a result, they are exiled from Eden, helping Catholics to understand evil as a privation (absence) of good. This idea was developed by Saint Augustine in his work, *The Enchiridion*.

Jews don't believe in original sin, even though Adam and Eve feature in the *Torah*. Instead, rabbis spoke of the *yetzer ha ra* (an evil impulse or will). This impulse is hinted at in the Psalms, which include a verse about being born guilty and being a sinner from the moment of conception. The Jewish scriptures as a whole suggest that God created us with the ability to choose right from wrong, and that evil results from people misusing their free will.

2.4a The Goodness of God and the World



All Christians (including Catholics) believe in the goodness of God and creation because:

- Jesus says God is good (Mark 10:18)
- St Anselm says that God is 'that than which nothing greater can be thought'
- Christians also believe the incarnation shows God's goodness, since he took human form and accepted the cross out of love for humanity (see 2.2)
- God repeatedly describes what he has made as 'good' in the six-day creation account (Gen. 1:1-2:4a - relevant for Jews and Christians)
- St Thomas Aquinas says creation's beauty points to a creator God, who is good / omnibenevolent, and anything God makes must in turn be good (Judaism has a similar idea)
- Creation is loved by God, as affirmed by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*
- God (along with his goodness) is present in creation, as portrayed in Genesis by His breathing life into Adam (relevant for Jews and Christians)
- Jews see evidence of God's goodness in the stories from the Torah where he protects the Israelites
- The best example of this may be from Exodus when he sends Moses to rescue the Israelites from slavery (remembered at Passover)

Despite the goodness of God and creation, life still contains suffering as:

- Humans (and even spirit beings such as Satan) can be a force for evil
- God may have reasons for allowing suffering that we lack the intelligence to understand (the Book of Job theodicy)

Possible exam questions:

- (b) Describe Catholic teaching regarding the goodness of God. [5]
- (b) Describe Catholic teaching regarding the goodness of creation. [5]
- (c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, why God is seen as good. [8]
- (c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, why creation is seen as good. [8]
- (d) 'God is good.' Discuss. (For a disagreeing viewpoint, see 2.4b)

(c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, why creation is seen as good. (The first paragraph of this answer would also score full marks for a (b) task that asked you to describe Catholic beliefs about the goodness of creation.)

Catholicism teaches that creation is good because, as stated in the Catechism, creation was made by God. St Thomas Aquinas suggests that the beauty of nature points to God as its creator, while God's creation of the universe is the very first story in the Bible. Since God himself is 'that than which nothing greater can be imagined' (St Anselm), anything he makes must also be good. Pope Francis states in *Laudato Si'* that 'the fundamental moving force in all created things' is God's love, which further makes creation good.

Judaism also teaches that creation is good. Many Jews believe the world is too wonderful and complex to have happened by chance, so it must have had a creator. Jews believe this creator to be a perfect God, therefore his creation must be good. Also, creation is repeatedly described as good in the Genesis creation story. Since Genesis is part of the Torah, which Orthodox Jews believe to be the faultless word of God, they would take this as evidence that creation is good.

(c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, why God is seen as good. (The first paragraph of this answer would also score full marks for a (b) task that asked you to describe Catholic beliefs about the goodness of creation.)

Catholics believe God is good because this is what the Bible suggests. For example, Jesus describes God as good in Mark's Gospel. Since Catholics follow Jesus, they would believe what he says. Catholics would also see the incarnation (when God became man in the person of Jesus) as evidence of God's goodness. This is because they believe God took on human form and accepted the cross as an act of love for humanity (as it paid the price for our sins).

Jews believe God's goodness is revealed in creation. In the Torah, God's creation is described as 'good' throughout Genesis 1, suggesting its creator must also be good. Jews also see evidence of God's goodness in the way he protects his people from persecution. For example, Exodus records the Passover story of God sending Moses to rescue the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

2.4b+2.5 Challenges to God's Goodness: The Problem of Evil, and Catholic Responses to it



- Some people (such as Epicurus) are atheists because of what's called 'the problem of evil' – the idea that suffering shows God cannot exist as he is supposed to be powerful enough to stop it and caring enough to want to
- JL Mackie developed this into the inconsistent triad - the idea of (i) an omnipotent God and (ii) an omnibenevolent one is incompatible with (iii) the existence of suffering and evil
- this is sometimes called 'the problem of evil' because the existence of evil poses a problem for believing in God
- counter-arguments to this 'problem of evil' are called theodicies
- in *The Enchiridion*, St Augustine suggested that evil doesn't actually exist as a thing
- he suggested that Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden symbolically shows how sin separates us from God, who is good, and that evil is therefore just a 'privation' (absence) of good that allows us to recognise and appreciate goodness
- St Irenaeus and John Hick say suffering allows 'soul-making' - we can mature through it and develop godly characteristics (e.g. compassion)
- but JL Mackie suggests there is more suffering than necessary to appreciate goodness, and it often doesn't have positive effects (it can make people resentful and bitter)
- the free will defence (FWD) argues that bad human choices (e.g. murder) are a cause of suffering (moral evil) and therefore not God's fault. (This theodicy is used by Jews as well as Christians as it finds its basis in the story of The Fall in Genesis)
- in the Old Testament book of Job (significant for both Christians and Jews), it is suggested that God has his reasons for allowing suffering, but humans lack the intelligence to understand them

Some strengths (+) and weaknesses (-) of these arguments:

- + David Hume thought the logic behind the inconsistent triad was so robust he referred to the problem of evil as 'the rock of atheism'
- But its logic does require evil to exist, and St Augustine suggests that it doesn't: just as dark is actually just the absence of light, so evil is just the absence of goodness
- + the FWD seems logically sound: how could God prevent suffering without taking away our freedom to cause it? Isn't it better we live in a world with risk and reward rather than a sterile one?
- Determinists such as Sam Harris would reject the FWD as they believe humans don't have freedom, with all apparent 'decisions' just an unavoidable consequence of biology and environment

Possible/past exam questions:

(d) 'If God was all-loving he would not allow suffering.' Discuss this statement, considering various views. [15] **2023 exam question!**

(d) ‘Suffering proves that there is no God.’ Discuss. (The answer below uses 2xPEE ideas in each of the two main viewpoints – this is a straightforward way of presenting a developed viewpoint that allows examiners to award higher marks.)

Some people, such as atheists, would agree with this statement. This is because (as stated by thinkers such as Epicurus), if God was omnipotent he could stop evil, and if he was omnibenevolent he would want to. Since suffering exists, there cannot be a God, since God is supposed to be omnipotent and omnibenevolent. This argument is called the ‘problem of evil’ (or sometimes ‘the inconsistent triad’). Furthermore, JL Mackie developed this idea, saying there is too much suffering in the world for it to exist in order that we might recognise goodness. For example, an earthquake doesn’t require thousands of people to die to bring out the charitable side of others – seeing people’s homes destroyed would be more than enough for most. Mackie also rejected the idea that suffering is necessary to help people improve. He said suffering often makes people bitter and resentful.

Catholics would disagree with this statement. One reason is because thinkers such as St Irenaeus and John Hick defend the existence of God through the ‘soul-making’ theodicy. This suggests that God allows suffering in order to enable them to mature and develop certain characteristics. For example, seeing someone upset allows others to demonstrate compassion. Moreover, the Bible provides theodicies that respond to the problem of evil. For example, the story of The Fall in Genesis 3 shows how suffering can result from a misuse of free will, while the Book of Job suggests that God may have his reasons for allowing suffering, but humans are not intelligent enough to understand them. Since Catholics believe in Biblical truth, they would say these ideas show how suffering can exist alongside an omnibenevolent God.

In conclusion, I think the statement is wrong. I find the disagreeing view strong because while the problem of evil seems to make logical sense, with the philosopher David Hume even calling it ‘the rock of atheism’, it does not seem logical to expect there to be no suffering in a world where humans have the freedom to cause it. God cannot control how free beings behave, otherwise they are not really free. I find the agreeing view weak because it requires evil to exist as a thing, and as St Augustine argues in the *Enchiridion*, evil is just the privation (absence) of good.

2.6 – Responses to suffering



- Catholicism takes an **ambivalent** approach to suffering (i.e. it sees pros and cons) – we should try to reduce it to show love to our neighbour, but also recognise that suffering can have its positives
- In the New Testament, Jesus' crucifixion shows how love can lead to extreme suffering...
- ...but Jesus teaches this is ultimate goodness: 'Greater love has no one than to lay down their life for their friends' (John 15:13)
- Being a Christian means being prepared to 'carry our cross [suffering]', as this is what Jesus called his disciples to do
- For Christians, the cross is a symbol of God's self-sacrificial love - the incarnate Son undergoing crucifixion to pay the price of humanity's sins (according to the New Testament)
- The cross also shows how, through the Christ who is both human and divine, God shares in our suffering
- Pope John Paul II focuses on the link between human and divine suffering in *Salvifici Doloris*
- The answer to the question of the meaning of suffering 'has been given by God to man in the Cross of Jesus Christ' (*Salvifici Doloris*)
- *Salvifici Doloris* encourages Christians to unite their sufferings with Christ's and to draw courage, strength and hope from the Resurrection
- The document also suggests that suffering can transform people, helping them produce endurance and character
- Catholics read Isaiah's 'Suffering Servant' passage as a prophecy of Jesus, who would be 'pierced for our sins' (Isaiah 53:5)
- The passage describes the servant accepting punishment without bitterness or retaliation, which Catholics see as an example of how to bear suffering patiently
- Jews read Isaiah's 'Suffering Servant' passage as a metaphorical description of Israel - experiencing suffering, but ultimately saving the world
- Jews accept the free will defence, but also see some suffering as sent by God as a test (e.g. Job) or punishment (e.g. Adam+Eve)

Possible/past exam questions:

- (b) Describe the teachings of Pope John Paul II regarding suffering. [5]
- (c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, teachings about suffering. [8]
- (d) 'Suffering is not always evil.' Discuss. **2018 exam question!**

The (d) tasks here draws on ideas from this section and 2.4b+2.5

(c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, teachings about suffering. (The first paragraph of this answer would also score full marks for a (b) task that asked you to describe Catholic teachings about suffering.)

Catholics take an ambivalent approach to suffering – Jesus' command to love our neighbour means we should strive to reduce it (e.g. through charity), but also recognise that it may have positives. For example, suffering can be a way of connecting to Christ. This is because Christ suffered on the cross, so our own sufferings can help us be closer to him. This idea was suggested by Pope John Paul II in *Salvifici Doloris*, in which it's also suggested we can draw courage and hope from Christ's Resurrection. Catholics also see positives in suffering that results from self-sacrifice. For example, Jesus taught, "Greater love has no-one than to lay down their life for their friends."

Jews think some suffering can be used by God as a test. An example of this in the Tanakh is when Job is made to suffer to test his faith. The Torah also has examples of suffering being used as a punishment by God. For example, the flood in Genesis is sent to purify an evil world, while Adam and Eve are punished for disobeying God.

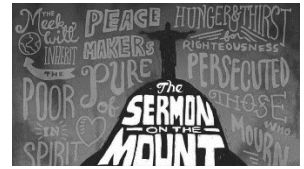
(d) 'Suffering is not always evil.' Discuss. (The answer below uses 2xPEE ideas in each of the two main viewpoints – this is a straightforward way of presenting a developed viewpoint that allows examiners to award higher marks.)

Catholics would agree with this statement. One reason is because Catholics recognise that suffering may have positives. For example, suffering can be a way of connecting to Christ. This is because Christ suffered on the cross, so our own sufferings can help us be closer to him. This idea was suggested by Pope John Paul II in *Salvifici Doloris*, in which it's also suggested we can draw courage and hope from Christ's Resurrection. Furthermore, Catholics also accept the 'soul-making' theodicy of St Irenaeus and John Hick. This suggests that God allows suffering in order to enable people to mature and develop certain characteristics. For example, seeing someone upset allows others to demonstrate compassion.

Atheists might disagree with the statement. One reason is because they might see suffering as unnecessary. JL Mackie suggested there is too much suffering in the world for it to exist in order that we might recognise goodness. For example, an earthquake doesn't require thousands of people to die to bring out the charitable side of others – seeing people's homes destroyed would be more than enough for most. Furthermore, Mackie also rejected the idea that suffering is necessary to help people improve. He said suffering often makes people bitter and resentful rather than empathetic. As such, suffering is always seen as evil.

In conclusion, I agree with the statement. I find the disagreeing view weak because while suffering can make people bitter and resentful, it doesn't always do this – for those times it does bring out good qualities in people the suffering is not evil. I find the agreeing view strong because if Christ's suffering paid the price for human sin, his suffering was an act of goodness. Suffering that results from self-sacrifice for others cannot really be evil.

2.7 – Jesus as a moral authority



- In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew's Gospel), Jesus gives various moral teachings
- This Sermon includes the Beatitudes, where Jesus praises those who suffer (e.g. "Blessed are those persecuted in my name") and promises them reward from God
- He also adds his own amendments to Torah laws (e.g. where the Torah says, 'Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth', Jesus says, "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other cheek")
- Jesus' teachings on divorce and adultery are also stricter than in the Torah
- Although this may seem to show Jesus contradicting Old Testament laws, Jesus makes clear that he is not: "I come not to abolish the law [Torah] but to fulfil it"
- The Sermon also includes Jesus teaching the Lord's Prayer and giving the Golden Rule (treat others as you wish to be treated)
- Teaching on a mountainside hints at Jesus' moral authority since the Old Testament Law (Torah) was given to Moses on a mountain
- For these reasons, and because he is God incarnate and "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John's Gospel), many Christians regard Jesus as THE moral authority
- Some Christians would say that the Church, natural law and the conscience also carry some moral authority (see 3.6 and 2.8 for reasons why)
- Others might say that since the Church was created by Jesus, and since Jesus is part of a Trinity that made the conscience and Natural Law, all moral authority comes from Jesus
- Jews would reject Jesus as a moral authority because they don't see him as God incarnate and regard the *Torah* as God's law instead
- The *Torah* says anyone left to hang from a tree is cursed by God, so Jesus' crucifixion makes it hard for Jews to accept Jesus' moral authority

Possible/past exam questions:

- (b) Describe Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. [5]
- (c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, whether or not Jesus may be considered the source for moral authority. [8]
- (d) 'All Catholics need to do to lead a good life is follow the example of Jesus.' Discuss.
2020 exam question! (This is a very broad statement where the disagreeing view could draw on a wide range of ideas from not just this Good+Evil, but other topics as well)

(c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, whether or not Jesus may be considered the source for moral authority. (The first paragraph of this answer would also score full marks for a (b) task that asked you to describe Catholic teachings about Jesus' moral authority.)

Catholics would regard Jesus as the source for moral authority because they believe he is the incarnation - the 'Word made flesh', as John's Gospel puts it. In Matthew's Gospel he is shown as the fulfilment of the Law, preaching from a mountain just as Moses (whom Jesus overrules on the issue of divorce) had when delivering the original law (the Ten Commandments). Christians see Jesus as God's final revelation to humanity, while in his own words, Jesus is "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6). As followers of Jesus, Christians would see this as evidence of his moral authority.

Nearly all Jews would disagree with this. They do not believe Jesus was our saviour or the incarnation. They believe that scriptures, particularly the *Torah*, carry moral authority as the word of God, and the *Torah* even gives reason to question Jesus' moral authority: Jesus was crucified, and Deuteronomy 21:23 says that anyone left to hang from a tree is cursed by God. As such, Jews would not tend to regard Jesus as the source for moral authority.

(d) 'All Catholics need to do to lead a good life is follow the example of Jesus.' Discuss. (The answer below uses 2xPEE ideas in each of the two main viewpoints – this is a straightforward way of presenting a developed viewpoint that allows examiners to award higher marks.)

Some Catholics would agree with this statement. One reason is because they believe in the incarnation. John's Gospel describes Jesus as the 'Word made flesh', which means he was God in human form. Since Catholics believe Jesus was God, and that God is perfect, following his example should be enough to lead a good life. Furthermore, Catholics believe Jesus was an excellent role model. For example, they believe he gave his life to atone for the sins of humanity, demonstrating self-sacrificial love. By following Jesus' example of being willing to 'take up our cross' and put others first, Catholics believe they are living a good life.

Other Catholics might disagree with this statement. One reason is because they would say you need to follow Jesus' teachings as well as his example to lead a good life. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught the Golden Rule ('treat others as you wish to be treated'). Since treating others how you wish to be treated might be slightly now to when Jesus was on Earth, they might think focusing on Jesus' teachings to lead a good life is more important. Moreover, they might think living a good life today involves more than just following Jesus' example. For example, some Catholics think part of leading a good life is going to Mass, going to Confession and receiving other sacraments. Since these are Catholic rituals that Jesus (as a Jew) did not partake in, they might say leading a good life today requires doing things that Jesus didn't do.

In conclusion, I disagree with the statement. I find the agreeing view weak because while what we know of Jesus from the Gospels shows he was a good example to follow, relatively little of his life is actually described and so we will often find ourselves in situations that Jesus wasn't in, meaning we can't just follow his example to do the right thing. I find the disagreeing view strong because the Golden Rule is one that can be applied in all situations, showing that Jesus' teachings as well as his example are important for helping Catholics to lead a good life.

2.8 – Natural Law, Conscience and the development of the virtues



- Catholicism teaches that humans have free will to choose good or evil
- Conscience is our in-built sense of right and wrong
- The Catechism teaches that it calls us to love and comes to us from God, although we do have a responsibility to keep an informed (educated) conscience
- The conscience has moral authority – both St Thomas Aquinas and the Catechism say people should not be forced to act against their conscience
- Natural law is the idea that nature can teach us moral truths that apply in all times/places
- 'All activity of reason and will springs from us as being what we are by nature.' (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*)
- Aquinas identified five **primary precepts** (areas of moral conduct people naturally strive for) with reproduction, nurturing offspring and preserving life being common to all creatures...
- ...while orderly living and the pursuit of truth regarding God are features unique to humans as rational creatures made *imago Dei*
- The Church says the appropriate response to suffering is virtuous living
- Virtues are moral habits humans need to practise in order to become good people
- St Paul identifies three *theological* virtues: faith, hope and love (1 Corinthians 13)
- St Thomas Aquinas identified four *cardinal* virtues: prudence (the wisdom to figure out the right course of action), justice (fairness), fortitude (the strength and courage to endure hard times) and temperance (self-control)
- Conscience and Natural Law are not given great authority in Judaism
- This is because there is no mention of them in the Tenakh, and because the mitzvot are generally seen as authoritative

Evaluative ideas to consider for a relevant (d) task

- The psychologist Sigmund Freud questioned the authority of the conscience, saying it is just a mixture of voices which have come to us from parents, role models and wider society
- Others say that if the conscience did come from God, why do different people's (informed) consciences reach different conclusions about what is right and wrong?
- Determinists such as Sam Harris don't believe we are free - every action we perform is a result of factors such as our past, environment and biology

Possible/past exam questions:

(b) Describe two features of Natural Law. [5] **2022 exam question!**

(c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about conscience. [8] **2021 exam question!**

(c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about conscience. (The first paragraph of this answer would also score full marks for a (b) task that asked you to describe Catholic beliefs about conscience.)

Catholics believe that conscience is human reason making moral decisions. They also believe that it is the God-given knowledge of what's right and wrong. The Catechism teaches that it calls us to love and comes to us from God, although we do have a responsibility to keep an informed (educated) conscience. Catholics also believe the conscience has moral authority – St Thomas Aquinas says people should not be forced to act against their conscience.

Conscience is not given great authority in Judaism. This is because there is no mention of it in the Tenakh, and because the mitzvot are generally seen as authoritative. Jews believe that these mitzvot (613 rules from the Torah) tell them what's right and wrong, though they do also believe we are affected by our *yetzer ha tov* (urge to do good) and *yetzer ha ra* (urge to do wrong).

(b) Describe two features of Natural Law. [5]

One feature of Natural Law is that it is universal. Catholics believe nature can teach us moral truths, so Natural Law is the moral laws of right and wrong which apply in all times and places and are not dependent on human laws.

A second feature is the five primary precepts identified by St Thomas Aquinas. These are areas of moral conduct he identified which people naturally strive for. He suggested, for example, that all animals sought to reproduce and nurture offspring, while orderly living and the pursuit of spiritual truth are unique to humans.

(b) Describe two of the virtues. [5]

One virtue is prudence. This is identified by St Thomas Aquinas as a cardinal virtue. Prudence means having the wisdom to figure out the right course of action.

A second virtue is faith. This is seen as a theological virtue and was identified along with hope and love by St Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. Faith refers to religious belief – for Catholics, it particularly refers to Christian beliefs such as that God is a Trinity and that Jesus was God in human form (the incarnation).

2.9+10 – Sculptures and statues (including Michelangelo's *Pieta*)



- Images such as crucifixes, the Stations of the Cross and statues of saints are widely seen in Catholic churches and are designed to help people reflect and focus on prayer
 - Pope Gregory the Great ordered images to be made as a way to help people who couldn't read 'see' Bible stories
 - Holy statues are venerated in Catholicism (i.e. shown respect), but not worshipped
 - In *On Holy Images*, St John of Damascus wrote that before Jesus, God had neither body nor face so could not be shown in an image, but through the incarnation 'he has made himself visible', so images like statues are acceptable
 - This idea builds on what St Paul wrote in the Bible's New Testament: 'Christ is the icon of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:15)
 - Michelangelo's *Pieta* sculpture shows Mary holding Christ's dead body following his crucifixion, which hints at God's goodness (dying to pay the price of human sin)
 - The image highlights the link between love and suffering - Christ's suffering out of love for us, and Mary suffers the loss of her loved son (reflecting God's love for us)
 - Mary is shown younger than she really would have been - this could symbolise her purity and innocence...
 - ...or that (spiritually) she is the daughter of her Son, needing him for life and salvation
 - Christ's face is calm and shows no signs of his torture, so the artwork hints at the hope of resurrection after a time of suffering
 - Jews would find the use of statues in Catholic churches odd because the Ten Commandments in the Exodus forbid making graven images and worshipping false idols
 - Synagogues don't contain statues, and many Jews would think that the Catholic practice of kneeling and praying in front of statues is a form of idolatry (worshipping false idols)
- + A strength of this objection is that the rule against making such images is explicit in the Bible, and Catholics should follow Biblical rules as the Bible is the holy book of all Christians
- A weakness to this argument is that the rule is about images *of God for worship* - since Catholics don't worship these images, the rule isn't broken
- Also, God himself commands that statues of angels form part of the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:18)

Possible/past exam questions:

- (b) Describe two ways Michelangelo's *Pieta* shows Catholic beliefs about the meaning of human suffering. **2020 exam question!**
- (c) Explain two different religious viewpoints on the use of statues in worship. **2022 exam Q!**
- (d) 'Having statues in churches is against the Ten Commandments.' Discuss. **2018 exam Q!**

(b) Describe two ways Michelangelo's *Pieta* shows Catholic beliefs about the meaning of human suffering.

'Pieta' means pity and Michelangelo's pieta shows Mary holding the body of the crucified Jesus. One way this artwork shows Catholic beliefs about suffering is by showing the link between suffering and love (an idea hinted at by Jesus in the Bible when he said that greater love has no-one than to lay down their life for a friend). In the statue, Christ has suffered out of love for us, while Mary is suffering the loss of her son. A second way is through the way Christ's face seems calm and shows no sign of the torture he has undergone. This hints at the Catholic belief in the hope of resurrection after a time of suffering.

(d) 'Having statues in churches is against the Ten Commandments.' Discuss. (The answer below uses 2xPEE ideas in each of the two main viewpoints – this is a straightforward way of presenting a developed viewpoint that allows examiners to award higher marks.)

Catholic Christians would disagree with this statement. One reason is because they would say statues help them to focus on prayer. Pope Gregory the Great ordered the making of images to help people 'see' Bible stories, so Catholics can find it easier to reflect on Bible stories by, for example, using the Stations of the Cross to help them visualise what Christ went through on Good Friday. Since statues in Catholic churches can help them concentrate on their worship of God, many Catholics would say this doesn't really go against the Ten Commandments. Furthermore, they might say that the Old Testament rule was for a time when God was more mysterious and hidden. However, St Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians that Jesus is 'the image of the invisible God'. So as St John of Damascus explained, before Jesus, God was hidden and unknowable, and not having images therefore made sense, but since God is revealed through his incarnation in Christ, having religious images (like statues in churches) is acceptable.

Jews would agree with this statement. One reason is because they think the meaning of the Commandments is fairly straightforward. One of the Torah's Ten Commandments, given by God to Moses in the book of Exodus, says not to make 'graven images'. Since statues are graven images, their use in a place of worship would be seen by Jews as breaking the Commandment. Moreover, Jews would see statues in churches as a form of idolatry. The Commandment specifically states not to worship false idols, yet Catholics often kneel and pray before statues. So Jews see statues in churches as breaking this Commandment (which is why synagogues don't have them).

In conclusion, I think the statement is wrong. I think the agreeing argument that having statues is forbidden in the Ten Commandments is weak – the Commandments prohibit the *worship* of such images, but Catholics don't mistake images in churches for God or worship them (they are just venerated). I find the disagreeing view strong because God himself instructs in Exodus that images of angels feature on the Ark of the Covenant. I think this shows that the Biblical rule is about worshipping false idols, rather than having any statues at all in places of worship.

2.11 – Pilgrimage



- Pilgrimages are spiritual/religious journeys, often (for Catholics) to places connected to Jesus (e.g. Jerusalem) or visions of Mary (e.g. Lourdes)
- Pilgrimage is important for Catholics as it can help spiritual renewal and develop closeness to God, cutting out daily distractions and focusing on faith
- Pilgrimages are prayerful, with pilgrims often praying for a particular thing or person
- Many pilgrims seek to be 'healed' from the guilt and suffering of sin, and may go to Confession as part of their pilgrimage (as happens at Lourdes)
- Some pilgrimage sites (such as Lourdes) are associated with miraculous physical healings - signs that God will ultimately take away our suffering
- Lourdes is a place in France where Mary is said to have appeared to St Bernadette and told her to dig for a spring reported to have healing powers (pilgrims bathe in this spring)
- Many sick people travel to Lourdes, creating a community where suffering is normal and helping the sick is commonplace
- Solidarity between the sick and healthy mark an important Christian response to suffering, while St Bernadette's faith despite her own sickness can be a source of inspiration
- In Judaism, pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem was instructed in the Torah for key festivals (e.g. Pesach); some Jews now still visit its ruins and pray for its restoration
- Some Jews think it's important to visit the graves of significant Jews (e.g. Maimonides)

Strengths/weaknesses to the argument that pilgrimage is important/worthwhile

- + It follows in Jesus' footsteps, as the Gospels record him pilgrimaging to Jerusalem
- Lots of people making long journeys to go to pilgrimage sites is bad for the environment, and we have a duty to be stewards (see Origins+Meaning)
- + Around 70 healings at Lourdes have been investigated and found to have no scientific explanation
- But this is a low number, so people going for a cure are likely to be going with false hope

Possible/past exam questions:

(b) Describe two religious practices that might take place during a pilgrimage to Lourdes. [5]
2021 exam question!

(c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, ways of understanding pilgrimage. [8] **2023 exam question!**

(d) 'A pilgrimage is just another type of holiday.' Discuss. **2020 exam question!**

(d) 'Pilgrimage is the most important religious practice for Catholics.' Discuss. **2022 exam question!**

(c) Explain, from either Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, ways of understanding pilgrimage. (The first paragraph of this answer would also score full marks for a (b) task that asked you to describe how Catholics understand pilgrimage.)

One way of understanding pilgrimage for Catholics is as a way of finding healing. Pilgrims will often travel to pilgrimage sites looking to unburden themselves of sin, perhaps going to Confession as part of the process. This can lead to pilgrims feeling as though their guilt has been healed, easing their suffering. Sites such as Lourdes are even associated with miraculous physical healings, seen as a sign that, come the end of the ultimate pilgrimage (life), God will remove suffering in heaven. Catholics also understand pilgrimage as a way of following in Jesus' footsteps. This is because the Gospels describe Jesus making pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

For Jews, pilgrimage was once understood as a way of completing certain mitzvot. This is because the Torah gave instructions for people to go to Jerusalem for festivals in the days of the Temple. Since that has been destroyed, those mitzvot cannot be completed. However, some Jews think that the Shekinah never left the place where the Temple was. As such, pilgrimage to the Temple ruins is seen by some Jews as a way of getting closer to God.

(d) 'A pilgrimage is just another type of holiday.' Discuss. (The answer below uses 2xPEE ideas in each of the two main viewpoints – this is a straightforward way of presenting a developed viewpoint that allows examiners to award higher marks.)

Catholics would disagree with this statement. One reason is because they see pilgrimage as a way of finding healing. Pilgrims will often travel to pilgrimage sites looking to unburden themselves of sin, perhaps going to Confession as part of the process. This can lead to pilgrims feeling as though their guilt has been healed, easing their suffering, and holidays don't have this purpose. Furthermore, another important feature of pilgrimage is solidarity. By making a pilgrimage as a group, Catholics can feel a sense of belonging, which can help to combat the suffering of loneliness or isolation. At Lourdes, this is particularly significant for the sick, since there to be sick is normal. The number of volunteers assisting the sick at Lourdes can also help them to see that they are cared for, and highlights the importance of companionship and care in any Christian response to suffering.

Some people, especially atheists, might agree with this statement. This is because atheists don't believe in God. As such, the idea that pilgrimage might bring people closer to God or help to gain his forgiveness is rejected. This means a pilgrimage could ultimately be viewed as just a holiday. Moreover, even some religious people might agree because pilgrimage sites tend to be visited by people from far away. For example, Lourdes is in the south of France, but many of its pilgrims travel from Britain, Ireland or even further. These journeys are often made in large groups having a good time, and a journey as a group to a far off place for a good time is essentially a holiday.

In conclusion, I disagree with the statement. I find the agreeing view weak because while atheists might say that any spiritual feelings experienced on a pilgrimage are based on false beliefs, this doesn't mean the purpose of the journey is to just have a holiday. If someone travels to have a spiritually uplifting experience, this is different to going on a journey to go sightseeing, get a suntan or other things people go on holiday for. I find the disagreeing view strong because many people going on pilgrimage go to support others who need assistance (e.g. going with sick people to Lourdes). This shows that they are not just going to relax and unwind, which is what people tend to think of as the purpose of a holiday.

2.12 - The Rosary



- The Rosary is a prayer in which Catholics contemplate scenes from the life of Christ and Mary
- These scenes are divided into four sets of five mysteries (Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, Glorious)
- They follow the Bible's accounts of Christ's incarnation through to his adult life, his suffering, his resurrection and ascension
- While reflecting on each scene, Catholics say one Our Father, ten Hail Marys and one Glory Be (this is called a decade of the Rosary)
- Rosary beads are used while saying these to help keep count of the prayers said
- The five Sorrowful mysteries help Catholics to reflect on how God embraced the world and its suffering through his: (i) 'Agony in the Garden' (where Jesus went to Gethsemane before his arrest and prayed for the strength to get through his ordeal); (ii) 'Scourging at the Pillar' (where Pilate had Jesus whipped)...
- ... (iii) 'Crowning with Thorns' (where soldiers mocked the claim that Jesus was King of the Jews); (iv) 'Carrying of the Cross' (where Jesus had to carry his cross through Jerusalem and to a hill called Golgotha); and (v) Crucifixion (where Jesus was nailed to a cross and executed)
- The Sorrowful Mysteries do not explain why God allows suffering, but they do help understand the incarnation, showing God (as Jesus) sharing in our suffering on Good Friday
- The Rosary is important as some Catholics find that saying it quietly and prayerfully can help bring peace of mind and because it helps them to remember important Biblical events
- The importance of the Rosary is shown by October being dedicated to the Rosary and by many Catholics giving Rosary beads as gifts for religious occasions (e.g. First Communion)

Evaluative points that could be relevant for some Rosary (d) tasks

- Non-Catholics might say the Rosary is too focused on Mary as you say 10 Hail Marys for every 1 Our Father (the final two Glorious mysteries also focus on Mary)
- The Rosary didn't exist until the 13th century, so Catholicism didn't have it for 1200 years

Possible/past exam questions:

- (b) Describe two of the Sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary. [5] **2019 exam question!**
- (b) Describe how Catholics pray the Rosary. [5]
- (d) 'Praying the Rosary is the most important religious practice for Catholics.' **2023 exam question!**
- (d) 'Praying the Rosary is the best way to understand the incarnation.' Discuss.

NOTE THAT YOU WOULD NOT GET A (c) TASK ABOUT THE ROSARY

(b) Describe two of the Sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary.

One Sorrowful mystery (which are scenes based on the accounts from the Bible of Jesus' suffering on Good Friday) is the crowning with thorns. This was when Roman soldiers twisted thorn into a crown and placed it on Jesus' head to mock the claim he was 'King of the Jews'.

Another Sorrowful mystery is the crucifixion. This was when Jesus was nailed to a cross and died. Catholics believe Jesus accepted death to pay the price for humanity's sins, demonstrating God's love for us.

(d) 'Praying the Rosary is the most important religious practice for Catholics.' Discuss. (The answer below uses 2xPEE ideas in each of the two main viewpoints – this is a straightforward way of presenting a developed viewpoint that allows examiners to award higher marks.)

Some Catholics would agree with this statement. One reason is because aspects of Catholic culture show how important it is. For example, Rosary beads are a common gift for religious occasions (such as First Communion), while a whole month in the Catholic calendar (October) is dedicated to the Rosary. Since the Rosary is such an iconic aspect of Catholic worship, some Catholics would say it is the most important. Moreover, the Rosary really helps Catholics to reflect on the life of Christ. When praying the Rosary, Catholics focus on 'mysteries', which are mostly Biblical scenes from the life of Christ, from his birth to his death and resurrection. Since Christ is the founder of Christianity, a religious practice that focuses on his life can be seen as the most important one for Catholics.

Other Catholics would disagree with this statement because they think pilgrimage is more important. One reason for this is because they see pilgrimage as a way of finding healing. Pilgrims will often travel to pilgrimage sites looking to unburden themselves of sin, perhaps going to Confession as part of the process. This can lead to pilgrims feeling as though their guilt has been healed, easing their suffering and helping them feel closer to God. Furthermore, another important feature of pilgrimage is solidarity. By making a pilgrimage as a group, Catholics can feel a sense of belonging, which can help to combat the suffering of loneliness or isolation. At Lourdes, this is particularly significant for the sick, since there to be sick is normal. The number of volunteers assisting the sick at Lourdes can also help them to see that they are cared for, making pilgrimage an opportunity to follow Jesus' command to love thy neighbour (a very important part of religious practice for Catholics).

In conclusion, I disagree with the statement. I find the agreeing view weak because the Rosary didn't exist until the 13th century, and a practice that didn't start until the Catholic Church had already been around for 1200 years can hardly be considered the most important religious practice for Catholics. I find the disagreeing view strong because at least pilgrimage is something Jesus himself did (unlike saying the Rosary) when visiting the Temple in Jerusalem (as described in the Gospels), so by doing pilgrimage Catholics are following in the footsteps of the second person of the Trinity.

NOTE: while the disagreeing view here focuses on a practice covered from this topic, it would be perfectly acceptable to focus the paragraph on an important religious practice from another topic, such as receiving the Eucharist, going to Mass, singing hymns etc.

SUGGESTED VIDEOS FOR REVISION

Search the following on YouTube and click on the first result each search brings

Problem of Evil An Introduction Mr McMillan
(there are 4 parts – use them all)

GCSE RE (Eduqas) - Catholic responses towards evil and suffering 5min recap

GCSE RE Catholic Christianity - Doctrine of the Incarnation

GCSE RE Catholic Christianity - Incarnation in the Gospels

GCSE RE Catholic Christianity - Trinity in Church Teaching

GCSE RE Catholic Christianity - Trinity in the Bible

GCSE RE (Eduqas) - God's goodness 5min recap

3MC - Episode 24 - What is Evil?

3MC - Episode 25 - What is Original Sin?

Mr Macmillan Revise Conscience

Mr Macmillan Revise Natural Law

GCSE RE Catholic Christianity - Art and the Incarnation

Michelangelo's Pietà - An Analysis

GCSE RS Unit 10.4 (Part 3 of 5) Jesus and The Law of Moses

2 5 Pilgrimage

GCSE RE (Eduqas) - Rosary 5min recap