

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Fundamental Belief in Eternal Existence**    Twenty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time  
Friday, September 16, 2016    8:15 AM    **1 Cor 15:12-20;**    Lk 8:1-3    Sts. Cornelius,  
pope and Cyprian, bishop, martyrs    (What Christianity believes is that there is something even  
about our physical nature that is basic to who we are and will be transformed again in a way we  
don't understand, in an eternal way of life.)

**“For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not  
been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins.”**

Apparently in the early Church in the city of Corinth there were those who disputed the  
reality of eternal life. Now what made Christianity unique was the belief not only in eternal life,  
which many religions and belief systems believed in, but that eternal life was somehow  
embodied, that **somehow everything that made us up as a person, including our bodies, was  
renewed and revitalized in some mysterious way**—no one ever understood how, we still  
don't—in some sort of **very substantial and eternal existence**. And St. Paul says **that's the  
whole foundation of Christian faith**; without it we don't have anything but emptiness, vain.  
“Your faith is vain.” He means empty; there's nothing there.

Now as I have studied religions in general, one thing you could say is true of all religions **is**  
that all religions believe that **beyond the world of appearances**, what we see, taste, touch, and  
feel, **there is something else. All religions believe that. But what Christianity believes is that  
there is something even about our physical nature that is basic to who we are and will be  
transformed again in a way we don't understand, in an eternal way of life**, and that that  
eternity is a gift to those who believe, belief itself not being necessary to define. Believe in what?  
Somehow believe in the good news.

Now today we are confronted with a phenomenon that is called **secularism**, and there are  
two forms of it. The one is that when you die you are dead. Even some people in my own family  
believe that: **When you die you are dead; there is nothing more**. The world just happened, and

it will just stop happening for you when you die. There is no purpose. There is no meaning. The only things we know we know from science and science does not give us purpose or meaning. That is actually a prevalent form of secularism, especially among the educated. Then there is **another view that, oh yes, there is some sort of eternal life, and it's all the good things we like on earth**, like golf or boating, and so on. Well, that's very debatable and it's a debate we probably shouldn't even have.

The point of the gospel is that God is eliciting helpers in this work of redeeming all of his beloved, and that **no matter how bad anyone is God is trying to redeem them, and if they cooperate, they will be redeemed**. What we do on this earth is not irrelevant; it's very relevant. **What we do on this earth has something to do with who we become, what people we become and, therefore, who we shall be in eternity**. Jesus uses an expression often you ought to think about: "The last shall be first, and the first shall be last." What that refers to is that some people might well be included in eternal life but in a sort of diminished way because in this earth they were too much trying to be the first. **So everything we do and the choice we make and the values we hold are all important**. It all feeds into who we are. And Paul wants the Corinthians to realize that by wrong thinking they can do themselves a great deal of damage.