

SALVATION!



Limpas Crucifix Holy Name Retreat Center Houston

WHAT NOW?

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Salvation!

It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus was born, lived, suffered and died on the cross to save us *from death for eternity* with God. Jesus' name means: *God saves*. God's will is for all to be saved. God created us to live forever.

We cannot earn salvation (eternal life with God in Heaven) anymore than we could earn being born. We don't deserve this gift of inestimable value and we can never merit it. But, the Good News is, no matter your past or where you are right now, you can receive this abundant life. Simply and sincerely, come as you are. God loves you just as you are, but too much to leave you that way. God will work with you and in you to bring about on-going conversion.

Salvation comes by the free gift of God (grace) through our simple faith in God and his goodness. God created you, cares for you and loves you.

Most of you have already been baptized and have gone to Church. You are probably a member of a Church somewhere whether or not you are attending. However, it could be you have no Church affiliation and you hunger for something more, something spiritual. Jesus says to all, "Come to me, all you who are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest." Jesus is calling you.

Being baptized and going to Church is part of the picture. Most had baptism done for you when you were too young to decide. Even if you did decide your baptism may not have been the right moment in your life. In addition to the ritual, you must make an inner decision to surrender your life to the Lord.

This personal choice isn't a one time prayer, but must become a lifestyle of obedience, worship and service. You aren't saved solely because you have been baptized. You aren't saved by going to Church. You aren't saved by simply praying a prayer. You are saved when you give

yourself to God and *live your decision*. Christianity is a lifestyle. God will fill you with the Holy Spirit who is the foretaste of Heaven to come. The Spirit will bear witness within you that you are reborn and a child of God. This joy is something no amount of money can buy.

It is my deepest desire that you are ready to make a dedication of yourself to God right now. Just as you are, simply pray:

Prayer of Surrender to Jesus Christ

Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God.
 I believe your suffering and death on the cross was for me.
 I am saved by your sacrifice.
 I give my life to you now.
 I surrender my body, thoughts, emotions and my will to you.
 Take me Lord, just as I am.
 Make me what you want me to be.
 I believe I'm on the way to Heaven!
 Thank you Jesus for your love.
 Jesus, I trust in you. Amen!

Abandoning your life to Jesus Christ is the most significant act you can do in your life. Faith in Jesus and what he has done for you on the cross is what saves you. Jesus suffered greatly so that your sins would be forgiven and you could be right before God. Through Jesus we will live forever!

You have believed Jesus is the Son of God. He is Risen from the dead. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Jesus is our salvation. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus. You have surrendered your life to Jesus. Christianity is not complicated but very simple. However, faith is more than just an assent to the truth. Your faith is very costly. Faith means you believe and you are willing to live your life according to God's will. You must make Jesus the Lord of your life.

What now?

Now that you have received Jesus Christ as your savior, what must you do? What does it mean to follow Christ?

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. Believers must abide in him, live in him and allow him to be the center of our life. Living in Jesus is the heart of discipleship. Discipleship is a lifestyle of faithful living.

First of all, make time for God every day. God is Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit. Develop a relationship with each person of the Trinity through prayer. Praying to God is instinctual. Similar to breathing we all have the ability to pray and pray well. Buy and read books on prayer. You may want to purchase my book: *The Sacred Quest*. I have a free booklet on prayer to help you also: *The Gift of Prayer*. I have many other free booklets that will help you in your walk with God. Go to www.francedric.org to download (free stuff) Start your day connecting with God. Invite God into your daily walk. Acknowledge God in all of your ways. Pause throughout your day and invite God into your situation. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and make himself real to you. A good prayer I like to pray is: "Lord, lead me, guide me, control me." Prayer is more about thanksgiving, praise and worship than anything else. We pray to communicate with God and develop our personal relationship with him. You connect with God when you consent to his presence and live with gratitude.

Besides working at your prayer life, you must spend some time reading. Start with the Bible. I know the Bible is hard to understand. It was written by many different people over hundreds of years a long time ago. It's message, emerging from a distant historical context can be hard to grasp and apply. My ministry is dedicated to helping you read and understand the Bible. I have a

great picture Bible I'd like to send you free of charge. Email me at: frcedric@frcedric.org if you would like one. I have read this Bible and it makes the stories come alive. It is easy to understand. Or simply read the Bible of your choice. Catholics read the New American Bible revised edition. The NIV and NRSV are very good. There are many other valid translations. Become a Biblical Christian. The Word of God is like a seed that grows and develops inexplicably. Through reading the Scriptures, you progress in a spirituality that is solid and unshakable.

Read good Christian books. I presently have authored 25 books to help people grow in their relationship with God, mature in virtue and realize their destiny. Who you are is God's gift to you. Who you become is your gift to God. A disciple is a "learner." The truly educated person never stops going to school. Life is about learning, growing and advancing forward. Books expand our world and thinking and bring us deeper knowledge and understanding. I like this saying, "A mind stretched by a good book will never return to its original size." Part of your surrender is giving time to God to grow in wisdom and knowledge. Faith comes by hearing and one way you hear is by reading.

Another way of hearing is by watching *wise, truth-filled Christian TV programs and listening on radio*. In our day and age, God has raised up many great inspirational preachers. God will lead you to the right ones. As you listen to their teachings, the Word of God will grow in you and you will be formed in Christian living. The Scriptures tell us to "remember our leaders." I thank God for the many men and women who have taught me the living Gospel of Jesus Christ. You may want to purchase the DVDs and CDs of preachers who touch your life. Listening to Spirit-filled Christian music with its praise, message and melodies helps you to live a life of praise to God also. Watch my TV programs on demand at: <https://www.youtube.com/frcedric>

It is important that you join a Church community or if you are already a member, become an active participant. The Catholic Church has a process called the O.C.I.A. program. (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) This is a formation process for those joining the Church and wanting to be baptized. If you are already baptized and have fallen away, you may want deeper formation. I invite you to go to your local parish and ask to join this process. Other denominations may have something similar. Talk to your pastor and find out what you have to do to become a full member of your denomination. I am hoping you will develop friendships with people of character that will last. They will become models of behavior for you and help you with their counsel. Don't live on the fringes; participate!

My ministry is very ecumenical. That means that I am open to all Christian denominations. While I believe Catholicism has the fullness of truth, other denominations are beneficial also. We all learn from each other. Catholicism is the original church and has a great history and tradition filled with much wisdom. We can learn from those who came before us. I trust the rich 2000 year history of the Catholic Church to form my conscience and help me in my stance and decisions.

Go to the Church of your choice. If the Church you choose doesn't "feed" you, then find another that does. If their doctrine isn't orthodox or wise, keep searching. If the people are anonymous and distant, find a church where people love each other. Don't go out of obligation, but go to be fed, find community and give praise to God. Thanksgiving to and worship of God are a major part of prayer and of utmost importance. Keeping Holy the Sabbath is a divine mandate and part and parcel of your surrender to God.

The Church needs you! When you are absent, we are missing your unique presence talents and gifts.

Get involved and make a difference. Ask not what the Church can do for you as much as what you can do for the Church. Remember you are a steward of your talents and resources. Share your gifts as well as your money to the Church community and ministries who feed you. As you give you will discover what Jesus taught is true: It is more blessed to give than to receive. Remember it isn't just "me and Jesus." Christianity is me and Jesus and "Us and Jesus." The Bible makes it clear we are members of a wider body of believers. The mission of the early church originated from a community.

As a shy person I never wanted to get involved. It is easier to stay at home and isolate. I don't like being judged or criticized. However, as soon as I gave my life to Christ, I immediately knew God wanted me to participate in some church. I explored many denominations. Just because I was born and brought up Catholic didn't mean I should stay there.

In my search, I found all denominations were lacking in some way. Finally I heard this saying that was life-changing for me, "Better to light one candle than to curse the darkness." I realized I was critiquing Catholicism, the preaching, music and anonymity. Other denominations I explored had their deficiencies too and I became disheartened. After hearing that saying, I realized God wanted me to be a light in a dark place. I'm so glad I was obedient and made the move to get involved. Otherwise I would have missed my destiny.

God has a plan for you and walking in his design for your life will bring you great joy. Don't miss your destiny! God has a potential for you to realize. There is nothing that makes a person so happy as to be used by God to help another. Have a cause. You can't do everything, but you can do something! As a disciple of Jesus, you are his ambassador of his love. God will make you a witness to

others. The world needs to hear the truth through your unique personality. Be daring and bold and God will make a difference in the lives of others. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.

Obedience: Faith without works is dead. As I wrote, faith is more than a confident assent. True belief is backing up your assent by the way you live. Being obedient to God's will (avoiding sin) and living a virtuous life is extremely important. In Jesus' first sermon he told us to repent. What he meant was we need to turn away from any known sin and turn more fully to God. This significant truth runs all throughout the Bible. Turn away from sin. Once I examined my conscience, identified my areas of transgression and turned away from them, my conversion deepened exponentially. I realized repentance was the flip side of the two-sided coin that is faith.

Become Christ-like: When Jesus called you, he said, "Follow me." When you follow someone, you watch them and learn from them. Then you try to do what they do. Jesus said, "Learn from me." God wants us to develop Jesus' sacred heart of mercy, kindness, gentleness and love. This is our life's purpose. Don't miss the elephant in the room. Christianity is not so much a religion of ritual, rules and regulations as it is a religion of relationships and love. You must seek the highest gift of all and that is love. Love is patient and kind. Love is also generous, compassionate, forgiving and affectionate towards others. How you treat people is of utmost importance. Paul the apostle wrote: What really matters is faith made active in love.

Holy Spirit: The great gift of abundance that Jesus gives is the gift of God himself, the Holy Spirit. Above all, get to know the Holy Spirit who already lives in you. Jesus suffered and died for you to receive and know this lavish comforting reality. In the Holy Spirit, you will receive

God's love and be taught from within. The Spirit will lead you, guide you and help you. Instead of living on your own, yield yourself to the will and desires of God's Spirit. The true children of God are they who are in communion with and led by the Holy Spirit. The word Christ means "anointed one." A Christian is a person "anointed" by the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught, "If you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Ask and you will receive. Knock and the door will be opened. Seek and you will find.

Our life now has ultimate significance. The several years we are given on earth determines where we will live in eternity. The opportunity of a lifetime must be seized during the lifetime of the opportunity. Make sure you seize the opportunity given to you now, while there is time. Today, now, is the acceptable time. However, today is slipping away like sand through an hourglass. Live urgently, purposefully and *Passionately*.

You are loved affectionately and unconditionally by God. God so loved you that he sent and gave his only beloved Son, Jesus, so that you could be saved. Since you have received Jesus in faith, concentrate on abiding in him daily and live with trust. He will walk with you and never abandon you. Through thick and thin, one of my favorite prayers is: "Jesus, I trust in you." Your on-going surrender to Jesus Christ will bring you abundant life now. Your firm obedience will bring an intimacy and communion with God that is at the heart of the Gospel. God loves you and wants you to live forever with him in Heaven! May God who began this good work in you bring it to completion. Amen!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fr. Cedric Pisegna, C.P. is a Passionist priest who professed vows in September 1985. He was born in Springfield, Massachusetts and graduated from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with B.S. in social work and a minor in Business. In addition, he has studied Philosophy at Southern Illinois University and has studied Speech and Drama at Northwestern University in Chicago. Fr. Cedric graduated from the Catholic Theological Union at Chicago in May 1990, receiving his Master of Divinity degree with Bible Specialization. He was ordained a priest on June 29, 1991.

Presently, Fr. Cedric preaches retreats and missions throughout the United States and Canada, ministering out of the Passionist retreat complex in Houston, Texas. He has preached over 500 missions for 37 years. Fr. Cedric produces a program for TV and Radio, *Live with Passion!*, which presently airs nationally and internationally on the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), EWTN, and other networks. He has numerous CDs and DVDs on Christian living and has authored 25 books.

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