

# Inquiry Session: Heaven

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA

## Reflect on Your Experience

There are times when everything seems to just come together; when all is right. If you have ever walked along the seashore, your toes sinking into warm sand as the sun sets into the ocean, displaying a variety of colors, you know what it is to feel contentment and gratitude for being part of something much larger than yourself.

### *For Reflection . . .*

Recall a time when everything seemed just “heavenly.” When was that? What were the elements that made that time so special, so uplifting?

## Hear the Good News About Heaven

This world is not all there is to existence. There is a “place,” a state of being, beyond this life. Heaven beckons to us.

Our ultimate goal is living in total, intimate communion with God, which is another way of saying “Heaven.” We get glimpses of that blessed state of being, even now in this world. Jesus himself preached about the Kingdom of Heaven. He inaugurated that kingdom in this world. While it is not fully present here and now, it is partially manifested in the graced actions of believers. The sacraments of the Church are windows into Heaven, bringing us into communion with God’s holy presence. The Church herself is much like a ladder, assisting our ascent into Heaven.

The glory of Heaven that awaits us affords us hope in this world amid temptation and dreariness. Heaven holds out to us a worthy goal, an eternal epilogue in whose beautiful pages we eagerly seek to dwell.

## Read the Word of God

**Titus 3:4-7**

(Heirs in hope of eternal life)

**Matthew 25:1-23**

(Entering into the joy of the master)

**Revelation 21:1-5a**

(The new heaven and the new earth)

## Respond Through Action

We are wayfarers and pilgrims on this earth. We constantly strive for the life of Heaven, where we will join with all the saints and angels in praising God forever.

### *For Reflection . . .*

When was the last time you were separated from someone you loved? What did you do when you were reunited? How do you think that might compare to what Heaven will be like, when we are united with God and see him face to face?

## Witness to the Gospel

SAINT STEPHEN

A young Jewish man who converted to Christianity, Stephen preached about the Lord Jesus. In doing so he angered those who would not accept the truth of the Christian message. He was brought before the ruling council, the Sanhedrin, and testified regarding Christianity by reviewing Salvation History (see Acts 7). He concluded his testimony by saying, “Look, . . . I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” (Acts 7:56). Stephen was then taken out of the city and stoned to death. Saint Stephen is the first Christian martyr. His feast day is celebrated on December 26.