

Which form of popular piety is the most important for Catholics when reflecting on suffering?

Rosary:

Formulaic prayer

Catholics recite the: Glory be, Our Father & Hail Mary

Sorrowful mysteries are reflected on whilst Catholics pass through the decades

The 1st mystery reflects on 'agony in the garden' prior to Jesus' crucifixion and eventual resurrection which lead to the net good of salvation, drawing parallels with the book of Job which teaches Catholics to focus on how to keep faith despite the reality of suffering

Michelangelo's Pieta:

Helps griever's identify with the suffering of Mary after the loss of Jesus for her holding Jesus' body echoes Mary as the mother of God

The net good of the atonement is reflected in the content expression of Mary, at peace for the crucifixion granted man salvation

The white cloth wrapped around Jesus' body reminds us of the sacredness of Jesus and that through his divinity we can live in 'glorious splendour' with God thanks to the atonement

Lourdes:

A place of spiritual renewal in which we see God's miracles which heal the sick in action

Lourdes commemorates St Bernadette's sighting of Mary who ultimately, by accepting Gabriel's proposal of birthing Jesus paved the way for the atonement and salvation of man

Mary is an expression of complete devotion to God, although she endured suffering by witnessing the death of Jesus in following him up to the foot of the cross, she remained loyal to her faith, which is what McCord Adam and St Augustine's theodicies teach us to do despite the inevitability of suffering

'Pilgrimages are not important'

Catholics: disagree

Pilgrimages offer spiritual renewal, promote community cohesion & can even cure physical ailments through miracles

'Pilgrimages evoke our earthly journey to heaven' & we are 'God's pilgrim people'

Lourdes commemorates St Bernadette's sighting of Mary and allows us to 'live our scripture'

Jews: agree

Perceive pilgrimages, notably Lourdes to be too commercial

They break the greatest commandment of 'do not worship any other Gods before me', facilitating idolatry which is condemned in the Shema and Deuteronomy for the 'Lord is one'

My opinion:

I agree, the prospect of miracles healing mental & physical ailments preys on those already vulnerable

Arguably, worshipping God daily shows a stronger level of devotion as not everyone can afford a plane ticket to Lourdes

'The existence of evil means God does not exist'

Catholics: disagree

St Augustine's Enchiridion outlines:

Evil is a privation of good

We need evil to appreciate the good

Evil helps strengthen one's character through Hick's soul making

The book of Job emphasises the transcendence of God resulting in man being unable to fathom God's justifications for evil

Protestant McCord Adams argues:

The focus should be on loving God and keeping faith despite the existence of evil through her parable of the heart surgery

Atheists: agree

Hume's inconstant triad expresses the incompatibility of God being benevolent and omnipotent, yet allowing for the existence of evil

Mackie responds to St Augustine by arguing:

We don't need a contrast to appreciate the good

There is too much evil

Evil makes people bitter & resentful

My opinion:

Humans are limited by their own understanding of suffering so in line with the Book of Job, Catholics should aim to keep their faith (further emphasised by McCord Adams) despite the existence of evil

Mortal sin e.g. terrorism leaves victims' families bereaved, some comfort is found in the fact that 'the poor in spirit will inherit the kingdom of God' in heaven at the hands of a God

'God is the origin of the universe'

Catholics: agree

Although they contextualise Genesis, they still place God at the centre of creation as 'in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'

Genesis 2 outlines the role God gave man for Adam claimed dominion over animals by naming them, so we are appointed stewards of God's creation

God also created out of love, for he 'planted a garden east of Eden' and 'breathed life into Adam' before creating Eve from his rib for companionship

Human life is sacred for it was made 'imago dei'

Catholics view Genesis as an allegory which outlines the relationship between God and humanity but still see him as the source of all life

Atheists: disagree

God isn't the source of life, the Big Bang created the universe

The Big Bang entailed the universe expanding outwards from a 'point of singularity', it was coined by Lemaitre & expanded on by Hawking, evidenced by the Red shift and background radiation

Evolutionary theories also dismiss God as creator, with humans being seen by Dawkins as just 'carriers of DNA' in his book the 'Selfish gene', Singer also rejects the idea that humans are the superior species (they're important, not sacred) due to interdependence (man and animal's mutual dependence on each other for food & habitat)

My opinion:

Agree with the catholic position, the atheist stance is rational but our scientific knowledge regarding the universe is slim

On the basis of non overlapping magisteria, I'd argue God is the force behind the Big Bang and evolution is a part of his divine plan for humanity

Concluding that science may answer the 'how' but religion answers the 'why' of existential enquiry