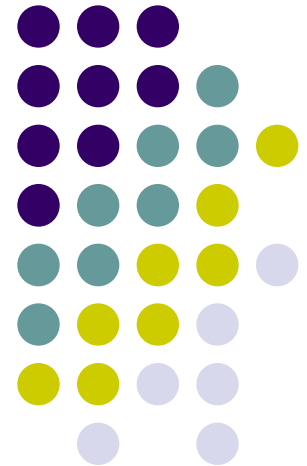


# Pre and Post Death Rituals: Catholic perspective

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Revd Kevin McGovern,  
Caroline Chisholm Centre for Health Ethics:  
Eastern Palliative Care,  
25 May 2016.



Caroline Chisholm  
Centre for Health Ethics

# Christian Beliefs around Death



- Christians believe in life after death.
- After death, Christians believe there is:
  - **Judgment** by God who sees what is truly in our hearts.
  - **Heaven** – eternal life with God, with reward for our goodness.
  - **Purgatory** – purification, cleansing for us to enter Heaven.
  - **Hell** – eternal rejection of God, with the eternal punishment of being separated from God.

# Christian Beliefs around Death (cont'd)



- In this life, we cannot know with certainty that we are saved and will go to Heaven.
- This spurs us on to continue to strive to do good and to avoid evil.
- Christians hope for Heaven.
- Christians fear Hell.
- Christians pray for those who have died that they might be purified and so enter Heaven.

# Divisions within Christianity



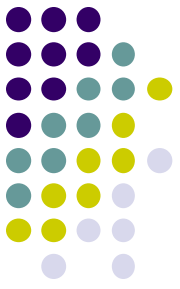
- **Eastern Orthodoxy**
- **Catholicism**
- **Protestantism**

# Sickness



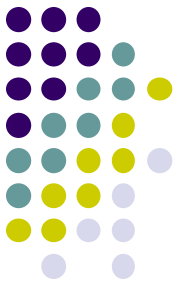
- Serious sickness or frail old age can be a time of existential crisis. We can be affected physically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually.
  - Receiving the Sacrament of Penance (i.e. going to **Confession**) strengthens us.
  - Receiving **Communion** (consecrated host or consecrated wine) also strengthens us.
  - The Sacrament of the **Anointing of the Sick** strengthens us too. It can heal us physically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually.
  - Catholics sometimes (wrongly) think of the Anointing of the Sick as the Last Rites.

# Dying and Death



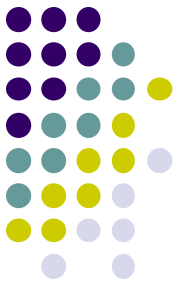
- For the Christian, death is our final journey with Christ beside us towards the great promise of eternal life.
  - **Viaticum** – food for the journey (Mass, consecrated host, or consecrated wine)
  - **Commendation of the Dying** – “Go forth, Christian soul, from this world...”
  - **Prayer After Death** – “May Christ, who called you, take you to himself...”

# Funeral Rites



- a journey with “stations” (times of prayer) as we pray for the one who has died and minister to those who mourn:
  - **Gathering in the Presence of the Body**
  - **Vigil Service (Wake)**
    - Bible readings, words of remembrance, prayers
    - (sometimes) gathering to pray the Rosary
  - **Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy**
    - Bible readings, words of remembrance, Song of Farewell and Final Commendation
  - **Rite of Committal**
    - burial or cremation

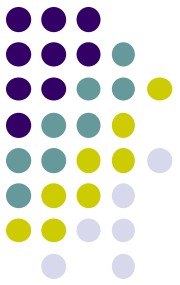
# Remembering Those Who Have Died



- “It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they might be loosed from their sins.” (2 Maccabees 12:46)
  - **Prayer**
  - **Month’s Mind Mass**
  - **Anniversary Masses**
  - November, the **month of the Holy Souls**



# Presenter



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