

## **THE LAST THINGS**

“For it is appointed for men to die once; then after this, the judgment.” Hebrews 9:27

### **DEATH**

Our allotted time is the passing of a shadow, and there is no return from our death, because it is sealed up and no one turns back” (Wis. 2:5). Death is not natural; i.e., it was not part of God’s original creation. Death came as punishment for sin. St. Paul reaffirms this in the New Testament, where he says “sin came into the world through one man and death through sin” (Rom. 5:12) and a little later says, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). In the case of those justified by grace, death loses its penal character and becomes a mere consequence of sin. Death consists of the separation of the soul from the body.

### **What is Death ?**

Unless the Second Coming comes during your lifetime, Nobody knows when, but it is going to happen. So live accordingly! Death is when the soul separates from your body. Your body will start to decompose, but your soul will live on forever, being reunited with your body at the final resurrection. If your soul is living on, where does it go? That is determined by the second “thing”.

### **Particular JUDGMENT**

After death, a soul is immediately judged to either heaven or hell. He knows everything about you. The good, bad and ugly. This immediate judgment is called the “particular judgment.”

Catholic teaching thus opposes several other theories:

- the theory that the souls of the departed sleep until the Resurrection (the “soul sleep” theory),
- that disembodied souls can remain about the earth lingering in the form of ghosts or spirits,
- that souls are reincarnated into new bodies that people who die in mortal sin can nevertheless have a chance to repent after death.

God is a perfect Judge, so there is no concern that his judgements will somehow be unfair and unjust, since He is perfection. He will determine if you should spend eternity in Heaven or Hell. Are you living in a way that you are ready for your judgement?

### **When death occurs**

When death occurs, the will of the soul is fixed in whatever state it was in when it passed from its body. Those who died rejecting God have their wills fixed against God. Repentance after death is not possible because the souls of the damned have no desire to repent after death.

### **HEAVEN**

Those souls who, at the moment of death, are free from all guilt of sin and punishment for sin, enter immediately into the bliss of heaven. The bliss of heaven consists primarily in the vision of God. This is called the beatific vision. Here on earth God is perceived through faith; in heaven, faith comes to an end and we arrive at true knowledge. Heaven is where you want to go, if it is not already obvious.

Heaven is a place of eternal , loving union with God, the source of all being, goodness, and beauty, the fulfillment of every human heart. So how do you go here? Only by dying in a state of grace through Christ in his Church. There is no other way!

### **Purgatory**

If you are wondering how purgatory fits in here. It is a temporary place that some people who are sent to Heaven will have to endure in order to prepare for Heaven. It is not one of the “last things” because it is not a final state.

### **The Beatific Vision**

The vision of God is an exchange of divine love and divine joy. This joy in the presence and vision of God is the primary bliss of heaven. There is a secondary bliss of heaven that consists in perfect union in

love with all the members of the Church, the saints and angels, in addition to the bliss derived from reunification with family and friends and the joy of receiving a resurrected body. Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness (CCC 1024). There is inequality in the beatific vision; some see God clearer than others and thus receive more joy and glory. The Council of Trent taught that a justified person merits an increase of the heavenly glory by good works. Nevertheless, “there will be no envy on account of the unequal glory, since the unity of love will reign in all” (St. Augustine, In Ioan. Tr. 67, 2).

## **HELL**

This is where you do not want to go if you don’t go to heaven. Those who die in a state of mortal sin are judged immediately to hell. You don’t want to go there. This is a place of eternal separation from God and punishment for our sins . All people who die in a state of mortal sin go to Hell. No exceptions, but one may ask God for forgiveness and mercy on his/her death bed and not be sent to Hell for eternity.

## **Jesus Warned us about Hell**

Jesus warned people more about hell than any other thing (see Mt. 3:12, 5:22,29, 8:12, 22:13,10:28, 23:15, Mk. 9:43-47, Lk. 13:28) Matthew 3:12 His winnowing fan is in His hand/ He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat in His barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire

## **The Pains of Hell**

It has been traditionally understood that there are two separate punishments in Hell.

The primary pain of Hell is called the poena damni, or the punishment of the damned the pain of loss, that means several things:

- This is the pain of eternal despair of knowing that you will forever be excluded from God’s presence for all eternity
- The knowledge that it’s duration will continue forever without possibility of respite
- The knowledge that it could have been otherwise, with repentance.
- The understanding that it is entirely one’s own fault, because of our actions.

The secondary pain of hell is poena sensus

- The secondary pain of hell is the the pain of sense.
- Hell is described as everlasting torment, death, destruction, and pain.
- Eternal torment for sins.
- It is unknown what this pain is.
- The Bible uses words like “fire”, “worm” and “brimstone” to describe the pains of hell
- What causes this pain has never been dogmatically clarified, but it is Catholic doctrine that such severe pains exists.

A loving God would not send anybody to Hell. God is indeed pure love, but He is also perfectly just and infinitely holy. All of these attributes are one because God is also completely simple. His holiness and justice are not opposed to His love but are part of it. He does not act out of love sometimes and then out of justice at other times. All His actions are loving and just. No person is condemned to hell that did not merit it during their life. God has done everything he could to warn people about hell and induce them to avoid it. It is people, by their own obstinate free will, who persist in sin and send themselves to hell despite the loving God. If the wicked are not punished, then the rewards of the righteous become unjust. God is infinitely just and will reward everybody according to what they have earned.

## **Nobody is really bad enough to go to Hell.**

This assertion misunderstands the gravity of sin. A single mortal sin committed once is enough to damn a soul if that person were to die in that sin, because mortal sin deprives us of God’s grace, which is the

prerequisite for entering heaven. None of us are really that good; except for some of the saints, most of us will commit at least one mortal sin sometime in our lives the trick is to ask repentance. Those who die in mortal sin have their wills irrevocably fixed on evil; even if God offered them repentance, they would not choose it. In choosing sin they have preferred something before God and would stubbornly cling to their sin even if it took them to hell.

### **How do we live in the light of “Last Things”**

Follow Christ! Repent your sins! Go to Mass! Receive the Sacraments of the Church frequently! It’s only by God’s grace in Jesus Christ that we face death, judgement, gain heaven, and avoid Hell.

### **The Second Coming**

The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, and all the holy angels with Him; and then will render to every man according to his work” (Lk. 9:26. See also: Mt. 24:20, Lk. 21:27, Jn. 6:39).

Jesus says that “as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man” (Matt. 24:27).

It is certain that the Second Coming will be an event of cosmic significance and will be witnessed by all men (Didache 16:8).

Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition list several things that are signs that the Second Coming is near; “signs of the times” as Christ calls them (Mt. 16:3).

The Preaching of the Gospel to the whole world (Mt. 24:14, Mk. 13:10)

The Conversion of the Jews (Rom. 11:25-32)

The Great Apostasy (Mt. 24:4, 2 Thess. 2:3)

The Appearance of the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:3,9- 11, 2 John 2:7, Didache 16:4)

Severe Tribulations (Mt. 24:9,29, Is. 13:10, 34:4)

Despite these signs, the time of the Second Coming is unknown to men. St. Paul teaches that “the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:1-2).

### **Resurrection of the Dead**

The bodily resurrection at the end of time was implicit in pre-Christian Judaism (see Hos. 6:3, Ezk. 37:1-14) though by no means explicit, and many Jews did not accept the doctrine of the resurrection (like the Sadducees).

Jesus Himself corrects their error and teaches not only the resurrection of the just, but also of the wicked (Lk. 14:14, Mt. 5:29, 10:28).

The General Resurrection is intimately linked with the Resurrection of Christ Himself

### **Resurrection**

What is “rising?”

“God, in His almighty power, will definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls, through the power of Jesus’ Resurrection” (CCC 997).

The resurrected body is the same body which we now possess. I Cor. 15:53 says, “This corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality.”

Who will rise?

CCC 998: “All the dead will rise: “those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.”

How will they be raised?

According to Tradition, the body will rise again in complete integrity, free from distortions, malformations and defects. St. Thomas teaches, “Man will rise again in the greatest natural perfection,” therefore in the state of mature age.

### **How will the Resurrected bodies differ from our earthly bodies?**

The essence of understanding the Resurrected body is that all its properties come from the transfiguration and conformity of the soul to Christ and the perfect subjection of the body to the transfigured soul.

Impassibility: refers to the incapability of suffering, that is, inaccessibility to physical evils of all kinds,

Subtility: a spiritualized nature; mastery over the laws of physics and nature.

Agility: the capability of the body to obey the soul with the greatest ease and speed of movement.

Clarity: being free from everything deformed and being filled with beauty and radiance. The grade of the transfiguration of the body will vary according to the degree of clarity of the soul, which is in proportion to the measure of the merits.

### **When will the Resurrection occur?**

The Resurrection will definitively happen on the last day, at the end of the world. The Resurrection is closely linked with Christ’s Second Coming; some Fathers believed that the Resurrection and the Second Coming would happen simultaneously.

### **General Judgment & End of the World**

After the Resurrection there will be a second judgment called the General Judgment. At this judgment, all men are judged together and every secret and desire of the heart is made manifest. The General Judgment serves the glorification of God and of the God-Man Jesus Christ by Revealing the wisdom of God in the government of the world. His goodness and patience towards sinners. Above all His rewarding justice.

### **The New World**

Though not much is known about it, it is the common consensus of Tradition that the present world will be destroyed on the Last Day. As to the manner of the destruction of the world, nothing can be said with certainty. After this destruction, the world will be renewed. The nature of this new world is uncertain, but like our resurrected bodies, it is a spiritualized nature. The relation between the “new heavens and the new earth” and the state of being in heaven (the beatific vision) is still open to debate