

The Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven & Hell

Prayer – John 14-1-6

Background – Secular distortions, Christian division and Catholic confusion

Sources – Holy Bible, Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)

Foundations

Human persons are a union of body and soul, made in image and likeness of God.

God desires communion with us now & throughout eternity. (CCC 1)

Humanity has a unique and **exalted dignity**.

We have a purpose and a destiny, and the freedom to accept or reject Him.

I. Death (CCC 1005-1019)

At death, the soul and the body are separated. (CCC1016)

The soul is immortal; once we are created we will never pass out of existence.

Why does death occur? Death is consequence of sin. This was warned in Gen 2:17, pronounced in Gen 3:19. Death was contrary to the plan of God (CCC 1008)

II. Judgment (CCC 1021-1022)

Salvation offered through Christ:

Recall the tragedy of Original Sin, which brought death and separation from God.

Through the Incarnation of Jesus, God became Man, so as to reconcile God and Man.

Through His Passion, Death & Resurrection, Christ conquered sin and death.

He offers us forgiveness, *invites* us into communion with Him, and a life of grace.

Our response to His invitation is **faith** ... we are called to receive His **grace**, so as to be transformed for lives of **love & obedience**.

“He who created us without our help will not save us without our consent.”

The Reality of Sin

Definition: Sin is an offense against God (CCC 1849-1850)

Sin is an obstacle to achieving this holiness & eternal life with Him.

All sin is evil, but not all actions have equal gravity. Even human law sees this.

This is recognized in Scripture (Luke 12:40-48 and 1 John 5:16-17)

Different Kinds of Sins (CCC 1852-64; 1 John 5:16-17)

Mortal Sin: grave matter, full knowledge & deliberate consent (CCC 1861)

a. Loss of sanctifying grace; destroys our relationship with God

b. If we die in a state of mortal sin, we choose separation from God – Hell

Venial Sin: transgression in a less serious matter (CCC 1856)

Particular Judgment of the soul upon a person's death.

At end of lives, we must give an accounting of how we have lived in Christ.

We will be judged “according to what we do in the body” (2 Cor 5:10).

Reincarnation is contrary to the Christian faith. (Heb 9:27)

Each receives eternal retribution at moment of death: either blessedness of heaven, through *purification* or immediate – or immediate & everlasting damnation. (1022)

In light of judgment, our task? Unite ourselves to Christ each day & every day!

Heb 12:14 – **Strive** ... for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Matthew 7:13-14 – Two gates lie before us, which will we choose.

III. Heaven

Heaven Explained in the CCC (1023-1029)

Images used to convey reality beyond comprehension

Heaven Succinctly Defined in CCC 1023:

Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live for ever with Christ.... for they "see him as he is," face to face."

Heaven Verses: John 3:16 --- John 14:1-2 -- John 17:3 -- John 17:20-24 -- Rom 8:14-25
1 Cor 1:5-9 -- 2 Peter 1:3-11 -- Phil 1:21-23 --Phil 3:20-21 - Rev 8:3-4 Rev 21:3-6*

How do we get there?

Possible only through the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Saved by faith, through God's grace, lived out in works of obedience and love.

Christ chose to give us seven special **channels of grace**.... The sacraments.

The grace of God transforms us & enables us to follow Him.

Faith without works is dead. (James 2:14-24)

Jesus spoke of **many things** necessary for salvation! Baptism & Holy Eucharist!

We cannot "cherry-pick" the ones we like, and ignore the others!

We are called to practice love and obedience, and will be judged accordingly.

Matt 25:31-42, Romans 2:2-8, Phil 2:12-13, 2 Cor 5:10, 2 Cor 11:15

Matt 7:21, Gal 5:4-6, Col 3:24-25, Rom 11:22, 1 Cor 9:27, 1 Cor 10:11-12

Who will get to heaven?

God *desires* all men to be saved & to come to knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim 2:4)

"If then God wills all to be saved... He gives to all that grace"- St. Alphonsus Liguori

"They who without their own fault do not know of the Gospel of Christ ..." – V2/LG16

Luke 12:40-48: Much will be expected of those given much...

All obligated to seek fullness of truth (Mt 10:37-39)

IV. HELL

"We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor" CCC 1033

Those die in mortal sin without repenting remain separated from Him.

This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God is called "hell."

The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God. (Read 1035)

God predestines no one to go to hell. Mortal sin involves willful choice.

Jesus is the strongest voice of all on the eternal nature of hell.

Matt 5:21-30 (Mark 9:47-48) and Matt 13:36-43

The most emphatic speaker on Hell is the One who died to saved all mankind.

Purgatory in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1030-1032):

Those who die In God's friendship, but still imperfectly purified...

Are indeed assured of eternal salvation, but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

Purgatory is entirely different from the punishment of the damned.

Recall the foundations... John 3:16 ... Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow!