

Catechism of the Catholic Church: #1005-1014

Review Questions

1. The *Catechism* proposes two “reasons” why death occurs, what are they? (see #s 1007 & 1008)
2. Why does death have a “positive meaning” in the Christian tradition? (see #s 1010 & 1011)
3. What does the *Catechism* teach about reincarnation?

Dying in Christ Jesus

1005 To rise with Christ, we must die with Christ: we must "be away from the body and at home with the Lord."⁵⁶⁴ In that "departure" which is death the soul is separated from the body.⁵⁶⁵ It will be reunited with the body on the day of resurrection of the dead.

Death

1006 "It is in regard to death that man's condition is most shrouded in doubt." In a sense bodily death is natural, but for faith it is in fact "the wages of sin."⁵⁶⁸ For those who die in Christ's grace it is a participation in the death of the Lord, so that they can also share his Resurrection.

1007 *Death is the end of earthly life.* Our lives are measured by time, in the course of which we change, grow old and, as with all living beings on earth, death seems like the normal end of life. That aspect of death lends urgency to our lives: remembering our mortality helps us realize that we have only a limited time in which to bring our lives to fulfillment:

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, . . . before the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

1008 *Death is a consequence of sin.* The Church's Magisterium, as authentic interpreter of the affirmations of Scripture and Tradition, teaches that death entered the world on account of man's sin. Even though man's nature is mortal, God had destined him not to die. Death was therefore contrary to the plans of God the Creator and entered the world as a consequence of sin. "Bodily death, from which man would have been immune had he not sinned" is thus "the last enemy" of man left to be conquered.

1009 *Death is transformed by Christ.* Jesus, the Son of God, also himself suffered the death that is part of the human condition. Yet, despite his anguish as he faced death, he accepted it in an act of complete and free submission to his Father's will. The obedience of Jesus has transformed the curse of death into a blessing.

The meaning of Christian death

1010 Because of Christ, Christian death has a positive meaning: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "The saying is sure: if we have died with him, we will also live with him." What is essentially new about Christian death is this: through Baptism, the Christian has already "died with Christ" sacramentally, in order to live a new life; and if we die in Christ's grace, physical death completes this "dying with Christ" and so completes our incorporation into him in his redeeming act:

It is better for me to die in (eis) Christ Jesus than to reign over the ends of the earth. Him it is I seek—who died for us. Him it is I desire—who rose for us. I am on the point of giving birth. . . . Let me receive pure light; when I shall have arrived there, then shall I be a man.

1011 In death, God calls man to himself. Therefore the Christian can experience a desire for death like St. Paul's: "My desire is to depart and be with Christ." He can transform his own death into an act of obedience and love towards the Father, after the example of Christ:

My earthly desire has been crucified; . . . there is living water in me, water that murmurs and says within me: Come to the Father.

I want to see God and, in order to see him, I must die.

I am not dying; I am entering life.

1012 The Christian vision of death receives privileged expression in the liturgy of the Church:

Lord, for your faithful people life is changed, not ended.

When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death
we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven.

1013 Death is the end of man's earthly pilgrimage, of the time of grace and mercy which God offers him so as to work out his earthly life in keeping with the divine plan, and to decide his ultimate destiny. When "the single course of our earthly life" is completed, we shall not return to other earthly lives: "It is appointed for men to die once." There is no "reincarnation" after death.

1014 The Church encourages us to prepare ourselves for the hour of our death. In the ancient litany of the saints, for instance, she has us pray: "From a sudden and unforeseen death, deliver us, O Lord"; to ask the Mother of God to intercede for us "at the hour of our death" in the *Hail Mary*; and to entrust ourselves to St. Joseph, the patron of a happy death.

Every action of yours, every thought, should be those of one who expects to die before the day is out. Death would have no great terrors for you if you had a quiet conscience. . . . Then why not keep clear of sin instead of running away from death? If you aren't fit to face death today, it's very unlikely you will be tomorrow. . . .

Praised are you, my Lord, for our sister bodily Death,
from whom no living man can escape.
Woe on those who will die in mortal sin!
Blessed are they who will be found
in your most holy will,
for the second death will not harm them.

IN BRIEF

As a consequence of original sin, man must suffer "bodily death, from which man would have been immune had he not sinned."

Jesus, the Son of God, freely suffered death for us in complete and free submission to the will of God, his Father. By his death he has conquered death, and so opened the possibility of salvation to all men.