

For God created us for incorruption and made us in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it.

- Wisdom 2:23-24

Death

CCC 1005 To rise with Christ, we must die with Christ: we must "be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (2 Cor 5:8) In that "departure" which is death the soul is separated from the body. (Phil 1:23) It will be reunited with the body on the day of resurrection of the dead. (Cf. Paul VI, Credo of the People of God # 28)

CCC 1007 Death is the end of earthly life. "A fact that lends urgency to our lives"

CCC 1008 Death is a consequence of sin... death entered the world on account of man's sin. (Rom 5:12) "Bodily death, from which man would have been immune had he not sinned" is thus "the last enemy" of man left to be conquered. (1 Cor 15:26)

CCC 1009 Death is transformed by Christ. The obedience of Jesus has transformed the curse of death into a blessing. (Rom 5:19-21)

CCC 1010 Because of Christ, Christian death has a positive meaning: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil 1:21) "The saying is sure: if we have died with him, we will also live with him. (2 Tim 2:11)

CCC 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." (Heb 9:27) There is no "reincarnation" after death.

Judgement

CCC 1021 Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ. (2 Tim 1:9-10) The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith. the parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul -a destiny which can be different for some and for others. (Cf. Lk 16:22; 23:43; Mt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Heb 9:27; 12:23.)

CCC 1022 Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven-through a purification or immediately, -or immediate and everlasting damnation.

At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love. (St John of the Cross)

Heaven

CCC 1023 Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live forever with Christ. They are like God for ever, for they "see him as he is," face to face: (1 Jn 3:2; cf. 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:4)

CCC 1024 This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity - this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed - is called "heaven." Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness.

CCC 1025 To live in heaven is "to be with Christ."

CCC 1027 This mystery of blessed communion with God and all who are in Christ is beyond all understanding and description. Scripture speaks of it in images: life, light, peace, wedding feast, wine of the kingdom, the Father's house, the heavenly Jerusalem, paradise: "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Cor 2:9)

CCC 1028 Because of his transcendence, God cannot be seen as he is, unless he himself opens up his mystery to man's immediate contemplation and gives him the capacity for it. the Church calls this contemplation of God in his heavenly glory "the beatific vision".

The Final Purification, or Purgatory

CCC 1030 All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

CCC 1031 The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. the tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire: (1 Cor 3:12-15; 1 Pet 1:7.)

As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come.⁶¹⁶

CCC 1032 This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: "Therefore Judas Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin." (2 Macc 12:46) From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead:

Church Fathers on Purgatory

Let us help and commemorate them. If Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice, why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them. (St John Chrysostom)

If a man distinguish himself what is peculiarly human from that which is irrational, and if he be on the watch for a life of greater urbanity for himself, in this present life he will purify himself of any evil contracted, overcoming the irrational by reason. If he has inclined to the irrational pressure of the passions, using for the passions the cooperating hide of things irrational, he may afterward in a quite different manner be very much interested in what is better, when, after his departure out of the body, he gains knowledge of the difference between virtue and vice and finds that he is not able to partake of divinity until he has been purged of the filthy contagion in his soul by the purifying fire. (*Sermon on the Dead*. Gregory of Nyssa, 394)

Lay this body anywhere; let not the care of it in any way disturb you. This only I request of you, that you would remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you be. (St Augustine, Confessions).

Useful too is the prayer fashioned on their behalf, even if it does not force back the whole of guilty charges laid to them. And it is useful also, because in this world we often stumble wither voluntarily or involuntarily, and thus it is a reminder to doe better. (Panarion, St. Epiphanius Bishop and Monk)

Let us pray for our brethren that are at rest in Christ, that God, the lover of mankind, who has received his soul, may forgive him every sin, voluntary and involuntary, and may be merciful and gracious to him, and give him his lot in the land of the pious that are sent into the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with all those that have pleased Him and done His will from the beginning of the world, whence all sorrow, grief and lamentation are banished. (Apostolic Constitutions, 8:4,41)

Hell

CCC 1033 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 or against ourselves: "He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."⁶¹⁰ Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren.⁶¹¹ To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."

CCC 1035 The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, "eternal fire." The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

CCC 1037 God predestines no one to go to hell; for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end.

Last Judgment

CCC 1038 The resurrection of all the dead, "of both the just and the unjust," (Acts 24:15) will precede the Last Judgment. This will be "the hour when all who are in the tombs will hear [the Son of man's] voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and

those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment." (Jn 5:28-29) Then Christ will come "in his glory, and all the angels with him Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.... and they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Mt 25:31-32, 46)

CCC 1040 The *Last Judgment* will come when Christ returns in glory. Only the Father knows the day and the hour; only he determines the moment of its coming. Then through his Son Jesus Christ he will pronounce the final word on all history. We shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation and of the entire economy of salvation and understand the marvelous ways by which his Providence led everything towards its final end. The Last Judgment will reveal that God's justice triumphs over all the injustices committed by his creatures and that God's love is stronger than death. (Song of Songs 8:6)

The Hope of the New Heaven and the New Earth

CCC 1042 At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. After the universal judgment, the righteous will reign forever with Christ, glorified in body and soul. the universe itself will be renewed:

The Church . . . will receive her perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things. At that time, together with the human race, the universe itself, which is so closely related to man and which attains its destiny through him, will be perfectly re-established in Christ. (Lumen Gentium 48)

CCC 1060 At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. Then the just will reign with Christ forever, glorified in body and soul, and the material universe itself will be transformed. God will then be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28), in eternal life.

Prayer of Commendation

Go forth, Christian soul, from this world
in the name of God the almighty Father,
who created you,
in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God,
who suffered for you,
in the name of the Holy Spirit,
who was poured out upon you.
Go forth, faithful Christian!
May you live in peace this day,
may your home be with God in Zion,
with Mary, the virgin Mother of God,
with Joseph, and all the angels and saints....
May you return to [your Creator]
who formed you from the dust of the earth.
May holy Mary, the angels, and all the saints
come to meet you as you go forth from this life....
May you see your Redeemer face to face.

CLOSE UP

The Scriptural Basis for Purgatory



The Church's teaching on Purgatory is not accepted by most non-Catholics, partly because it does not seem to be explicitly found in Scripture. However, belief in the state of purification after death, which the Church calls *Purgatory* (derived from the Latin *purgare*, meaning "to purify", whose root is *purus*, "pure"), originated in Jewish thought before Christ and is strongly implied in Scripture, and it has been part of the Sacred Tradition of the Church from her beginning.

The evidence in Scripture for Purgatory is found in the following passages:

— In the Second Book of Maccabees, which details the suppression and persecution of Jews by their Seleucid (Greek) rulers and a consequent revolt in the second century before Christ, the Jewish militants led by Judas Maccabeus returned to a battlefield to recover the bodies of their fallen comrades. There Judas found that every fallen man was carrying a token of a pagan idol, a clear violation of the First Commandment. Judas Maccabeus then gathered his surviving soldiers and offered prayers for the dead so their sins might be forgiven, and he took up a collection to send to the poor in Jerusalem as a "sin offering":

In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin. (2 Mc 12: 43-45)

Praying for the forgiveness of the sins of the dead indicates that their sins might be cleansed in the next life. This purification takes place in Purgatory.

— In St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, he referred to "the Day" (the Second Coming of Christ) and stated that the work that we do "will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done." If the work is good and survives the test, he will be rewarded; but if it is burned, "he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire."¹

Fire is a symbol of purification. By referring to us being saved "through fire" after being judged for our life's work, St. Paul indicated that a purification process can occur after death. This purification takes place in Purgatory.

— In the First Epistle of St. Peter, in the context of the resurrection from the dead, he stated that Christians "may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."²

"Tested by fire," like St. Paul's reference above, points to a purification after death. This purification takes place in Purgatory.

1 1 Cor 3: 12-15.

2 1 Pt 1: 7.

At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. After the universal judgment, the righteous will reign forever with Christ, glorified in body and soul. The universe itself will be renewed:

The Church... will receive her perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things. At that time, together with the human race, the universe itself, which is so closely related to man and which attains its des-

Prayers for the ✠ Faithful Departed ✠

PRAYER AT A GRAVE

Dear Lord, look with tender love upon the soul of N., whose mortal remains are committed to this grave. He/she has gone before us marked with the sign of faith, and now rests in the sleep of peace. To N. and to all who rest in Christ, we entreat you to grant a place of comfort, of light and peace. Amen.

PRAYER AT A GRAVE

With the Saints, O Christ, give rest to your servant N. where there is no pain, sorrow, nor mourning, but life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

PRAYER FOR ALL SOULS

Holy Lord, Almighty and eternal God. Hear our prayers for all the souls you have called out of this life. Purge them of their sins and failings in the fire of your love and grant to them a place of refreshment, light, and peace. Accept all souls into your safekeeping and on the great day of judgment raise them up with all the Saints to inherit your eternal Kingdom. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER FOR DEPARTED PARENTS

O God you commanded your people to "honor thy father and thy mother". In your loving kindness have mercy on the soul/s of my father/mother and forgive *them all their sins*. I humbly ask you that you would grant me to see their faces in the glory of eternal life. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER FOR DEPARTED FRIENDS

My God, pour forth your blessings and your mercies upon all souls in purgatory for whom, by reason of love, gratitude and friendship, I am bound or desire to pray. Amen.

PRAYER FOR AN UN-BAPTIZED SOUL

Almighty and faithful Creator, all things are of your making, all people are shaped in your image. We now entrust the soul of N. to your goodness. In your infinite wisdom and power, work in him/her your merciful purpose, known to you alone from the beginning of time. Console the hearts of those who love him/her in the hope that all who trust in you will find peace and rest in your kingdom. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

O gentlest Heart of Jesus ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, ever consumed with burning love for the poor souls in purgatory have mercy on the souls of your departed servants. Be not severe in judgment, but let some drops of your Precious Blood fall upon the devouring flames and send your angels to conduct your departed servants to a place of refreshment, light and peace. Amen.



*"So be perfect, just as your heavenly
Father is perfect."*

Jesus, Matthew 5: 48

*Everyone who has this hope based on
God makes himself pure, as God is pure.*

I John 3: 3

*"At the evening of life, we shall be
judged on our love."*

Saint John of the Cross

