



LESSON FOURTEEN

The Last Things: God Will Set All Things Right

Opening Prayer

Lord, you said,

*“I am the resurrection and the life;
he who believes in me, though he die,
yet shall he live,
and whoever lives and believes in me
shall never die”
(John 11:25–26).*

*Fill us with the hope of eternal life
as we keep our eyes on you.*

Amen.



Lesson Objectives:

- ❖ Understand the Catholic teaching on the four last things—death, judgment, heaven, and hell—and reflect on how these truths are meant to bring hope to our daily lives rather than fear.
- ❖ Distinguish between particular judgment (at death) and the Last Judgment (at the end of time), and what Scripture and the *Catechism* teach about each.
- ❖ Comprehend the meaning of bodily resurrection and the new creation—that our bodies will rise, glorified, at the end of time.

BURNING QUESTIONS

❖ If God is loving, why would he allow anyone to go to hell?

Many people struggle with the idea of hell alongside their belief in a merciful God. Does the existence of hell mean that God does not extend his love and mercy to the whole world?

❖ I'm a good person. Doesn't that mean I will go to heaven?

It is natural to associate being good with reward. Does the world's view of goodness differ from the true moral goodness God invites us to?

St. Catherine of Genoa

Feast Day: September 15

Lived: c. 1447 – 1510 · Genoa, Italy · Patron of Brides, Widows, Childless couples, Italian hospitals

A fifteenth-century mystic who spent years in a miserable arranged marriage, Catherine of Genoa experienced a transforming encounter with God’s love at age twenty-six. Her life became one of prayer and radical service to the sick and dying at Genoa’s hospital, where she eventually became director. Her *Treatise on Purgatory*—drawn from mystical insight—described purgatory not as torment but as the purifying fire of God’s love, burning away the rust of sin in souls who are already assured of heaven.



“Truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.”

Matthew 5:26

Death and Particular Judgment

The Doorway to Eternity

Death is not the end. If we are united to Christ through Baptism and remain in his grace, death will be the doorway to eternal life. During this life, we are free to say yes or no to God, to accept his love and grace or reject it. But when we die, the time for choosing ends: “Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ” (CCC 1021).

The Particular Judgment

At the moment of death, each soul appears before God for particular judgment. At this moment, the full truth of our life will be revealed in reference to Christ, “Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul” (CCC 1022). This means we either enter heaven, undergo purification in purgatory, or enter hell, all in accordance with the way we have freely loved or rejected God.

“It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment.”

Hebrews 9:27

Heaven and Purgatory

Heaven

Heaven is what we were created for: to live forever in union with God. More than a place, it is a “state of supreme, definitive happiness” (CCC 1024). Scripture describes it as, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). In heaven, there will be no more sin, suffering, or sadness (see Revelation 21:4). Nothing in this life compares.

Purgatory

Those who die in God’s friendship but are still burdened by sinful attachments are saved, but cannot enter heaven yet. Purgatory is the place where a final purification before entering heaven happens. Scripture teaches that “nothing unclean shall enter” heaven (Revelation 21:27). Purgatory is not a second chance after death; it’s the final burning away of everything in us that is not yet ready to stand in the full light of God (see CCC 1030).

“For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ ... the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.”

1 Corinthians 3:11, 13

Hell, The Last Judgment and Christian Hope

Hell

Hell is the eternal consequence of freely and finally rejecting God. It is not God's punishment for a lack of perfection, but the soul's own choice persisting to the end. Jesus speaks of hell to call us to repentance and warns about its eternal nature (see Matthew 25:41). No one is predestined to hell (see CCC 1037); God "desires all men to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

The Second Coming of Christ

We don't know when Christ will return, but he promised it (see Matthew 24:36). At that time, the dead will be resurrected, the Last Judgment will occur, and a new heaven and the new earth will be established. We profess these truths at the end of the Nicene Creed; they are not supposed to be a source of dread, but an invitation to live with purpose and hope.

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more."

Revelation 21:4



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Our Eternal Destiny, Our Choice

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How does the Catholic understanding of hell relate to God's gift of free will?
- ❖ God allows the possibility of eternal separation from him rather than forcing everyone to be with him in heaven. Why do you think he does this?
- ❖ Hell is ultimately about rejecting a relationship with God rather than failing to meet a behavioral standard. How does knowing this change your perception of salvation?

Faith and Fun

Which of the following saints is known for having kept a human skull on his desk as a reminder of death?

a. St. Thomas Aquinas

b. St. Francis of Assisi

c. St. Jerome

d. St. Ignatius of Loyola



Faith and Fun

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Skulls today are often associated with rebellion, occult customs, Halloween, or horror. In Christianity, however, a skull is a symbol of wisdom and prudence, a brisk reminder that our lives are short and we should live them with purpose. It can also be a symbol of Golgotha, the place of the skull, where Jesus was crucified—or it can serve as a remembrance of loved ones, as with celebrations of the Day of the Dead. Among early Christians, saints, and theologians, it was common to keep a skull as a reminder of death and impermanence.



Relics

What Relics Are

A relic is a physical object connected to a saint—a fragment of bone or hair, something they used, or something touched to their remains. Relics come in three classes: first-class (a part of the saint’s body), second-class (something they used), and third-class (something touched to a first-class relic). The practice of honoring relics dates back to the early Church, when Christians gathered at the graves of martyrs to celebrate the Eucharist.

Why We Honor Them

We venerate but do not worship relics. The veneration of relics expresses our belief that the body is sacred—it will one day rise—and that God works through physical things. The Church has recognized miraculous healings at relics throughout history. Relics are tangible links to those who have gone before us in faith and testify that death is not the end.



Living It Out:

Tonight, before going to sleep, examine your day. The Examen prayer is a powerful spiritual practice rooted in the tradition of St. Ignatius of Loyola. It’s a daily reflection that helps you prayerfully review your day with God.

Closing Prayer

Requiem Aeternam:

*Ÿ. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
R̄. And let perpetual light shine upon them.*

*Ÿ. May they rest in peace.
R̄. Amen.*

*Ÿ. May the souls of all the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God,
rest in peace.
R̄. Amen.*

Announcements / Reminders — add notes here