



## Scripture

*Malachi 3:19-20; 2Thessalonians 3:7-12;*

*Luke 21:5-19*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that before Christ's Second Coming the Church will pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that is to come will unveil the mystery of iniquity in the form of religious deception which will offer believers a solution to their problems but in reality it will lead them away from the truth (cf. CCC 675). As Catholics it would probably be more beneficial for us to stay away from all the doomsday talk concerning the end times which flood the airwaves from various television and radio ministries. If you take to heart what is shared here from the Catechism, with a decline in both Mass attendance and vocations to the priesthood you could make the case that the faith of many has already been shaken; plus all the signs that our Lord lists in this Gospel: wars and insurrections, nations rising against other nations, kingdoms against kingdoms, powerful earthquakes, famines and plagues - one could easily make the argument that these types of things have been occurring for a long time. And that's why it's best just to continue to walk in faith and whenever the final hour arrives, so be it. We have no way of knowing the span of years it will take before all the biblical apocalyptic warnings are completed. Anyone who is now at an adult age could surely testify that the world has been pacing on a moral decline since their childhood. Christ speaks of persecutions and being seized and thrown into prison while some will be put to death. Most of the early Fathers agree that this futuristic event was actually not all that far in the future and was meant specifically for Christ's chosen twelve; and most of them were indeed martyred. Our focus should stay on Jesus and being the holy men and women He called us to be; and try not to get all caught up in the hoopla concerning the end of the world, except only to be prepared for that day by being constantly in a state of grace. If we are truly making efforts to be genuine disciples of Christ, then while we wait for our Lord's return, we can, as proclaimed at Mass, "wait in JOYFUL HOPE for the coming of our Savoir, Jesus Christ."

### Saints Speak

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

*"For life is to be with Christ; where Christ is, there is life, there is the kingdom."*

St Ambrose

*"How great will your glory and happiness be, to be allowed to see God, to be honored with sharing the joy of salvation and eternal light with Christ your Lord and God, . . . to delight in the joy of immortality in the Kingdom of heaven with the righteous and God's friends."* St. Cyprian

*"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."*

Pope St Gregory the Great



From the Catechism...

## Heaven

**1023** Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live for ever with Christ. They are like God for ever, for they "see him as he is," face to face.

**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.

**1025** To live in heaven is "to be with Christ." The elect live "in Christ," but they retain, or rather find, their true identity, their own name.

**1026** By his death and Resurrection, Jesus Christ has "opened" heaven to us. Heaven is the blessed community of all who are perfectly incorporated into Christ.

**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

**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.

**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.

**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." 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.

## Hell

**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. 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. To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."

**1034** Jesus often speaks of "Gehenna," of "the unquenchable fire" reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost.

**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.

**1036** The affirmations of Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church on the subject of hell are a *call to the responsibility* incumbent upon man to make use of his freedom in view of his eternal destiny. They are at the same time an urgent *call to conversion*.

**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. In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, who does not want "any to perish, but all to come to repentance."

### The Particular Judgment

**1021** Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ. 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.

**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.

### The Last Judgment

**1038** The resurrection of all the dead, "of both the just and the unjust," 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." 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."

**1039** In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man's relationship with God will be laid bare. The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life

**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.

**1041** The message of the Last Judgment calls men to conversion while God is still giving them "the acceptable time, . . . the day of salvation." It inspires a holy fear of God and commits them to the justice of the Kingdom of God. It proclaims the "blessed hope" of the Lord's return, when he will come "to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed."

**1042** At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. After the universal judgment, the righteous will reign for ever 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*



## Word Wise

**Cosmos**      *The entire created order. This includes the material universe as we know and seek it out as well as the spiritual realities which are not tangible but nevertheless real such as angels. The created order or cosmos was perfectly created and God's desire is to restore all that that been made imperfect by sin and the effects of sin.*

**Eschatology**      *The study of the Last Things: Death, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory. The Eschaton is the final event of human history which will usher in the new cosmic order in which the fullness of perfection will be revealed. We do not know the hour or day when this will be. The early Christians thought it was coming quickly. This should not be confused with the idea of The Rapture or its associated events. There is nothing in Christian tradition or Scripture to support the rapture idea unless one cobbles together a variety of unrelated texts. It was introduced in the 1830's by a traveling evangelist who brought it from Scotland to the United States and it was later developed as part of the millennial fervor that swept the US at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

**Second Coming**      *This is the coming of Christ in glory to complete the destruction of evil and to establish the fullness of God's rein in the created order. We believe that it will be dramatic and unmistakable and the fullness of the power of God's saving love will purify completely all that is.*

**Conversion**      *Conversio, in the Latin, is an inward turning of the heart, mind and attitude that then manifests itself in outward action and speech. Conversion may come from the experience of blessing or suffering and reflect a fundamental change in life orientation and direction.*

**Elect**      *Are those chosen by God, called to eternity and who respond with the desire to live in God. God extends the invitation to all people to come into a unique relationship with the Divine through the person of Jesus, the human face of God in history. The Church has always taught that God desires the salvation of all and rejects as heretical the teaching of John Calvin, a 16<sup>th</sup> century reformer, who taught that only a few people are among the Elect and that most people are destined to eternal damnation.*

**Pantocrator**      *From the Greek, meaning all-sovereign or ruler of all, Pantocrator was originally applied to God. Later it came to mean Christ, the sovereign who holds the world together, and who gives life its sustaining meaning. The image appeared as early as the sixth century, but many were destroyed by iconoclasts. Christ as Pantocrator is usually represented with a Gospel in the left hand, with the right hand raised in blessing. This image is more common in the Eastern Church.*



*Christ Pantocrato*