

THE EIGHT LAST THINGS: Handout Part I: Death

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From a sudden and unforeseen death, deliver us, O Lord!

Roman Missal, Litany of the Saints

In the hour of my death call me and bid me come to you, that with your Saints I may praise you forever and ever. Amen [from the Anima Christi]

This is the first lesson in a study of the 8 “last things”. Traditionally the Church has defined the “last things” as 4: Death, Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. However, in this study we will be focusing on these “last 4 things” and will be expanding our list to include the 8 last things of concern for humanity from the moment of death to the new creation of heaven and earth at the end of time as man understands time. Our list of the “Eight Last Things” includes:

1. Death
2. Individual Judgment
3. Heaven
4. Hell
5. Purgatory
6. The Second Coming/Resurrection of the Dead
7. The Final Judgment
8. The New Creation

The theological definition of physical “death” is the separation of soul from body: CCC# 1005

The human being is the union of body and soul: Isaiah 57:16; CCC#362-66; 997; 1005.

- CCC#365: *The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the “form” of the body: i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living human body; **spirit and matter, in man are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.***

Did God create death or destine man to die? See Wisdom 1:12-15; 2:21-24; Romans 5:12; CCC# 1008; 1018: *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 [CCC#1018].*

The three kinds of sin: 1 John 5:16-17; CCC#405; 1018; Baltimore Catechism: Q#54-58.

1. Original sin; 2. Venial sin; 3. Mortal sin (venial and mortal are “actual” sins)

Church teaches death is a consequence of sin. Unbelievers say it is just part of life—but death is the antithesis of life.

Sin breaks the relationship with God; God is the source of life and so to separate from Him is to merit death. James 1:14-15: *Everyone is put to the test by being attracted and seduced by that person’s own wrong desire. Then the desire conceives and gives birth to sin, and when sin reaches full growth it gives birth to death.*

God’s worst punishments are when He lets us have the wrong things we insist we want. Man would have been immune from death if he had not sinned; Christ restored the grace necessary for man to overcome sin: Wisdom 1:14; Romans 5:18-19; Romans 5:21; Romans 6:23.

Christ will finally and forever conquer death: Romans 3:23-26; 1 Corinthians 15:20-27 and Revelation 20:14; 21:4; CCC 1005; 1009-10; 1018; 1470; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; Mark 14:33-34; Hebrews 5:7-9; Romans 5:19-21; Philippians 1:21; 2 Timothy 2:11.

St. Ignatius Bishop of Antioch wrote in a letter in 107AD, as he prepared for his execution and his entrance into eternity: *It is better for me to die in 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.*

In Christian death we can transform our individual deaths into an act of submission and obedience which becomes an act of love for God the Father just as Jesus offered Himself in obedience in love to the Father on the altar of the Cross [CCC# 1011].

How does one prepare for death? Why does the Litany of Saints in the Roman Missal include the plea: *“From a sudden and unforeseen death, deliver us, O Lord”*? See CCC#1013-14.

Suggested Catechism References:

Death	As a consequence of sin: 1008
	To die in mortal sin: 1033; 1861
	To die in Christ: 1009; 1005-14; 1274
	Preparing for death: 1014
	Suffering death for the sake of faith: 1258
	The destiny of the just after death: 265; 366; 989; 1027-29

Resources used in this lesson:

1. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
2. *New Jerusalem Bible*
3. *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*, Pauline Books and Media, Boston, 1999.
4. *Dogmatic Theology: Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, Johann Auer, Joseph Ratzinger, Catholic University of America Press, 1988.
5. *Our Sunday Visitor’s Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine*, edited by Russell Shaw, Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Huntington, Indiana, 1997.
6. *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, volume 5*, Christian Classics, Benziger Bros., New York, 1948
7. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, volume 2: Augustine: City of God*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1995.
8. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, volume 3: Augustine: On the Trinity*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1995.

The Baltimore Catechism volume 4, Rev. Thomas Kinkeade, Tan Books