

## ARTICLE 12

## "I BELIEVE IN LIFE EVERLASTING"

1523-1525 **1020** The Christian who unites his own death to that of Jesus views it as a step towards him and an entrance into everlasting life. When the Church for the last time speaks Christ's words of pardon and absolution over the dying Christian, seals him for the last time with a strengthening anointing, and gives him Christ in viaticum as nourishment for the journey, she speaks with gentle assurance:

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. . . .

2677, 336 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. . . .<sup>589</sup>

## I. 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.<sup>590</sup> 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.<sup>591</sup>

**1022** Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that

589 OCF, Prayer of Commendation.

590 Cf. 2 Tim 1:9-10.

591 Cf. Lk 16:22; 23:43; Mt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Heb 9:27; 12:23.

refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven—through a purification<sup>592</sup> or immediately,<sup>593</sup>—or immediate and everlasting damnation.<sup>594</sup>

At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love.<sup>595</sup>

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## II. 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:<sup>596</sup>

By virtue of our apostolic authority, we define the following: According to the general disposition of God, the souls of all the saints . . . and other faithful who died after receiving Christ's holy Baptism (provided they were not in need of purification when they died, . . . or, if they then did need or will need some purification, when they have been purified after death, . . .) already before they take up their bodies again and before the general judgment – and this since the Ascension of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ into heaven – have been, are and will be in heaven, in the heavenly Kingdom and celestial paradise with Christ, joined to the company of the holy angels. Since the Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, these souls have seen and do see the divine essence with an intuitive vision, and even face to face, without the mediation of any creature.<sup>597</sup>

**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. 260, 326 2794, 1718

**1025** To live in heaven is "to be with Christ." The elect live "in Christ,"<sup>598</sup> but they retain, or rather find, their true identity, their own name.<sup>599</sup> 1011

For life is to be with Christ; where Christ is, there is life, there is the kingdom.<sup>600</sup>

592 Cf. Council of Lyons II (1274): DS 857-858; Council of Florence (1439): DS 1304-1306; Council of Trent (1563): DS 1820.

593 Cf. Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1000-1001; John XXII, *Ne super his* (1334): DS 990.

594 Cf. Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1002.

595 St. John of the Cross, *Dichos* 64.

596 1 Jn 3:2; cf. 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:4.

597 Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1000; cf. LG 49.

598 Phil 1:23; cf. Jn 14:3; 1 Thess 4:17.

599 Cf. Rev 2:17.

**1026** By his death and Resurrection, Jesus Christ has "opened" heaven to us. The life of the blessed consists in the full and perfect possession of the fruits of the redemption accomplished by Christ. He makes partners in his heavenly glorification those who have  
 793 believed in him and remained faithful to his will. Heaven is the blessed community of all who are perfectly incorporated into Christ.

**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."<sup>601</sup>  
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**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":  
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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.<sup>602</sup>

**1029** In the glory of heaven the blessed continue joyfully to fulfill God's will in relation to other men and to all creation. Already they reign with Christ; with him "they shall reign for ever and ever."<sup>603</sup>  
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### III. 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.<sup>604</sup> The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on  
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600 St. Ambrose, *In Luc.*, 10, 121: PL 15, 1834A.

601 1 Cor 2:9.

602 St. Cyprian, *Ep.* 58, 10,1: CSEL 3/2, 665.

603 Rev 22:5; cf. Mt 25:21, 23.

604 Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1304; Council of Trent (1563): DS 1820; (1547): 1580; see also Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1000.

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.<sup>605</sup>

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.<sup>606</sup>

**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."<sup>607</sup> 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.<sup>608</sup> The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead:  
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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.<sup>609</sup>

### IV. 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: "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."<sup>610</sup> 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.<sup>611</sup> 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."  
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605 Cf. 1 Cor 3:15; 1 Pet 1:7.

606 St. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4, 39: PL 77, 396; cf. Mt 12:31.

607 2 Macc 12:46.

608 Cf. Council of Lyons II (1274): DS 856.

609 St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 41, 5: PG 61, 361; cf. Job 1:5.

610 1 Jn 3:14-15.

611 Cf. Mt 25:31-46.

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.<sup>612</sup> Jesus solemnly proclaims that he "will send his angels, and they will gather . . . all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire,"<sup>613</sup> and that he will pronounce the condemnation: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!"<sup>614</sup>

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."<sup>615</sup> The chief punishment of hell  
393 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*  
1734 incumbent upon man to make use of his freedom in view of his  
1428 eternal destiny. They are at the same time an urgent *call to conversion*: "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few."<sup>616</sup>

Since we know neither the day nor the hour, we should follow the advice of the Lord and watch constantly so that, when the single course of our earthly life is completed, we may merit to enter with him into the marriage feast and be numbered among the blessed, and not, like the wicked and slothful servants, be ordered to depart into the eternal fire, into the outer darkness where "men will weep and gnash their teeth."<sup>617</sup>

1037 God predestines no one to go to hell;<sup>618</sup> for this, a willful  
162 turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence  
1014, 1821 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".<sup>619</sup>

612 Cf. Mt 5:22, 29; 10:28; 13:42, 50; Mk 9:43-48.

613 Mt 13:41-42.

614 Mt 25:41.

615 Cf. DS 76; 409; 411; 801; 858; 1002; 1351; 1575; Paul VI, CPG § 12.

616 Mt 7:13-14.

617 LG 48 § 3; Mt 22:13; cf. Heb 9:27; Mt 25:13, 26, 30, 31-46.

618 Cf. Council of Orange II (529): DS 397; Council of Trent (1547):1567.

619 2 Pet 3:9.

Father, accept this offering  
from your whole family.  
Grant us your peace in this life,  
save us from final damnation,  
and count us among those you have chosen.<sup>620</sup>

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## V. THE LAST JUDGMENT

1038 The resurrection of all the dead, "of both the just and the unjust,"<sup>621</sup> will precede the Last Judgment. This will be "the hour  
1001, 998 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."<sup>622</sup> 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."<sup>623</sup>

1039 In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man's relationship with God will be laid bare.<sup>624</sup> The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life:

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All that the wicked do is recorded, and they do not know. When "our God comes, he does not keep silence." . . . he will turn towards those at his left hand: . . . "I placed my poor little ones on earth for you. I as their head was seated in heaven at the right hand of my Father – but on earth my members were suffering, my members on earth were in need. If you gave anything to my members, what you gave would reach their Head. Would that you had known that my little ones were in need when I placed them on earth for you and appointed them your stewards to bring your good works into my treasury. But you have placed nothing in their hands; therefore you have found nothing in my presence."<sup>625</sup>

620 Roman Missal, EP I (Roman Canon) 88.

621 Acts 24:15.

622 Jn 5:28-29.

623 Mt 25:31, 32, 46.

624 Cf. Jn 12:49.

625 St. Augustine, *Sermo* 18, 4: PL 38, 130-131; cf. Ps 50:3.



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 marvellous 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.<sup>626</sup>

1041 The message of the Last Judgment calls men to conversion while God is still giving them "the acceptable time, . . . the day of salvation."<sup>627</sup> 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 marvelled at in all who have believed."<sup>628</sup>

## 2854 VI. THE HOPE OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

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:

310 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.<sup>629</sup>

1043 Sacred Scripture calls this mysterious renewal, which will transform humanity and the world, "new heavens and a new earth."<sup>630</sup> It will be the definitive realization of God's plan to bring under a single head "all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth."<sup>631</sup>

1044 In this new universe, the heavenly Jerusalem, God will have his dwelling among men.<sup>632</sup> "He will wipe away every tear

626 Cf. Song 8:6.

627 2 Cor 6:2.

628 Titus 2:13; 2 Thess 1:10.

629 LG 48; cf. Acts 3:21; Eph 1:10; Col 1:20; 2 Pet 3:10-13.

630 2 Pet 3:13; cf. Rev 21:1.

631 Eph 1:10.

from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."<sup>633</sup>

1045 For man, this consummation will be the final realization of the unity of the human race, which God willed from creation and of which the pilgrim Church has been "in the nature of sacrament."<sup>634</sup> Those who are united with Christ will form the community of the redeemed, "the holy city" of God, "the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."<sup>635</sup> She will not be wounded any longer by sin, stains, self-love, that destroy or wound the earthly community.<sup>636</sup> The beatific vision, in which God opens himself in an inexhaustible way to the elect, will be the ever-flowing well-spring of happiness, peace, and mutual communion.

1046 For the cosmos, Revelation affirms the profound common destiny of the material world and man:

349 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God . . . in hope because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay. . . . We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.<sup>637</sup>

1047 The visible universe, then, is itself destined to be transformed, "so that the world itself, restored to its original state, facing no further obstacles, should be at the service of the just," sharing their glorification in the risen Jesus Christ.<sup>638</sup>

1048 "We know neither the moment of the consummation of the earth and of man, nor the way in which the universe will be transformed. The form of this world, distorted by sin, is passing away, and we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, in which happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in the hearts of men."<sup>639</sup>

632 Cf. Rev 21:5.

633 Rev 21:4.

634 Cf. LG 1.

635 Rev 21:2, 9.

636 Cf. Rev 21:27.

637 Rom 8:19-23.

638 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 5, 32, 1: PG 7/2, 210.

639 GS 39 § 1.

1049 "Far from diminishing our concern to develop this earth, the expectancy of a new earth should spur us on, for it is here that the body of a new human family grows, foreshadowing in some way the age which is to come. That is why, although we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress clearly from the increase of the kingdom of Christ, such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society."<sup>640</sup>

1050 "When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and our enterprise . . . according to the command of the Lord and in his Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom."<sup>641</sup> God will then be "all in all" in eternal life.<sup>642</sup>

True and subsistent life consists in this: the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, pouring out his heavenly gifts on all things without exception. Thanks to his mercy, we too, men that we are, have received the inalienable promise of eternal life.<sup>643</sup>

### IN BRIEF

1051 Every man receives his eternal recompense in his immortal soul from the moment of his death in a particular judgment by Christ, the judge of the living and the dead.

1052 "We believe that the souls of all who die in Christ's grace . . . are the People of God beyond death. On the day of resurrection, death will be definitively conquered, when these souls will be reunited with their bodies" (Paul VI, *CPG* § 28).

1053 "We believe that the multitude of those gathered around Jesus and Mary in Paradise forms the Church of heaven, where in eternal blessedness they see God as he is and where they are also, to various degrees, associated with the holy angels in the divine governance exercised by Christ in glory, by interceding for us

and helping our weakness by their fraternal concern" (Paul VI, *CPG* § 29).

1054 Those who die in God's grace and friendship imperfectly purified, although they are assured of their eternal salvation, undergo a purification after death, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of God.

1055 By virtue of the "communion of saints," the Church commends the dead to God's mercy and offers her prayers, especially the holy sacrifice of the Eucharist, on their behalf.

1056 Following the example of Christ, the Church warns the faithful of the "sad and lamentable reality of eternal death" (*GCD* 69), also called "hell."

1057 Hell's principal punishment consists of eternal separation from God in whom alone man can have the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

1058 The Church prays that no one should be lost: "Lord, let me never be parted from you." If it is true that no one can save himself, it is also true that God "desires all men to be saved" (*1 Tim* 2:4), and that for him "all things are possible" (*Mt* 19:26).

1059 "The holy Roman Church firmly believes and confesses that on the Day of Judgment all men will appear in their own bodies before Christ's tribunal to render an account of their own deeds" (Council of Lyons II [1274]: *DS* 859; cf. *DS* 1549).

1060 At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. Then the just will reign with Christ for ever, 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.

<sup>640</sup> *GS* 39 § 2.

<sup>641</sup> *GS* 39 § 3.

<sup>642</sup> *1 Cor* 5:28.

<sup>643</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech. illum.* 18, 29: *PG* 33, 1049.