

Session 10



THE LAST THINGS

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THE LAST THINGS: What Happens After We Die?

INTRODUCTION

At some point in our lives we all wonder what will happen after we die. Of course, none of us can know exactly what will occur—despite the numerous books written about near-death experiences—but as Christians we have One Who Has Gone Before Us in the person of Jesus, whose Death and Resurrection shed light on what awaits us. He has given us some indication of what awaits, and the Church has continued to help us with her instruction.

The Church teaches that if we are to grow and mature as Christians, we need to take time to prayerfully consider the Four Last Things—death, judgment, Heaven, and Hell. Unless and until we take these things seriously, our life here on earth will lack meaning and focus. It's only when we consider the decisions we make in the light of eternity that our entire lives begin to make sense and our relationship with God can come to full maturity.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **The particular judgment of each soul at the moment of death**
- **Hell: what it is, and why, if we fail to repent, we will be separated from God forever**
- **Heaven, the perfect communion of life and love with the Trinity**
- **Purgatory, the purification some need before entering into full communion with God**
- **Why Catholics pray for the dead**



OPENING PRAYER

A Prayer for a Happy Death

Lord Jesus Christ,
 who willest that no man should perish,
 and to whom supplication is never
 made without the hope of mercy,
 for Thou saidst
 with Thine Own holy and blessed lips:
 “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in My name,
 shall be done unto you”;
 I ask of Thee, O LORD,
 for Thy holy Name’s sake,
 to grant me at the hour of my death
 full consciousness and the power of speech,
 sincere contrition for my sins,
 true faith, firm hope and perfect charity,
 that I may be able to say unto Thee with a clean heart:
 Into Thy hands, O LORD, I commend my spirit:
 Thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth,
 who art blessed forever and ever. Amen.

—St. Vincent Ferrer

*“O my dear
 parishioners, let
 us endeavor to get
 to heaven! There
 we shall see God.
 How happy we shall
 feel! We must get to
 heaven! What a pity
 it would be if some
 of you were to find
 yourselves on the
 other side!”*
 —St. John Vianney



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We all have various images of Heaven, but according to the video, what is Heaven?

2. In the presentation, the Catholic teaching on Purgatory is discussed. What are some of the misconceptions about Purgatory? What does the Catholic Church really teach about Purgatory? And why can Purgatory be seen, at least in some sense, as something for which we should be grateful?

3. Why is it accurate to state, “God doesn’t send people to Hell”?

CALL TO CONVERSION

After spending a few moments in prayer, write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:



#1 In the words of a traditional Catechism, “God made us to know him, to love him, and to serve him in this world, and to be happy with him forever in heaven.” As we go through our lives, the single most important question we need to ask in light of eternity is *How can we know, love, and serve God?* If we want our lives on earth to have meaning, we need to explore this question in depth. What do you think it means to know God? What does it mean to love God? What does it mean to serve God? What is one way this week that you can get to know God better? To love him more deeply? To serve him more completely? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance—and courage—to follow through on your commitment.

#2 Reflect on the following quote from the Ash Wednesday liturgy:
“Remember, man, that you are dust and to dust you shall return.”
How does this quote make you feel? Why do you think that the Church asks us to reflect on this statement at the beginning of Lent? How might this prayer help you focus more on what is truly important in this life?

#3 At the end of the presentation, Dr. Sri asks a fundamental question:
“Are you moving toward eternity with Jesus or without him?” Take some time to look over your life, your priorities, the way you spend your days. Is your life moving toward Jesus or away from him? How would your life be different if you were truly making all your decisions in the light of your eternal destiny?



CLOSING PRAYER

St. Alphonsus Liguori's Night Prayer

Jesus Christ, my God,
I adore you and thank you
for all the graces
you have given me this day.
I offer you my sleep
and all the moments of this night,
and I beg of you to keep me without sin.
Therefore, I put myself
within your sacred side
and under the mantle of our lady,
my Mother.
Let your holy angels
stand about me and keep me in peace;
and let your blessing be upon me.
Amen.



SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Here is a verse from the Bible that you can memorize and reflect on this week to help you apply today's session to your daily life:



“And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.”

—Hebrews 9:27

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For Further Reading:

For more in-depth reading about the Last Things see the following *Catechism* passages:

- *Particular Judgment: CCC 1021–1022*
- *Heaven: CCC 1023–1029*
- *Hell: CCC 1033–1037*
- *Purgatory: CCC 1030–1032*
- *Last Judgment: CCC 1038–1041*

Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 13*
- *The Last Things* by Regis Martin
- *Heaven, the Heart's Deepest Longing* by Peter Kreeft
- *Encyclical Letter, Saved by Hope* by Pope Benedict XVI
(www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html)



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