

## 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!

2677, 336 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. . . .

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>591</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>592</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  
679 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>593</sup>

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

591 OCF, Prayer of Commendation.

592 Cf. 2 Tim 1:9-10.

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

that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven—through a purification<sup>594</sup> or immediately,<sup>595</sup>—or immediate and everlasting damnation.<sup>596</sup>

At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love.<sup>597</sup> 1470

## 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>598</sup> 954

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>599</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>600</sup> but they retain, or rather find, their true identity, their own name.<sup>601</sup> 1011

For life is to be with Christ; where Christ is, there is life, there is the kingdom.<sup>602</sup>

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

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

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

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

598 1 Jn 3:2; cf. 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:4.

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

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

601 Cf. Rev 2:17.

602 St. Ambrose, *In Luc.*, 10, 121: PL 15, 1834A.

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  
 959, 1720 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>603</sup>

1028 Because of his transcendence, God cannot be seen as he is,  
 1722 unless he himself opens up his mystery to man's immediate con-  
 163 templation and gives him the capacity for it. The Church calls this contemplation of God in his heavenly glory "the beatific vision":

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>604</sup>

956 1029 In the glory of heaven the blessed continue joyfully to  
 668 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>605</sup>

### 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>606</sup> The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on

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<sup>603</sup> 1 Cor 2:9.

<sup>604</sup> St. Cyprian, *Ep.* 58, 10, 1: CSEL 3/2, 665.

<sup>605</sup> *Rev* 22:5; cf. *Mt* 25:21, 23.

<sup>606</sup> 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>607</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>608</sup>

**1032** This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: "Therefore [Judas 958 Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin."<sup>609</sup> From the beginning the Church has 1371 honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, 1479 they may attain the beatific vision of God.<sup>610</sup> The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead:

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>611</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>612</sup> Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet 1861 the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his 393 brethren.<sup>613</sup> To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting 633 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."

607 Cf. 1 Cor 3:15; 1 Pet 1:7.

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

609 2 Macc 12:46.

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

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

612 1 Jn 3:14-15.

613 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>614</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>615</sup> and that he will pronounce the condemnation: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!"<sup>616</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>617</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>618</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>619</sup>

1037 God predestines no one to go to hell,<sup>620</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>621</sup>

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614 614 Cf. *Mt* 5:22, 29; 10:28; 13:42, 50; *Mk* 9:43-48.

615 615 *Mt* 13:41-42.

616 *Mt* 25:41.

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

618 *Mt* 7:13-14.

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

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

621 2 *Pet* 3:9.

Therefore, Lord, we pray:  
 graciously accept this oblation of our service,  
 that of your whole family, . . .  
 order our days in your peace,  
 and command that we be delivered from eternal damnation  
 and counted among the flock of those you have chosen.<sup>622</sup>

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## V. THE LAST JUDGMENT

**1038** The resurrection of all the dead, "of both the just and the unjust,"<sup>623</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>624</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>625</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>626</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: 678

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>627</sup>

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622 *Roman Missal*, EP I (Roman Canon) 87.

623 *Acts* 24:15.

624 *Jn* 5:28-29.

625 *Mt* 25:31, 32, 46.

626 Cf. *Jn* 12:49.

627 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  
 637 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  
 314 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>628</sup>

1041 The message of the Last Judgment calls men to conversion while God is still giving them "the acceptable time, . . . the day of  
 1432 salvation."<sup>629</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>630</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  
 769 ever with Christ, glorified in body and soul. The universe itself will  
 670 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>631</sup>

1043 Sacred Scripture calls this mysterious renewal, which will transform humanity and the world, "new heavens and a new  
 671 earth."<sup>632</sup> It will be the definitive realization of God's plan to bring  
 280, 518 under a single head "all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth."<sup>633</sup>

1044 In this new universe, the heavenly Jerusalem, God will have his dwelling among men.<sup>634</sup> "He will wipe away every tear

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628 Cf. *Song* 8:6.

629 *2 Cor* 6:2.

630 *Titus* 2:13; *2 Thess* 1:10.

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

632 *2 Pet* 3:13; cf. *Rev* 21:1.

633 *Eph* 1:10.

634 Cf. *Rev* 21:5.

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>635</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 sacra- 775  
ment."<sup>636</sup> Those who are united with Christ will form the commu-  
nity of the redeemed, "the holy city" of God, "the Bride, the wife 1404  
of the Lamb."<sup>637</sup> She will not be wounded any longer by sin, stains,  
self-love, that destroy or wound the earthly community.<sup>638</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:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing 349  
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>639</sup>

**1047** The visible universe, then, is itself destined to be trans-  
formed, "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>640</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 673  
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>641</sup>

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635 *Rev* 21:4.

636 Cf. *LG* 1.

637 *Rev* 21:2, 9.

638 Cf. *Rev* 21:27.

639 *Rom* 8:19-23.

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

641 *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  
2820 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>642</sup>

1050 "When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature  
and our enterprise . . . according to the command of the Lord and  
1709 in his Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from  
the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents  
260 to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom."<sup>643</sup> God will then  
be "all in all" in eternal life.<sup>644</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>645</sup>

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## IN BRIEF

- 1051 Every man receives his eternal recompense in his im-  
mortal soul from the moment of his death in a particu-  
lar 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 con-  
quered, 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 gover-  
nance exercised by Christ in glory, by interceding for us

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<sup>642</sup> GS 39 § 2.

<sup>643</sup> GS 39 § 3.

<sup>644</sup> 1 Cor 15:28.

<sup>645</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech. illum.* 18, 29: PG 33, 1049.

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.
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