

Catechism Course 2021

Clondalkin

14 Life after Death

Death & Judgement

Scripture speaks of two judgements: the judgement of the individual soul immediately after death, and the collective judgement of the human race at the end of time.

St John of cross says 'at the evening of life, we shall be judged by our love.'

To choose to sin is to choose against love, and in life we are shaped by our love or our lack of love. Until the end we can turn to God (perhaps even in the last split second Christ will appear in the soul¹), but after death our will is fixed on God or on our sin.

Heaven

We are predestined for heaven, that is, God has made us for heaven.

To be in heaven is to be united with God. The 'beatific vision': To see God.

At the end of time, Christ will bring about a new heaven and a new earth, where we will dwell with him in joy forever. We will have glorified bodies.

Heaven cannot be boring! -This is because God in infinite goodness, truth and beauty, which our finite will desires.

Purgatory

To be in heaven means to be part of the Communion of Saints. To be saints means we need to be purged of our sins. Even though in confession we are completely forgiven of sins, sin leaves a stain on the soul which needs to be washed away.

Hell

Heaven is our destiny, willed by God; in contrast, hell is not willed by God. Yet Jesus is clear that hell is a possibility for those who turn from God. As we have free will, it is possible for us to turn from love and life, from God. As human beings we are made to enjoy God: to be deprived of this is a terrible loss. Unlike Heaven, the Church has never taught that we know that any one individual is in hell.

Some further resources

- Catechism, paragraphs 988-1050
- CS Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (a novel about heaven and hell)
- JRR Tolkien, *Leaf by Niggel* (a novel about heaven and purgatory)
- CS Lewis *The Problem of Pain*. Available online at http://www.samizdat.qc.ca/cosmos/philo/PDFs/ProblemofPain_CSL.pdf
- Kreeft, *A Handbook of Catholic Apologetics*, Sections on Heaven, Hell and Salvation
- Youtube video on Hell by Bishop Robert Barron <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8zhnooySk4>
- Von Balthasar, *Dare We "Hope That All Men Be Saved"?*
- In contrast to the above, a somewhat more traditional view on hell and salvation: Ralph Martin's book *The Fulfilment of all Desire*.

1 Note, this does not appear in the catechism, but is a view held by many mainstream catholic theologians.