

## *Death, Judgment, Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven*

### **Q. 291. Why should a Christian face death with courage and joy?**

We have good reason to face death with courage and joy because: (1) Christ's Resurrection has conquered death; (2) in the risen Christ we live, die, and shall live again; and (3) we look forward to our homecoming with God our loving Father.

*1. We have good reason to face death with courage and joy because Christ's Resurrection has conquered death.*

Death is the separation of body and soul. It is the passage of the soul over the threshold between earthly life and the life beyond. Though the soul continues to exist, it is disturbed by the dissolution of the body, for the soul loses the instrument through which it has acted.

Christ gave death, which was introduced after Adam's fall, a new significance. He changed it into an event that brings salvation. By becoming man and by taking death upon Himself, as mankind's representative, Jesus gave Himself as a perfect sacrifice to the heavenly Father. He expiated, or made satisfaction for, Adam's surrender to Satan, the effects of which passed on to all mankind. From the time of the Crucifixion, man has been able to face death with the expectation of obtaining everlasting life in God's Kingdom.

*2. We have good reason to face death with courage and joy because in the risen Christ we live, die, and shall live again.*

The Resurrection of Jesus is the most important testimony of Sacred Scripture to our future resurrection in the body. Through Jesus' merits, God has set up a new order, according to which Jesus is the beginning of our resurrection.

St. Paul said: "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:21-23). As the second Adam, Who gives new life to all things, Christ achieves His final victory over Satan, the lord of the earth, who gained dominion over all mankind by the fall of the first Adam.

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*For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.*

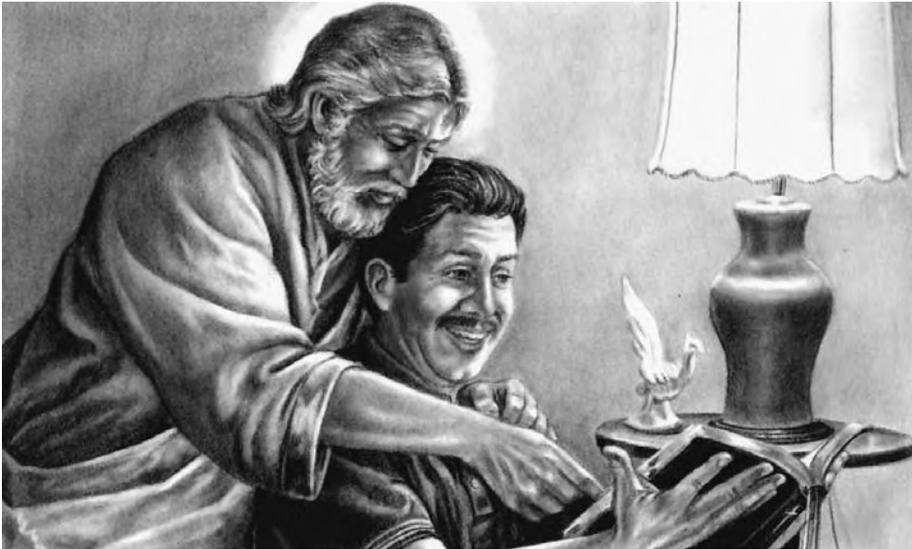
3. *We have good reason to face death with courage and joy because we look forward to our homecoming with God our loving Father.*

As Catholics, we believe that the just, who have been made perfect through death and Purgatory, are now in heaven, though they have not yet risen in the body, nor undergone the final judgment.

Heaven is the fullness of the Kingdom of God. It would be insufficient to consider heaven only as the place or state of reward from the standpoint of individual happiness. In fact, it is primarily a place and form of the manifestation of God's glory. Each of us is called to glorify God in heaven in a perfect manner. The essential element in this adoration and honor is our love and self-surrender to Him.

God is the highest good Whom we not only shall know and love, but also live within, in a mysterious sharing of His life. This life in God is purest joy, everlasting rest, fullest attainment, and quiet happiness. We look forward to this state of perfection, the greatest experience of our whole lives. It surpasses any experience we may have on this earth. So, we should face death with courage and joy, as we await our homecoming with God our loving Father.

#F3-63



### ***Sacred Scripture***

Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants! *Luke 12:35-38*

### ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***

**1010** Because of Christ, Christian death has a positive meaning: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”<sup>71</sup> “The saying is sure: if we have died with him, we will also live with him.”<sup>72</sup> What is essentially new about Christian death is this: through Baptism, the Christian has already “died with Christ” sacramentally, in order to live a new life; and if we die in Christ’s

grace, physical death completes this “dying with Christ” and so completes our incorporation into him in his redeeming act: “It is better for me to die in (*eis*) 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.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Vatican Council II**

While the mind is at a loss before the mystery of death, the Church, taught by divine Revelation, declares that God has created man in view of a blessed destiny that lies beyond the limits of his sad state on earth. Moreover, the Christian faith teaches that bodily death, from which man would have been immune had he not sinned, will be overcome when that wholeness which he lost through his own fault will be given once again to him by the almighty and merciful Savior. For God has called man, and still calls him, to cleave with all his being to him in sharing for ever a life that is divine and free from all decay. *Modern World*, 18

#D2-25



### **Summary Prayer**

*Lord, may the thought of death be ever present to the eyes of our souls. May the remembrance of the final judgment and of the torment which the lost experience be continually in our minds, that we may never deliberately commit sin. When You return from the celestial wedding feast which You celebrate in heaven with Your Bride, the Church Triumphant, and You come again as Judge, may we be ready to enter with You into the eternal reward which You have prepared for Your watchful servants.*

*Jesus, help us to prepare ourselves for Your coming by detaching our affections from earthly things. When we are called upon to meet You, we must not be hindered by attachments to the things of the earth. We want to lift high in the darkness of this mortal existence “a burning lamp” to symbolize the flame of our devotion, which has been fed by meditation on the eternal truths, as a lamp is fed by oil, that You may see its bright light immediately upon Your coming.*

*Help us to live as watchful servants of our heavenly Master, withdrawn from the interests of this passing world, through self-sacrifice and tending toward the eternal and heavenly country by means of prayer, good works, and frequent reception of the sacraments.*

*Jesus, help us to die in the state of grace, so that the day of our death may be for us a day of redemption, a day that we may hail with gladness. But, best of all, may it be the day on which we shall see You, the Friend Whom we have loved and served all our lives. Even if You send us away from Your presence for a while, until we are cleansed from the remnants of venial sins which still stain our souls, we know that we shall soon be admitted to the beatific vision of Your glorious face forever and ever. Amen.*

**Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise** (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. What are three reasons why Christians should face death with courage and joy?
2. How can you prepare yourself for a peaceful and holy death?
3. Pray the Rosary with your family, asking Our Lady to pray for each person “now and at the hour of death. Amen.”

### **Q. 292. What is the particular judgment?**

At the very instant that the soul leaves the body, it is judged by Almighty God. This is the particular judgment.

If we die with no sins on our soul which require atonement or satisfaction, the immediate sight of God in heaven will itself be our judgment.

#### **Sacred Scripture**

For nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. *Matthew 10:26*  
And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. *Hebrews 4:13*

#### **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

**1022** Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven—through a purification<sup>1</sup> or immediately,<sup>2</sup>—or immediate and everlasting damnation.<sup>3</sup> At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Vatican Council II**

When the Lord will come in glory, and all his angels with him (cf. Mt. 25:31), death will be no more and all things will be subject to him (cf. 1 Cor. 15:26-27). But at the present time some of his disciples are pilgrims on earth. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory, contemplating “in full light, God himself triune and one, exactly as he is” [Ecumenical Council of Florence (1438-45), Decree for the Greeks]. All of us, however, in varying degrees and in different ways share in the same charity towards God and our neighbors, and we all sing the one hymn of glory to our God. All, indeed, who are of Christ and who have

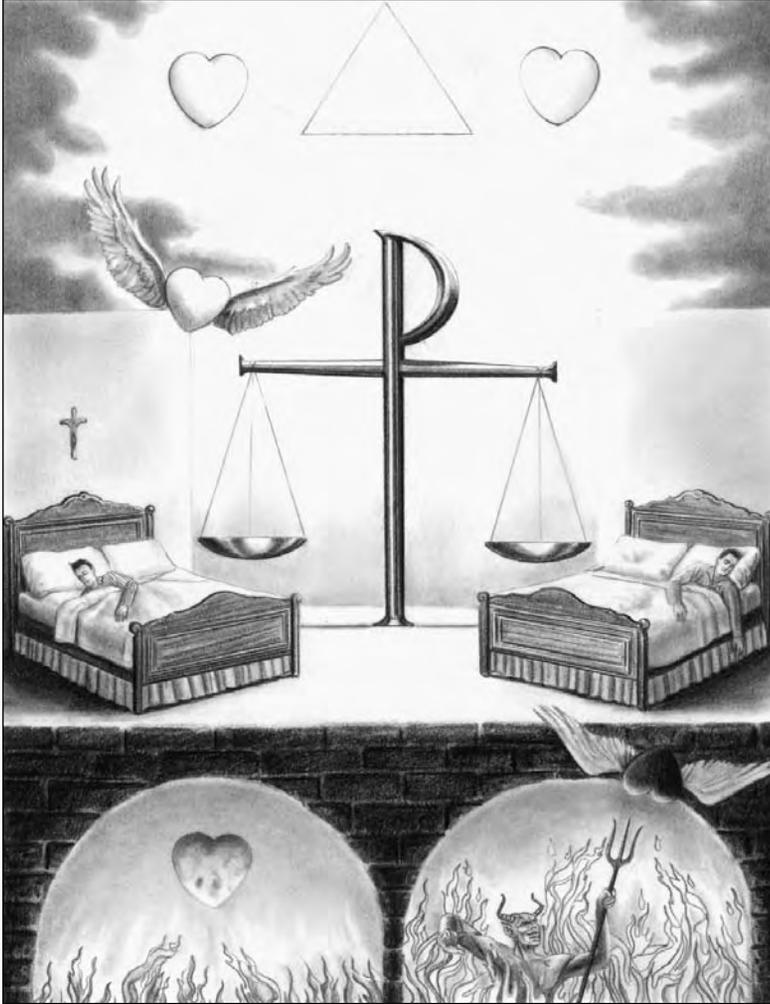
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*For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.*

his Spirit form one Church and in Christ cleave together (Eph. 4:16). So it is that the union of the wayfarers with the brethren who sleep in the peace of Christ is in no way interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the constant faith of the Church, this union is reinforced by an exchange of spiritual goods. *The Church, 49*

### Catechism by Diagram

#J3-17



**The Particular Judgment.** At the moment the soul leaves the body after death, it is judged (scale) by Jesus Christ (monogram). If it is in the state of grace, it goes to Heaven (heart to Heaven), or, if it has to undergo temporal punishment for sins not yet atoned for (heart with spots in fire), it first goes to Purgatory. If it is in mortal sin (black heart), it does not die in the state of grace and goes to eternal punishment (fire, devil).

#### **Summary Prayer**

*Father, You weigh what is in our hearts. Free us from all evil, and as we wait for Your day of judgment, set a firm guard on our thoughts, so that, as we return good for evil, we may praise Your kind justice forever and ever. Amen.*

**Q. 293. What is hell?**

Hell is the eternal separation from God.

The person who dies in the state of mortal sin has deliberately torn himself from God during life and has died without that bond of union with God which we call sanctifying grace. He has no means by which to establish contact with God and has lost Him forever. He is in hell.

We know that in hell there is everlasting fire, because Jesus Himself said so. It is not the kind of fire we see on earth; earthly fire cannot afflict the soul, since the soul is a spirit. There is in hell a “pain of sense” of such a nature that it cannot be better described by any other word in our human language than by the word “fire.” What matters most is the “pain of loss.” The eternal separation from God constitutes the worst of hell’s suffering. It will be extreme loneliness.

**Sacred Scripture**

And they shall go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh. *Isaiah 66:24*

Then he will say to those at his left hand, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...” And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. *Matthew 25:41, 46*

**Catechism of the Catholic Church**

**1037** God predestines no one to go to hell;<sup>1</sup> for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence 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>2</sup>: “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>3</sup>

**Vatican Council II**

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 (cf. Heb. 9:27), we may merit to enter with him into the marriage feast and be numbered among the blessed (cf. Mt. 25:31-46) and not, like the wicked and slothful servants (cf. Mt. 25:26), be ordered to depart into the eternal fire (cf. Mt. 25:41), into the outer darkness where “men will weep and gnash their teeth” (Mt. 22:13 and 25:30). *The Church, 48*

**Q. 294. What is Purgatory?**

Purgatory is a place of spiritual cleansing. Anyone who dies in the grace of God but is not free from all temporal punishment due to sins cannot go to heaven at once. Those who still have to do penance for their sins go first to Purgatory.

“But nothing unclean shall enter it [heaven], nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:27).

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*For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.*

**Sacred Scripture**

Q. 293. Mt 5:29-30; Lk 16:19-31.

Q. 294. 2 Cor 7:1.

**Catechism of the Catholic Church**

Q. 293. Paragraphs **1033-1037**.

Q. 294. Paragraphs **1030-1032**.

Purification is a matter of purging the soul and of preparing it for the full perfection of the supernatural life, which it already possesses. The soul must complete what was lacking in its fidelity and honor to God on earth. The soul's final turning to God happens through suffering. The real element which effects this cleansing and fulfillment of the soul in Purgatory is its living love of God, which it possessed on leaving this life.

The soul in Purgatory is animated by an ardent desire for absolute holiness in order to please God. Purgatory will continue to exist until the whole world has been judged on the Last Day. After this final judgment, there will be nothing left but heaven and hell.

#P28-5



### ***Sacred Scripture***

Truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny. *Matthew 5:26*

Each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. *1 Corinthians 3:13-15*

### ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***

**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.

## **Q. 295. What is the Beatific Vision?**

The Beatific Vision is an immediate vision of God.

We believe that the just who have been made perfect through death and Purgatory are now in heaven, though they have neither risen in the body nor

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*For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.*

**Sacred Scripture**

Q. 295. 1 Jn 3:2; Rev 7:9-17.

**Catechism of the Catholic Church**

Q. 295. Paragraphs 163, **1023**, **1028**, 1032, **1045**.

undergone the final judgment. We are called to glorify God in heaven in a perfect manner by loving Him and surrendering ourselves to Him. God is the highest Good, Whom we shall not only know and love, but also live in, in a mysterious sharing of His life.

This face-to-face union with God is the happiness of heaven. God will give the saved or predestined a full flowering of supernatural life in heaven because He is infinitely merciful. They shall be with Him forever.

The Beatific Vision is a union with God. God possesses the soul and the soul possesses God in a unity which is so complete that it is infinitely beyond the happiness of any human love. This happiness is eternal; man was created for heaven, the only place where he can truly be happy.



#D2-23

### ***Sacred Scripture***

But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.” *1 Corinthians 2:9*

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. *1 Corinthians 13:12*

### ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***

**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: “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>72</sup>

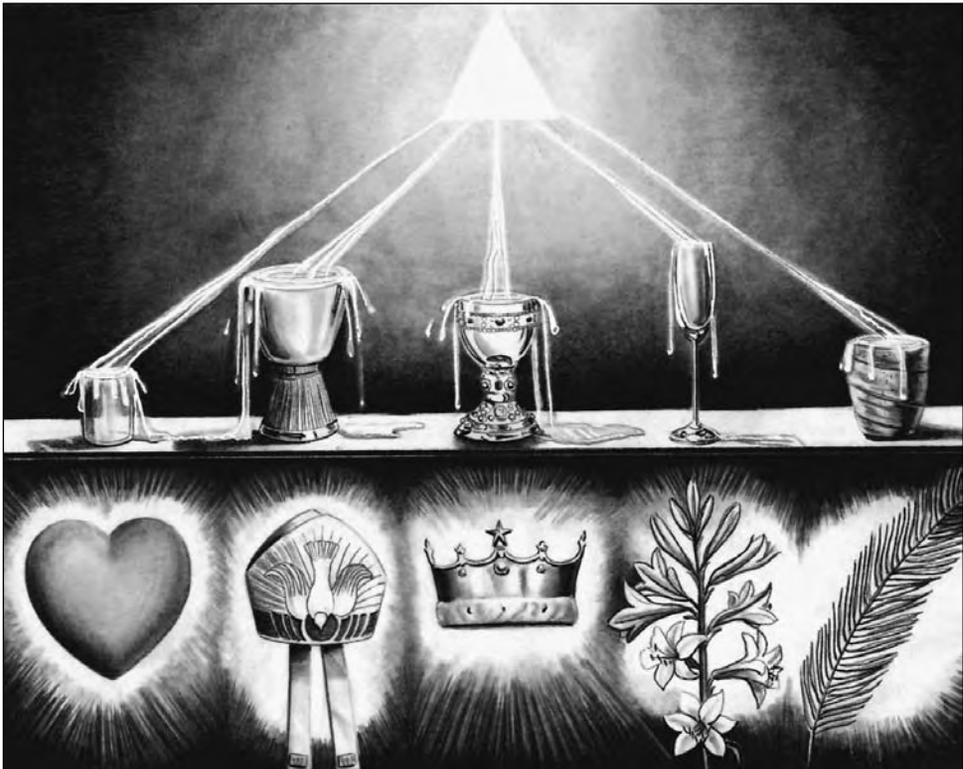
### ***Vatican Council II***

Christ won this victory when he rose to life, for by his death he freed man from death. Faith, therefore, with its solidly based teaching, provides every thoughtful man with an answer to his anxious queries about his future lot. At the same time it makes him able to be united in Christ with his loved ones who have already died, and gives hope that they have found true life with God. *Modern World, 18*

Animated and drawn together in his Spirit we press onwards on our journey towards the consummation of history which fully corresponds to the plan of his love: “to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:10). The Lord himself said: “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Apoc. 22:12-13). *Modern World, 45*

## **Catechism by Diagram**

#H7-4



**The Beatific Vision.** The degree of sanctifying grace will determine the degree of our happiness in heaven. In order that we may be capable of this direct vision of God, God (triangle) will give us a supernatural power that we call the Light of Glory, which can be given only to a soul already united with God by means of sanctifying grace. All will be perfectly happy (full containers) because they will possess God in proportion (variety of sizes) to the grace they possess (streams of graces coming from God and filling each container).

**Summary Prayer**

*Heavenly Father, You raise us up from our lowliness by giving us the hope of eternal life. May we always serve You in this our pilgrimage and come to enjoy the happiness of our home with You, through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise** (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. What does our Faith teach us about heaven, hell and Purgatory?
2. How does the reality of heaven, hell and Purgatory affect your daily decisions?
3. Pray and make sacrifices for the conversion of sinners, that they may repent and receive forgiveness for their sins. Also pray for the holy souls in Purgatory, that they may be relieved of their sufferings and speedily enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Chapter Summary Prayer**

*O God, You search the hearts of all, both the good and the wicked. May those who are in danger because of their love for You find security in You now, and on the day of judgment, may they rejoice in seeing You face to face.*

*Lord, You are the fullness of life, of holiness, and of joy. Fill our days with the love of Your wisdom, that we may bear fruit in the beauty of holiness, like a tree watered by running streams. Help us to seek the values which will bring us lasting joy in this changing world. In our desire for what You promise, make us one in mind and heart, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.*

**Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 81**

*See Appendix A for more references.*

**Q. 291. Why should a Christian face death with courage and joy?**

*Gospel of Life, John Paul II, sect. 25, 28, 29, 36, 44, 51, 67, 81, 97, 102, 105;  
On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 26;  
On Human Work, John Paul II, sect. 27;  
On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, John Paul II, sect. 25.*



**Thought Provokers**

*Please see Appendix C for the answers.*

- Q. 291: How can we be sure that when we die we are going to Heaven?
- Q. 292: Practically speaking, how can we prepare for death?
- Q. 293: Some people reject the Catholic doctrine of God since they believe that there cannot be an all-good and an all-loving God Who would allow some of His creatures, created in His image and likeness, to spend eternity in hell. How can we help these people to accept the Catholic doctrine of God in light of these objections?
- Q. 294: Is Purgatory a state of suffering?
- Q. 295: In Heaven do the blessed and the angels really see God?