

Resurrection of the Body

Q. 296. What do we mean when we say, “I believe in the resurrection of the body”?

When we say, “I believe in the resurrection of the body,” we mean that we believe that, at the end of the world, all the bodies of those who have lived on earth will be raised from the dead and will be united again with their souls.

If the whole man—body and soul—has loved and served God, even at the cost of pain and sacrifice, it is just that the whole man, body as well as soul, enjoys that eternal union with God which is the reward of such love.

If the whole man has rejected God by unrepented mortal sin, it is just that the body should share, with the soul, in the eternal separation from God which the whole man has chosen.

Our bodies will no longer need food or drink or rest, and will be in some sense “spiritualized.” In addition, the bodies of those who are in heaven will be “glorified”; they will possess a perfection and beauty which will be a sharing in the perfection and beauty of the soul that has been united to God.

Sacred Scripture

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. *Job 19:25-27*

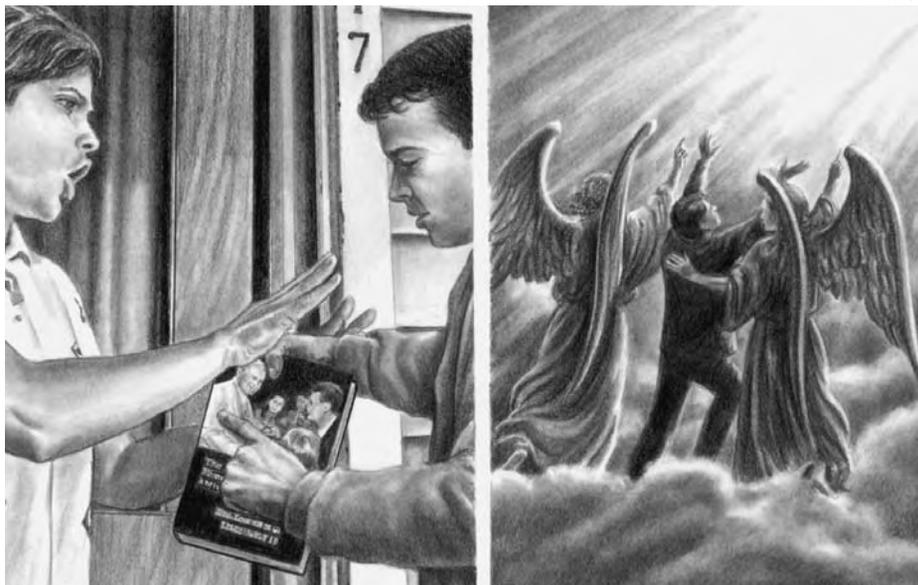
Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. *1 Corinthians 15:51-57*

And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. *Revelation 20:13-14*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

989 We firmly believe, and hence we hope that, just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives for ever, so after death the righteous will live for ever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day.¹ Our resurrection, like his own, will be the work of the Most Holy Trinity: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you.”²

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



Vatican Council II

We know neither the moment of the consummation of the earth and of man (cf. Acts 1:7) nor the way 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, whose happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in the hearts of men. Then with death conquered the sons of God will be raised in Christ and what was sown in weakness and dishonor will put on the imperishable: charity and its works will remain and all of creation, which God made for man, will be set free from its bondage to decay. *Modern World*, 39

Q. 297. What do we mean when we say, “We believe in life everlasting”?

We believe that those who die in the state of grace will live with God forever. “And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3). In God alone can we find eternal happiness.

This life is a time of testing and trial. The eternal happiness of heaven consists essentially in the fulfillment of love. Unless we depart this world with love for God in our hearts, we will be unable to experience the happiness of heaven. Our life upon this earth is the time which God has given us to develop and to prove our love for Him. We must prove that our love for God is greater than any of His created gifts, such as pleasure, wealth, fame, or friendship. We must prove that our love can withstand the pressure of man-made evils, such as poverty, pain, humiliation, or injustice.

The thought of these final realities—death, judgment, Purgatory, heaven, and hell—should fill us with Christian hope, but at the same time with an awareness of the responsibility we have to attain life everlasting.

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

Vatican Council II

At the hour when Christ will appear, when the glorious resurrection of the dead will occur, the glory of God will light up the heavenly city, and the Lamb will be its lamp (cf. Apoc. 21:24). *The Church, 51*

In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle. With all the warriors of the heavenly army we sing a hymn of glory to the Lord; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ, until he our life shall appear and we too will appear with him in glory. *Sacred Liturgy, 8*

Summary Prayer

God of mercy and compassion, grant that we who are baptized into the death of Your beloved Son may die to all sin and selfishness and eagerly await the dawning of our joyful resurrection, through the merits of the same Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

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

1. On what basis will we receive eternal happiness?
2. Is your love for God greater than your love for His created gifts of pleasure, wealth, or human friendship? How can you serve God in the ordinary circumstances of your life, even at the cost of pain and sacrifice?
3. Meditate on the resurrection of the body at the end of the world. Let the thought of heaven and eternal life fill you with courage and hope as you perfectly and lovingly fulfill your daily duties, especially when you experience difficulties and struggles.

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Chapter Summary Prayer

Father, in Your plan of salvation, Your Son, Jesus Christ, accepted the Cross and thus freed us from the power of the enemy. May we come to share in the glory of His Resurrection. May we hold fast to the life of grace which You have given to us and so come to the eternal gifts You promise. Watch over us, for we have been saved by Christ. May we, who are redeemed by His suffering and death, always rejoice in His Resurrection.

God our Father, may we look forward with hope to our resurrection, for You have made us Your sons and daughters and have restored the joy of our youth by giving us Your grace. Hear the prayers of Your newborn people and strengthen Your Church, that we may answer Your call. May we rise and come forth into the light of day, to stand in Your presence until eternity dawns.

God of mercy, You have filled us with the hope of our resurrection by restoring man to His original dignity. May we who relive this mystery in the Mass come to share it in perpetual love. Grant that everything we do may be directed by the knowledge of Your truth. May the Eucharistic mysteries give us new purpose and bring us to a new life in You. May the Easter mystery we celebrate be effective throughout our life. You restored us to life by raising Christ from death. Strengthen us by this Easter sacrament; may we feel Its saving power in our daily lives. May It bring us to the glory of the resurrection and to eternal life with You. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 82

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 296. What do we mean when we say, “We believe in the resurrection of the body?”

On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 26.

Q. 297. What do we mean when we say, “We believe in life everlasting”?

On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 26;

On Human Work, John Paul II, sect. 25;

On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, John Paul II, sect. 25.

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Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

Q. 296: Must we believe that our resurrected bodies are identical with the bodies we now have and which will perish after death?

Q. 297: Isn't it true that even the souls in hell will live forever?