

The Last Judgment

Q. 298. What is the Last Judgment?

The Last Judgment is the universal judgment of the human race at the resurrection of the dead at the end of the world.

“When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 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” (Matthew 25:31-33).

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done” (Revelation 20:11-12).

The Last Judgment will be a social judgment, because it will manifest to the world God’s justice in condemning sinners and His mercy in those who are saved. It will also be a total or general judgment, since not only people’s moral conduct, but all the accumulated blessings or injuries which will have resulted from each person’s good or evil deeds will be revealed.

This general judgment is called the Last Judgment, since it is not followed by another and since its sentence endures forever. It takes place on the Last Day, and, along with the resurrection of the body and the renewal of the world, is an element in the coming of the Lord with power.

The general judgment is more than the promulgation of the sentence already passed on so many at their particular judgments, for it also concerns those who are still living on that day. The whole human race will be judged. Judgment will be passed too on the angels—both good and bad; indeed on all of creation. Each individual person will once more be summoned to appear before the Lord as His Judge.

In this judgment each person will be given a view over his whole life and its significance. He will see it in the light of the Lord. The sentence which was passed upon us in our particular judgment will now be publicly confirmed. All of our sins—and all of our virtues, too—will be known.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

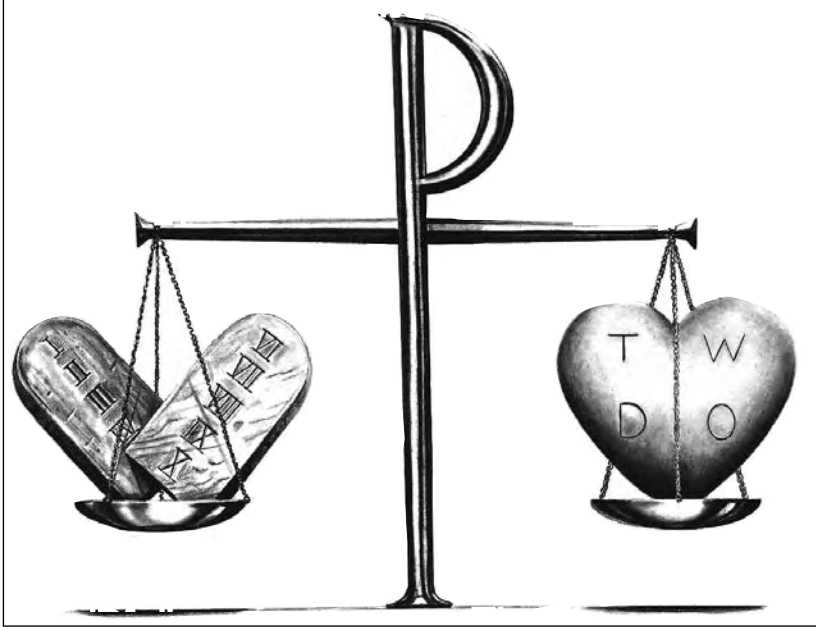
1040 The Last Judgment will come when Christ returns in glory. Only the Father knows the day and the hour; only he determines the moment of its coming. Then through his Son Jesus

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

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 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.¹

Catechism by Diagram

#J3-16



Jesus Our Judge. Jesus Christ (monogram) will judge us according to His Commandments (tablets) concerning our thoughts (T), words (W), deeds (D), and omissions (O). Christ will pronounce a sentence which cannot be reversed. At the time of judgement, only God's justice prevails.

Vatican Council II

Already present in figure at the beginning of the world, this Church was prepared in marvelous fashion in the history of the people of Israel and in the old Alliance. Established in this last age of the world, and made manifest in the outpouring of the Spirit, it will be brought to glorious completion at the end of time. At that moment, as the Fathers put it, all the just from the time of Adam, "from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect" [See St. Gregory the Great, Homily, In Evange.19,1: PL 76; 1154B] will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church. *The Church*, 2

Q. 299. What will take place on the day of the Last Judgment?

On the day of the Last Judgment: (1) All of us will be revealed, "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Corinthians 5:10). Then (2) "those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:29).

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



1. On the day of the Last Judgment, all of us will be revealed, “for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The office of judging all mankind at the end of the world is given to our Lord Jesus Christ, not only as God, but also as Son of Man, or Messiah. Our Lord Himself taught us that He would be the judge of mankind.

“The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” (John 5:22-23).

The divine reward of eternal life requires our faithfulness to God. Freed from sin and made servants of God, we receive, as the fruit of our good works, an increase of personal sanctification and, in the end, eternal life, which is the greatest gift of God. St. Paul says: “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:22-23).

2. On the day of the Last Judgment, “those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29).

Our Lord will reward each of us according to our works on the day of the general judgment, and will give an eternal life of happiness to those who have persevered in good works to the end. He will punish unrepentant sinners. St. Paul says: “For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life” (Romans 2:6-7).

In heaven, the blessed shall be absorbed in possessing the infinitely perfect God, the greatest love that exists. The keenest human love is but a pale shadow of this love. They shall also see Christ, the God-man, in His glorified manhood, and shall live in community with the angels and the saints.

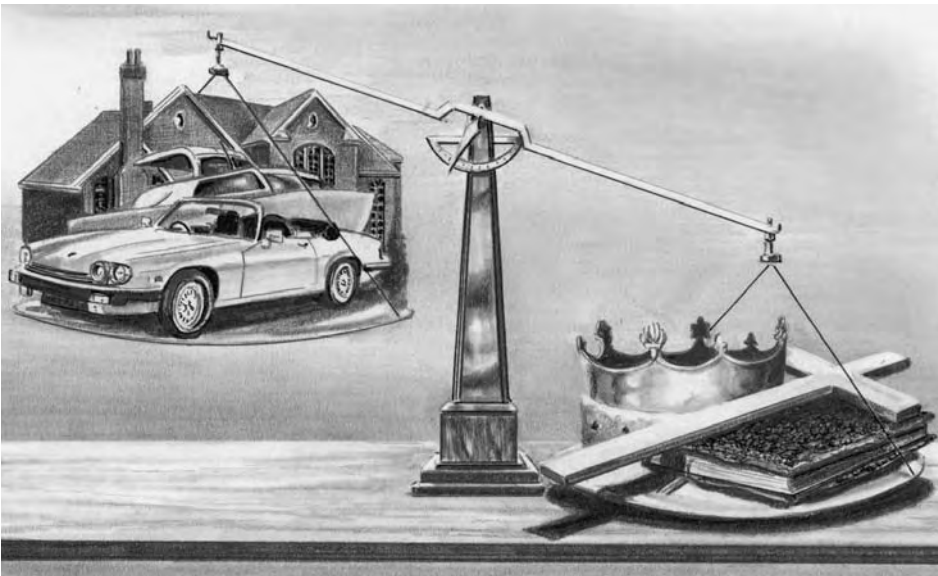
Happiness in this life is neither perfect nor complete. God, Who is infinitely good, would not place in our hearts the desire for perfect happiness if there were no way in which that desire could be fulfilled. Union with God in heaven will be more complete and joyous than we can ever imagine. St. Paul wrote about the wisdom that God has predestined to be our glory: “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).

The blessed shall also know their loved ones in heaven who have died in the grace of God, and they shall rejoice at their presence.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1039 In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man’s relationship with God will be laid bare.¹ The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life: “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.’”²

#J3-28



Splendor of Truth

The question is not so much about rules to be followed, but about the full meaning of life. This is in fact the aspiration at the heart of every human decision and action, the quiet searching and interior prompting which sets freedom in motion. This question is ultimately an appeal to the absolute Good which attracts and beckons us; it is the echo of a call from God who is the origin and goal of man's life. (*section 7*)

Summary Prayer

Jesus, in the Incarnation You entered into the world, being clothed in the infirmities of man. You came to earth in order to set up in men's hearts the Kingdom of God, but You were rejected by the people of Your time. You died the death of a public criminal. Your mission, judged according to the opinion of the people, seemed a complete failure. However, this was part of the divine plan. Being the all-knowing and all-powerful God, You reserve Your triumph until the Last Day, when You will come in Your glory to complete triumphantly Your work upon earth and to establish forever the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God in heaven.

Your plan implies that we must be judged before being made citizens of the eternal Kingdom. Our entrance into the Kingdom will be based upon our acceptance of the divine will. The angels of God will gather together Your elect, and as the Founder of the Kingdom, You will judge all men.

We believe that the Last Judgment is universal. It will come unexpectedly and with extraordinary suddenness, like lightning.

We believe that the dead will rise again. For the blessed, this resurrection will be glorious. Accompanied by angels, they will go in a glorious procession to the place of judgment. But the resurrection of the damned will be hideous, bearing to their exceeding shame the curse of their sins in their bodies. They will be driven by evil spirits to the place of judgment.

Then You will come, glorious, majestic, and powerful. You will be publicly and solemnly acknowledged as Head, King, and Judge of nations and men. By the greatness of Your omnipotence, all consciences will suddenly be laid open and illuminated as one enormous picture—the great picture of the City of God and of hell below. The Last Judgment will be the grand finale of the whole history of the Church and of mankind. Lord, we believe in your words, which will not pass away.

Jesus, a heaven of goodness, love, and tenderness will beam upon the blessed as You turn to them with a kind and gentle glance and say, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). You will give them the Kingdom in return for so little. You will assure them that their works, done out of faith and love for You, deserve this: for what they have done to the least of men, they have done to You. They will enter into life everlasting with You. May we be among them! Let us suffer in this world in order to be glorified in the next. We despise the fallen world and its principles. May we possess You eternally.

We believe that an irrevocable sentence of damnation must be pronounced upon the lost, because You cannot do otherwise than to banish forever from Your presence those who hate You and will hate you forever.

Jesus, You will be our Judge. At the moment of death, the opinions of other people will not concern us; we shall care only for what You think of us. While we are still in this life, help us to avail ourselves of all the gifts of Your love, to make use of Your sacraments, and to pray and perform works of mercy. Be not our Judge, but our Savior, when we appear before You at the Judgment. To You be all honor, praise, and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise

1. The Last Judgment will be a social and final judgment. What does this mean? What will happen to those who have done good and those who have done evil during their lives on earth?
2. How can you and your family prepare yourselves for the Last Judgment so as to obtain eternal life?
3. Pray to God for the gift of perseverance as you and your family strive to be faithful to Him in the fulfillment of your daily duties and in the practice of good works.

#J3-27



Q. 300. What will take place when Christ returns with power?

When Christ returns with power as Judge of the living and the dead: (1) He will give His people to the Father, and (2) the Church will then reach perfection and enter into the fullness of God.

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



1. When Christ returns with power as Judge of the living and the dead, He will give His people to the Father.

The great event of the Second Coming of our Lord in power and glory will be, at the same time, the judgment and the raising of the dead in their bodies.

When Jesus has subjected all things to Himself, He will deliver His dominion to the Father. “Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power” (1 Corinthians 15:24). United to man through Jesus Christ, the whole creation shares in His continual sacrifice and perfect worship of the Father in the Holy Spirit. St. Paul says: “When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one” (1 Corinthians 15:28).

2. When Christ returns with power as Judge of the living and the dead, the Church will then reach perfection and enter into the fullness of God.

Death is the beginning of our resurrection. The particular judgment places the individual soul in its proper eternal setting. This placement is confirmed in the Last Judgment. Heaven and hell need, for their completion, the Second Coming of Christ. By raising up the bodies of mankind, Jesus will restore to both the blessed and the lost, the human condition they once had by giving them bodies which correspond to their state. The soul will demand its body. The new humanity requires fulfillment by the resurrection of the bodies of all mankind. Only then will the Church reach perfection and enter into the fullness of God.

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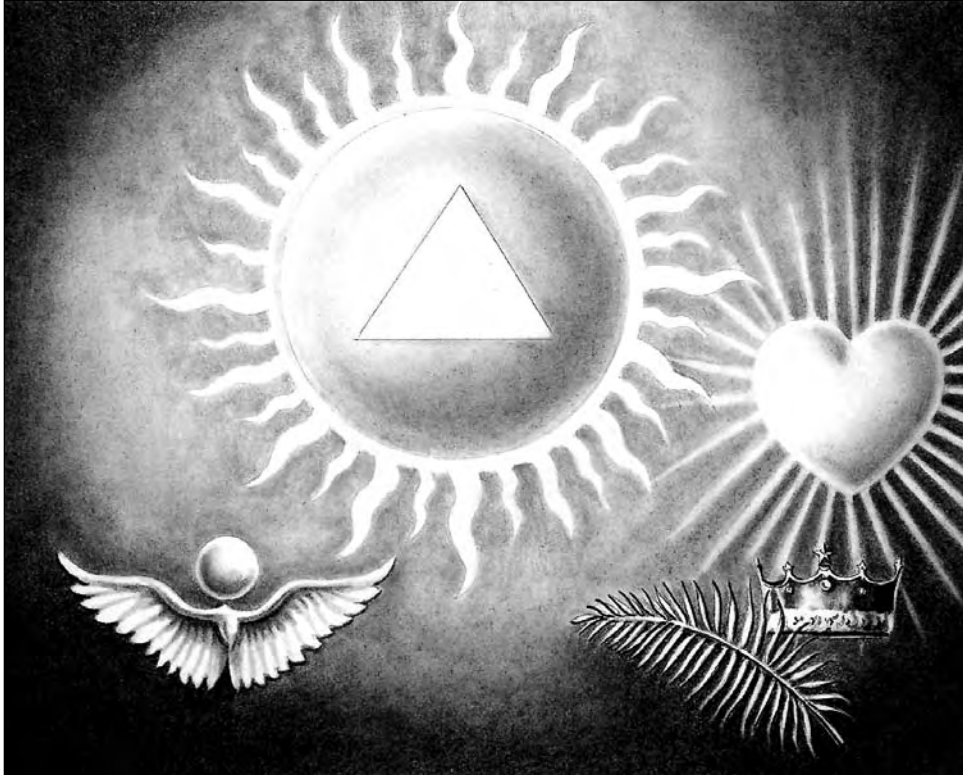
1042 At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. After the universal judgment, the righteous will reign for ever with Christ, glorified in body and soul. The universe itself will be renewed: “The Church... will receive her perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the 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.”¹

Summary Prayer

God our Father, as the Day of Christ Jesus draws near, bring to completion the good work which You have begun in us. Make us pure and blameless in Your sight and prepare us for the Day of Christ. May we then attain the perfect goodness which He shall produce in the elect for Your glory and praise, forever and ever. Amen.

Catechism by Diagram

#H7-5



Life with God. We shall rise to live eternally with God and enjoy the good things God has prepared for those who love Him. There we shall see love and rejoice in God (triangle) together with the angels and all the blessed (heart with rays). Our reward will be great (crown, palm of victory). We shall be absorbed in the possession of the infinitely perfect God (rays and glow of light), the greatest love (sun) that exists. We shall see Christ in His glorified manhood. We shall live in the company of the angels and saints. We shall also know our loved ones in heaven and rejoice in their presence.

Q. 301. When will we fully reach our eternal destiny?

On the day of the Last Judgment, we will fully reach our eternal destiny.

The primary happiness of heaven consists in this: we shall possess, in body and soul, the infinitely perfect God and be possessed by Him. We will be personally and consciously united to God Himself, Who is infinite Goodness, Truth and Beauty. God's love will fulfill every desire of the human heart. We will then experience a happiness which, once achieved, we will never lose.

At every moment of our lives, we should be prepared for death. We must use the time allotted to us by the will of God, whether it be long or short, with this preparation in mind. We must live Christian lives which are deserving of a heavenly reward. The eternal happiness of heaven is worth this short life of sacrifice and pain. "For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Sacred Scripture

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. *Colossians 3:1-4*

Vatican Council II

The promised and hoped for restoration, therefore, has already begun in Christ. It is carried forward in the sending of the Holy Spirit and through him continues in the Church in which, through our faith, we learn the meaning of our earthly life, while we bring to term, with hope of future good, the task allotted to us in the world by the Father, and so work out our salvation (cf. Phil. 2:12). *The Church, 48*

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

1. What do we mean by "the Second Coming"? What will happen when this event takes place?
2. Are you and your family filled with expectant hope as you await the glorious return of Jesus? How is this reflected in your way of life?
3. In the Eucharistic celebration, we say, "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again." Meditate on this mystery of our faith and ask God to help you to prepare yourself and your family for Christ's Second Coming.

Chapter Summary Prayer

Father of glory, Who raised Jesus Christ from the dead and made Him sit at Your right hand, rescue us from our sins, bring us to a new life in Him, raise us up with Him on the Last Day, and give us a place with Him in heaven.

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

Lord God Almighty, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, direct our hearts and bodies to the love of God and the patience of Christ. Bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us safely to life everlasting.

Send Your abundant blessings to Your people who devoutly recall the death of Your Son in the sure hope of the resurrection of the dead. Grant us pardon; bring us comfort. May our faith grow stronger and our eternal salvation be assured.

Father of love, watch over Your Church and bring us to the glory of the resurrection of the dead which is promised by the Paschal sacrament, the most holy Eucharist. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 83

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 300. What will take place when Christ returns with power?

*On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, John Paul II, sect. 25;
On Social Concern, John Paul II, sect. 48.*

Q. 301. When will we fully reach our eternal destiny?

*On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 26;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 18.*



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

- Q. 298: Since there is a particular or private judgment at death, why is there also a general or Last Judgment?
- Q. 299: Should we fear the Last Judgment?
- Q. 300: When will Christ's Second Coming take place?
- Q. 301: How will existence in Heaven after the Last Judgment differ from existence in Heaven prior to the Last Judgment?
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