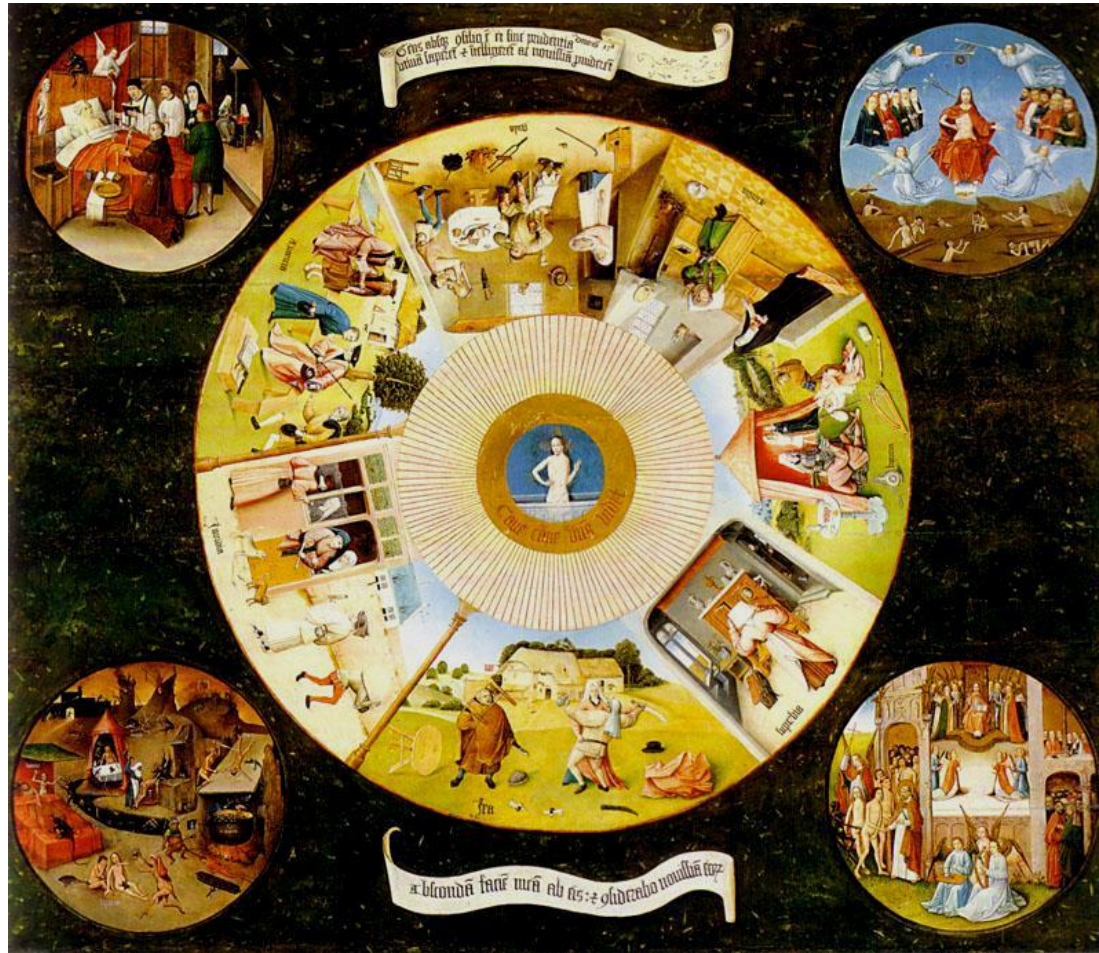


# *The Last Four Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell*



Catholicism 101 (RCIA) 2011-12

# The Four Last Things

## The Third part of the Creed

*“I believe in...the resurrection of the body and life everlasting”*

The last four things also includes the last of the second part of the creed:

*“He will come again to Judge the living the and dead”*

# Eschatology

- Another term for the study of the last four things is Eschatology
  - Comes from the Greek word *eschatos* which means “furthest” or “uttermost,” and so eschatology deals with the furthest or last things: death, judgment, heaven, hell, and purgatory
- There are two main way of focusing on eschatology:
  - (1) a *Particular* sense which deals with the last things of the *individual*, the person’s, death and judgment and their consequent reward or punishment
  - (2) There is also a *Universal* sense of eschatology that deals with *everyone*; this consists of Christ’s final coming, the Final Judgment, the Resurrection of the Body, and the new heavens and the new earth



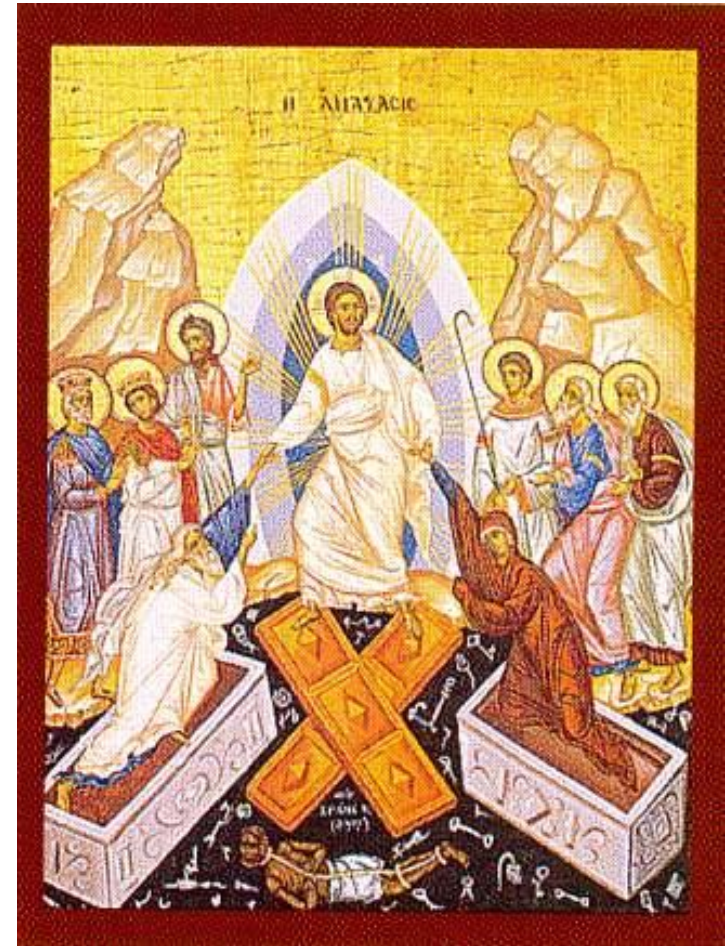
# Death

- **Death** – is the separation of the soul from the body
  - This is a theological definition as opposed to the medical definition of the irreversible loss of heart and lung functions or brain waves
- Death is something which a human being will only experience once
  - Scripture says, “*it is appointed for men to die once*” (Hebrews 9:27)
  - There is no reincarnation
- While death can seem natural, nevertheless, it is an experience of evil
  - Death is a consequence of sin, if our first parents would not have sinned human beings would not have to die



# Christian Death

- The light of faith especially the paschal mystery of Christ illuminates for us the mystery of death
- Death has a new and positive meaning in Jesus Christ
  - Jesus transformed the curse of death into a great blessing
  - Death can now be the door to eternal life and resurrection
- **Christian death** – is a *death in Christ* meaning that we die in a state of grace or friendship with God meaning that one is without any mortal sin
  - When we die in Christ we can lovingly offer the experience of our own death to the Father
  - A believer in Christ, following his example, is thus able to transform his own death into an act of obedience and love for the Father
  - “This saying is sure: if we have died with him, we will also live with him” (2 Tim 2:11)



# Judgment

- There are two Judgments
  - **The Particular Judgment**
  - **The Final Judgment**
- Christ is the Judge of the living and the dead
- These two Judgments are closely bound together
  - The way we are judged at the Particular Judgment will be confirmed and completed at the Final Judgment



# Particular Judgment

- At the moment of death the soul will go before the Divine Judge
- The soul will be rewarded or punished based upon the way one lived during their life on earth
  - *“So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 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 Cor 5:9-10
  - We will be judged by our faith and works
  - *“At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love”* --St John of the Cross



# Final Judgment

- The final Judgment will occur at the end of the world
  - “*But of that day or that hour no one knows...*” Mk 13:32
  - “*The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night*” (1 Thess 5:2)
- Christ will return in Glory and raise all the dead
  - The body will then share in the eternal reward or punishment of the soul
- We will understand God’s eternal plan and come to know the consequence of every good and evil action the human race has performed
  - The meaning of all of human history and the ultimate purpose of creation will be revealed



# Hell

- After the particular judgment those who die in mortal sin are eternally lost in hell
- “... *it is better for you to enter life than ... to go to **Gehenna**, to the unquenchable fire where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.*” Mk 9:43-44
  - Gehenna is a place in Israel where the Canaanites sacrifice children to their gods (The Valley of Ben Hinnom)
  - When the Israelites took over this territory they made it into a landfill where trash was continually burned
- 2 Pains in hell
  - The worst is the *pain of separation* from God who alone can give the happiness for which man longs
  - Second is the *pain of sense* corresponding to one’s sins
- God, while desiring “all to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9), nevertheless has created the human person to be free and responsible; and he respects our decisions; Thus, a person chooses hell by mortal sin
- The Church prays that none will be lost



# Purgatory

- After the particular judgment a soul can be sent to purgatory which is the state of those who die in friendship with God but still need to be purified of venial sins or the remains of mortal sin
- Purgatory is only for temporal punishment which is totally different from eternal punishment
  - It is both painful and joyful
  - Painful because the soul is undergoing purification and has not yet reached its goal and joyful because the soul knows with certainty that it will reach ultimate good
- Once the soul is purified it will enjoy the vision of God for all eternity
- Our prayers and sacrifices, especially the sacrifice of the Mass, assists the purification of the souls in purgatory

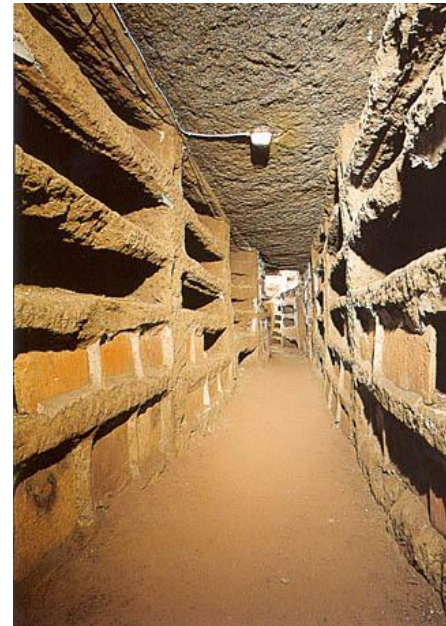


# Scriptural Foundations of Purgatory

- 2 Maccabees 12:38-46; Lk 12:39-48
- Mt 12:32 *“And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”*
  - This indicates that forgiveness is possible in the age to come
- Mt 18:21-35 *“Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”*
  - This parable is about the Kingdom of Heaven
  - The servant who did not show mercy is not cast into the outer darkness but is but in jail until he pays everything back
  - Thus we see there is a place where we pay back our debts

# Purgatory in Tradition

- Prayers for the dead
  - The custom of praying for the dead goes back to the 100s
  - Tertullian (160-220) says that this custom of prayer for the dead was received from tradition
  - The catacombs contain references to the need for prayers for the deceased
  - No one every challenges prayer for the dead until Arius in the 4<sup>th</sup> century
- State of Purification
  - St. Cyprian (200-258) said that the debt of punishment remains if one's penance is not complete
  - St. Augustine (354-430) speaks of a "corrective fire" and "purgative fire"
  - The Church defined the doctrine of purgatory at the councils of Lyon (1274), Florence (1438–1445), and Trent (1545–63)



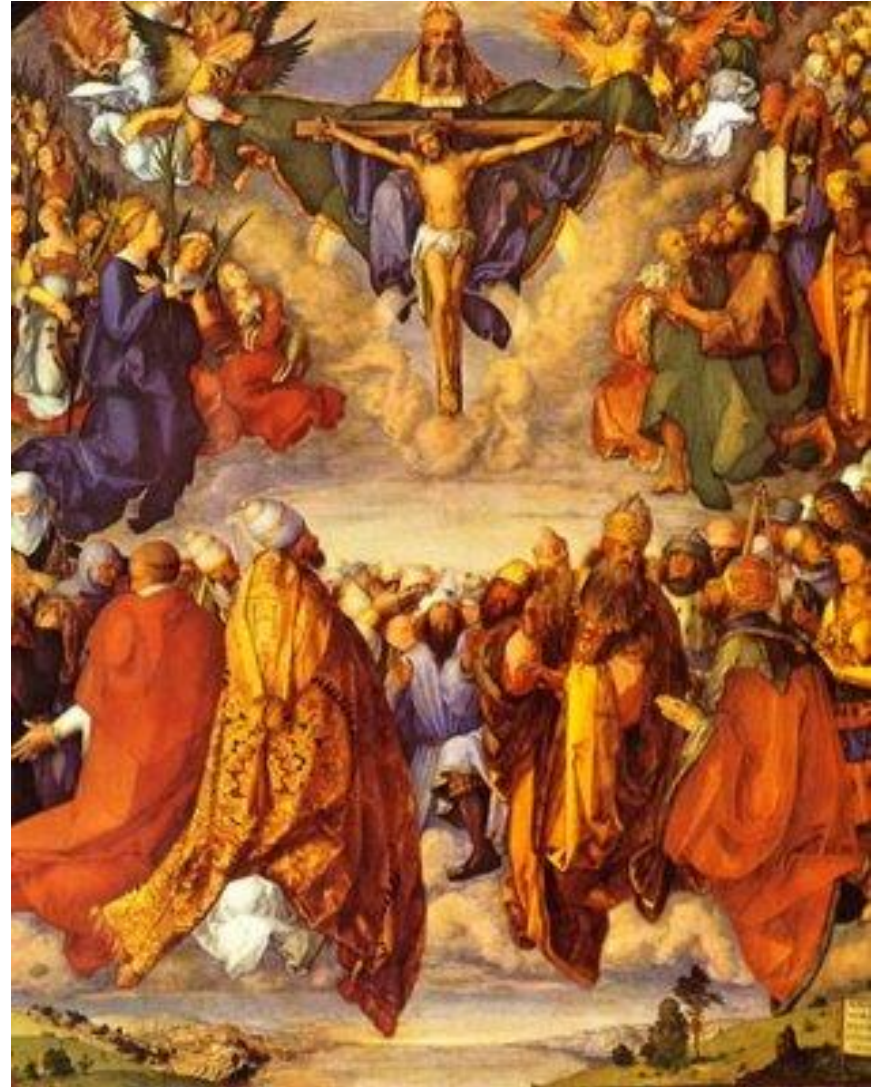
Rome, Catacombs of Priscilla



Inscriptions from the catacombs

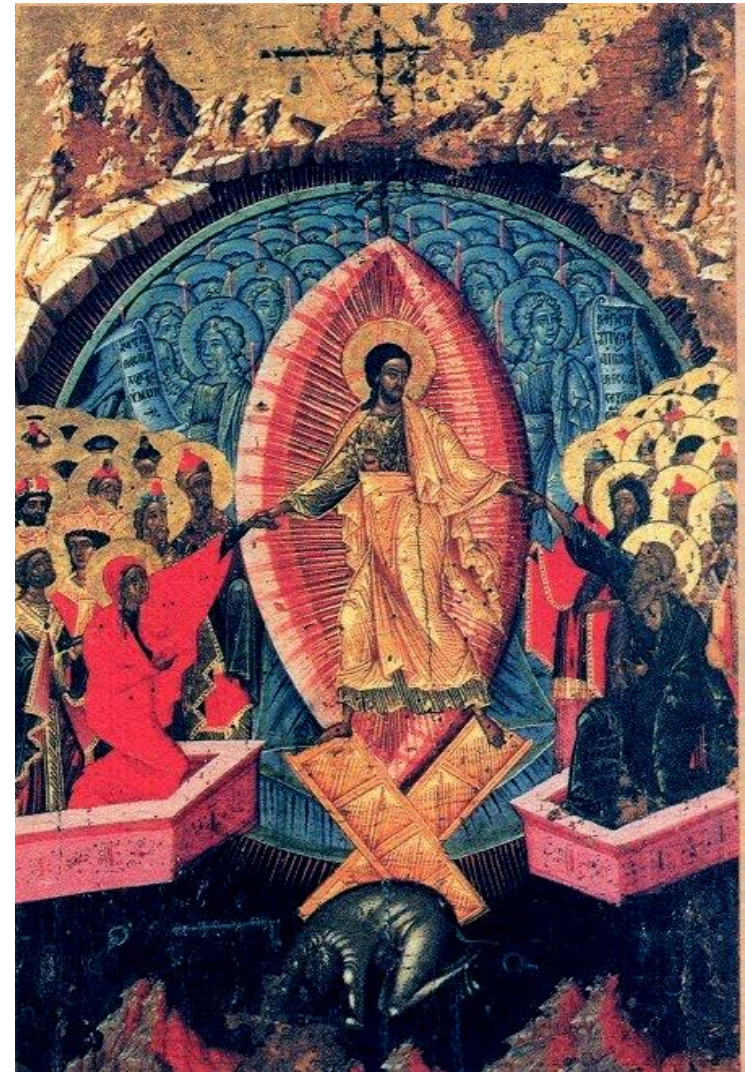
# Heaven

- After the particular judgment if a soul is in the grace of God and in need of no further purification it goes to the eternal happiness and joy of heaven which cannot be lost
- Heaven is the perfect communion of life and love with the Trinity and all the saints
  - In heaven we will see God as he is, “face to face” (1 Cor 13:12) and come to know ourselves perfectly
  - This vision of the Trinity is called the Beatific Vision
- There are degrees of heaven based on
  - The graces God has given us
  - How well we cooperated with those graces
- But all will be perfectly filled with happiness in heaven



# Last Judgment and The Resurrection of the Body

- *“The hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his 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.” (Jn 5:28-29)*
- All bodies will be raised from the dead and will share in the punishment or reward of the soul
- Then there will be a new heaven and a new earth
  - In the resurrection to life the new creation will share in the glory of God
  - Both the new universe and all people in heaven will experience what perfect happiness and fulfillment is



# The Resurrected Body

- *“It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”* (1 Jn 3:2)
- Since we know what Christ’s body was like we can determine some of the qualities of our resurrected body
- There are four traditional characteristics of the Resurrected Body
  - **Impassibility** – The body will not be able to die or suffer
  - **Agility** – There will be no heaviness or sluggishness in the body; the body will be able to go wherever the soul pleases
  - **Subtility** – We will be able to pass through any other bodily or material objects, e.g. when Jesus passed through the door before Pentecost
  - **Clarity** – Our bodies will shine with the glory of God, e.g. like at the transfiguration
- It is our bodies “this flesh” that will be raised and glorified

