

## Introduction

In this, our second lesson,

- we will continue our overview of the Last Things.

Today we will reflect on

- What will occur at the end of time,
- The Second Coming of Christ
- The Rapture
- The Last Judgment and its Relevance
- The Time of Mercy

Next week will speak about the ultimate realities of:

- hell,
- Heaven
- The Communion of Saints
- The new heavens and the new earth
- Life everlasting

## The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

In the Creed we profess that Jesus will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead

Even though He ascended into heaven, Christ is still with us

- Through His Holy Spirit
- Through His Church which is His Body
- And He is with us through the sacraments,
- especially the Eucharist

At the same time we await His return in power and glory

Jesus Christ is the King of the Universe

- And He possesses all power in heaven and on earth

Yet His kingdom on earth, the Church,

- is still under attack by the powers of evil,
- even though they have been defeated definitively by the death and Resurrection of Christ.

That is why the present time is still

- the time marked by distress and
- the trial of evil which does not spare the Church
- Therefore it is a time of waiting and watching.

We do not know when Christ will return.

As Jesus said...

“It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.” (Acts 1:7)

“Take heed, watch and pray, for you do not know when the time will come.” (Mark 13:33)

But we do know that

- already the final age of the world is with us (1 John 2:18)
- and the renewal of the world is irrevocably under way (1 Cor 10:11)

When God came into this world in Christ

- He began to recreate the world
- First in Mary
- Then in Himself
- Then in the faithful

By our Baptism the new creation begins to unfold in each one of us

The New Creation takes place from the inside out

- Is it unfolding in you right now?

This is a source of Joy, and Optimism

We also know from Scripture and Tradition

- **three things** will occur before the end of time
  - and the Glorious return of Christ the King
1. The Gospel must be proclaimed to the whole world and all the Gentiles who are going to be converted will be converted
  2. Israel will recognize Jesus as the Messiah
  3. The Church will pass through an ultimate trial that will shake the faith of many believers

Let's take a look at these in more detail now.

## The Universal Proclamation of the Gospel

Before His Ascension into Heaven Jesus commanded the Apostles to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.” Mark 16:15

The first thing that must take place before Christ comes again is

- the proclamation of the Gospel to the whole world
- So that all peoples will have the opportunity to hear and embrace the Good News

Still, there are people in the world who have never heard the name of Jesus

- There are people in our lives who are not Christian
- Or are living their faith half-heartedly

We live in a culture in which relativism reigns

- All religions and opinions are equal
- Keep your faith to yourself
- There are many paths that lead to Heaven

This is not so!

**John 14:6** Jesus said,  
"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.

If it is through no fault of your own that you do not know Jesus

- it is still possible for God to place His saving grace in you

But the fact remains

- Those who have received the Holy Spirit
- and all the grace and help of Christ, the Church and Our Lady
- Are at a definite advantage
- To reach their potential as God intends

If we have genuine love – to want good for others -  
The greatest good we can want for them is to be fully united to Christ

This is the love that drove Saint Francis Solano to brave a shipwreck to save souls in Peru and Argentina

- Rather than flee in a life boat he went down into the hull of a sinking slave ship and risked his life preaching to the drowning slaves
- The North American Martyrs gave up their lives to plant the seeds of the Faith in North America.

Their love for Christ and for their fellow man compelled them to share their faith

- Have we become too timid to bear testimony to our love for Jesus Christ?

Be natural

- Just share with others what God is doing for you

Don't impose but propose

- Mike Maddox and Ed Hearn
- Now his son is enrolled in Catholic School

Invite people to Mass, Confession, Rosary, class

**Second**, in the wake of the full number of the Gentiles who accept Christ,

- The veil will be lifted
- and the Jews will recognize Jesus as their Messiah

Based on **St.** Paul's teaching in chapter 11 of Romans the Church teaches that,

The "full inclusion" (Rom. 11:12) of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of "the full number of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:25), will enable the People of God to achieve the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. **(CCC 674)**

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> thing** that will occur before the second coming of Christ and the end of the world is that

- the Church will pass through a final trial
- that will shake the faith of many believers
- This trial will be led by the Antichrist

It will take the form of

- the supreme religious deception
- offering men an apparent solution to all of our problems
- at the price of rejecting Christianity (675)

Paul writes of this in 2 Thessalonians 2 where he says that

- The lawless one (or the Antichrist) will rise to power
- and lead a great rebellion against the truth proclaimed by the Catholic Church
- this will cause many to fall away from the faith

The work of the Antichrist is

- the effort to create a world without God
- with no reference to his moral law
- nor His plan for our life
  
- to deny that Jesus is the Messiah who has come from God.
- This denial is accompanied by a false “messianism,”
- in which man takes the place of God.
- As He tries in vain to become his own “savior.”

The world experienced one form of the Antichrist’s deception under communism

- People were promised a utopia on earth in which everyone would have bread
- but it came at the price of atheism

The Church will enter the glory of the Kingdom only through this final trial,

- when she will follow her Lord in his death and Resurrection.

Some believe that before Christ returns in glory

- there will be the Rapture.

The Rapture is a erroneous Interpretation of a number of passages from the Bible that have been woven together

The Rapture has never been part of the Teaching of the Apostles

The Rapture is a fictional idea made popular by the Left Behind series

### History:

- It seems to have been invented by John Nelson Darby (1800-1882),
- a protestant minister from Ireland who was extremely pessimistic about what he saw as the state of the world and the state of the Church.
- In its present form, then, it barely goes back 100 years, despite its popularity with the Left Behind series

### Summary

According to this fictional idea

- There are Two returns of Christ,
- One in secret, to spare the Christians of the final trial and its suffering
- The other in power and glory to judge the living and the dead

Rather, the teaching of the Apostles expressed in the Creed is that

- there is only one return of Christ the King

The idea of the Rapture is that

- Toward the end of the world,
- Jesus will come on the clouds of heaven and the righteous (“the saints”) will be raptured, that is, caught up into the air, to be with Christ.
- Christians will be suddenly (“in the twinkling of an eye,” based on 1 Cor. 15:52) taken to heaven (“raptured”),
- Christians will be separated from sinners who will remain on the earth to endure a seven year period of great suffering (the Tribulation)
- This will be followed by a millennial (1,000-year) earthly kingdom established by Christ for the Jews,
  - based on a literal interpretation of Rev 20:1-3.
- Finally, then, Jesus comes at the end in judgment
- and will inaugurate the new heavens and the new earth.

### 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17:

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up [or “raptured”] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

St. Paul says: As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.'

#### Commenting on Thessalonians St. Ambrose explains:

In that very taking up, death shall take place, as it were, in a deep sleep, and the soul, having gone forth from the body, shall instantly return. For those who are alive shall die when they are taken up that, coming to the Lord, they may receive their souls from His presence; because in His presence they cannot be dead.

This opinion is supported by the authority of St. Augustine in his book On the City of God."

If you would like to understand the main points please see the Frequently asked Questions section of our Website

## The Last Judgment

Then Christ will come in his glory and all the angels with him

This will be the hour when all who are in the tombs will hear the voice of the Son of man and come forth:

- Those who have done good, to the resurrection of life,
- Those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment. **John 5:28-29**

All the dead will Rise,

- both the just and the unjust, (Acts 24:15)
- This will precede the Last Judgment. 1038

## The Resurrection of the Body

Just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives forever

- so after death the righteous will live for ever with the risen Christ
- and he will raise them up on the Last Day (cf. **John 6:39-40**).

The Resurrection of the body means not only that

- the immortal soul will live on after death,
- but that even our “mortal body” will come to life again.

This new body will be immortal

- We will no longer be subject to
- Sickness, injury, decay or death
- This life will never, ever end!

What is our earthly life in comparison to everlasting life?

- Almost insignificant
- Analogy of one bad day as an infant in relation to the rest of earthy life
- One bad night in a bad hotel (as Teresa said)

Then why do we get so worked up and crazy about things here which cause us to live less than virtuously?

Example of my words that wound

- John and his laundry or Xavier and the toothpaste
- In 10,000 years will this matter?

Matthew 25:34-46, Jesus said, When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all his angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

Before him will be gathered all the nations,

This will be a truly awesome event

- And you and I will be there
- We may be standing next to Adam and Eve, Alexander the Great, Napoleon, or Hitler...
- Every person from Adam to the last person conceived

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

Then the King will say to those at his right hand,

**Come, O blessed of my Father**, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

**Then the righteous will answer him**, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?'

**And the King will answer them**, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'

**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; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?'

**Then he will answer them**, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.'

And they will go away into eternal punishment,  
• but the righteous into eternal life."

Why is there a Last Judgment if we have already experienced our Particular Judgment?

## 2 Corinthians 5:10

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.

There are two different occasions on which everyone must appear before the judgment seat of Christ

The first takes place when each one of us departs this life;

- When we render an account of all our thoughts, words and actions,
- This is our particular judgment

The Second takes place after the Resurrection of all the dead in which

1. the body will share in the reward or punishment of the soul,
2. The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences
  - the good each person has done
  - or failed to do during his earthly life.”
3. Jesus will pronounce the final word on all history
  - And we shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation
  - and understand the marvelous ways by which God’s Providence led everything towards its final end

Why does a father of three young boys die of brain cancer

- While a man, whom we think should not even have been born survives him and lives a long life.

Why is it that an innocent baby dies without the chance to grow and reach his potential

- And an evil man lives to a ripe old age as a tyrannical dictator destroying countless lives

One person suffers a life of perpetual sickness and suffering

- While another lives without ever seeing a doctor

If those who are evil seem to prosper and the good are made to suffer

We could at least find some consistency in this

But the blessings and sufferings are meted out in a seemingly random, inconsistent manner

Why did I blow my knee out Saturday

- and the 59yr old Korean keeps running?

At the Last Judgment we will understand clearly

- the way in which God worked all things for good for those who love him.

God is master of the world and of its history.

- But the ways of his providence are often unknown to us.

Only at the end,

- when our partial knowledge ceases,
- when we see God “face to face” (1 Cor 13:12)
- will we fully know the ways by which –
- even through the dramas of evil and sin –
- God has guided his creation to perfection. (CCC 314)

At the Last Judgment we will discover that

- God in his almighty providence
- brought good from the consequences of evil,
- even moral evil, caused by his creatures...

**Romans 8:28** We know that in everything God works for good for those who love him.

**St. Catherine of Siena** said to those who are scandalized and rebel against what happens to them: “Everything comes from love, all is ordained for the salvation of man, God does nothing without this goal in mind.”

God would not permit an evil if he did not cause a good to come from that very evil, by ways that we shall fully know only in eternal life. (CCC 324)

The Last Judgment will reveal that

- through everything we suffered in this life
- God was working for our good

Nothing was in vain,

- Nothing was lost
- nothing was senseless

This gives meaning, purpose and hope

- to all that we endure in this life.

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

The end of our lives and the end of the world is the time of judgment

- Now is the time for Mercy

St. Faustina – the Apostle or Secretary of Mercy

- A polish nun
- To whom Jesus appeared from 1931-38
- The Diary of St. Faustina

Lord, I doubt that You will pardon my numerous sins;

- my misery fills me with fright.

Jesus: My Mercy is greater than your sins and those of the entire world. Who can measure the extent of my goodness? For you I descended from heaven to earth; for you I allowed myself to be nailed to the cross; for you I let my Sacred Heart be pierced with a lance, thus opening wide the source of Mercy for you. Come, then, with trust to draw graces from this fountain. I never reject a contrite heart. Your misery has disappeared in the depths of My Mercy. Do not argue with Me about your wretchedness. You will give me pleasure if you hand over to Me all your trouble and grief. I shall heap upon you the treasures of My grace. 1485

Where do we receive the Mercy of Christ?

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Write, speak of My mercy. Tell souls where they are to look for solace; that is, in the Tribunal of Mercy [the Sacrament of Reconciliation]. There the greatest miracles take place [and] are incessantly repeated. To avail oneself of this miracle, it is not necessary to go on a great pilgrimage or to carry out some external ceremony; it suffices to come with faith to the feet to My representative and to reveal to him one's misery, and the miracle of Divine Mercy will be fully demonstrated. Were a soul like a decaying corpse so that from a human standpoint, there would be no [hope of] restoration and everything would already be lost, it is not so with God. The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full. Oh, how miserable are those who do not take advantage of the miracle of God's mercy! You will call out in vain, but it will be too late. 1448

## If it is Christ whom we meet in the Sacraments

- Then I faced my particular judgment last night at 530
- In the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Last week I encouraged you to

- Set aside time in solitude and silence
- Read
- Reflect
- Resolution

This week let's build upon that

- Include a brief examination on conscience
- As part of their daily prayer time

I have found it helpful to call to mind what I have done and what I have failed to do

Then to ask, "Why did I do this or fail to do that?"

This questions always leads to the root of my sin

- The root is one of the 7 deadly sins
- Pride, anger, lust, gluttony, envy, greed, sloth

Then determine the opposite virtue that I must practice

- Humility, meekness, purity, temperance, good-will, generosity, zeal

This then is the resolution for the day

See the website for a fully explanation of the seven deadly sins

Read

Reflect

Add a brief Examination of Conscience based on the 7

Deadly Sins

Resolution

A Resolution is

- a virtue to practice that conquers the vice
- and makes us more like Christ

Give examples of a resolution

- Today I will listen more than I speak
- I will not gossip today
- I complain too much
  - so today I will practice thanking God for everything
- Every time I am anxious I will replace that feeling with the thought that God will take care of me
- I am in the midst of suffering
  - so today I will remember that God only allows this suffering for my good and the good of others
  - there is meaning and purpose for this suffering

**What if I cannot find a Resolution?**

- Simply keep in mind your meditation all day long
- This remembrance will change
- the way you think
- and act