

“Reflecting on the End of Our Earthly Life”

1. We are entering into the last 2 weeks of the Liturgical year. **The readings should cause us to reflect carefully on the Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell and Purgatory.** We know not the day or the hour of our end. Pray to St. Michael the Archangel for protection from the evil one: the prayer & chaplet. Always remember to pray for the dying at each Mass and in our personal and family prayer life. It is a supreme act of charity, a Spiritual Work of Mercy to do so. By praying for the dying and those who have died, it also keeps us in tune with **our final end.** Remember what we heard last week-end from the book of Hebrews, all men live once, die once, and then are judged by the all merciful, but all just, God.
2. **What does this particular judgment involve?** According to Church teaching and the lives of the saints and others who have had “near death experiences”, as soon as one dies one is judged by almighty God. When we think of a human court case we think of the following elements: first the evidence is presented and the case examined, second the sentence is pronounced by the judge, and third the sentence is then executed or carried out. With God it is different. No witnesses are necessary. The soul is immediately enlightened on its holiness or lack thereof. It sees all its thoughts and desires, its words, actions or inactions, its good or evil in light of God’s all penetrating truth and love. **The soul sees itself as it truly is.** God as in a mirror shows the soul what the beauty of a pure love is - which comes about as a result of accepting generously all sacrifices/sufferings of this earthly life, in accepting with a loving heart all the trials that come the soul’s way, i.e., embracing one’s cross, and being charitable toward others. Each soul of course embraced this reality to a greater or lesser degree in this life, and so based on that, the soul will either go straight to **Heaven** to join the Blessed Angels and Saints, to **Purgatory** to join the saved persons who are being purified of their sins and the bad effects of it by being forged in the fire of God’s holy love, or to **Hell** to join the damned who because of selfishness, pride, and spite have spurned the Lord and His truth and love forever, in a downward spiral of despair and utter hatred.

3. **What is our response to all of this right now?** It may all seem far off, but don't be lulled into complacency by the evil one! Remember Sacred Scripture tells us, *God wills not the death of a sinner, but that he be converted and live.* Do not put off your conversion in presumption and pride thinking death is a long way off, but repent and believe the Good News: embrace the fullness of the Catholic faith in EVERY area of your life. **For we know not the day or the hour when we will be called from this life and will have to appear before the judgment seat of God.** Daily pray that all of us will be ready when that day comes, whether we are living when Jesus returns or when we take our last breath on this earth before the Second Glorious Coming of Christ. May we always trust in God's direction, in His wisdom, and goodness. Truly blessed are those who take their **Purgatory** on earth by the generous acceptance of daily trials and by the final Passion at the end of our earthly life (the priest and the lay woman in the hospital, and my mom). The multiple, humdrum, repetitious, sacrifices of daily life in our vocation purify and perfect our love, if united with Jesus. Let's ask the Blessed Mother to assist us in this dynamic, esp. by making the St. Louis de Montefort Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary. (See the book *The True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*). *In the evening of our life, we will be judged by our love,* as St. John of the Cross notes, and our love for God and others is primarily seen in the embracing the Crosses of life with patience and perseverance. The person who loves God increasingly with all of one's heart fears neither earthly death, nor judgment, nor hell because perfect love casts out all fear (St. Augustine) and gives us access to the inner life of God, even in this life (see *the Imitation of Christ* book). In God's grace and mercy may we all respond to Him increasingly in love, and someday by the kind intercession of St. Joseph, patron of a happy death, have the grace of a **holy & provided death**, i.e., to only take our final earthly breath after the visit of a priest and receiving the holy Sacraments of the Church: *Confession, Anointing of the Sick and Final Communion: Viaticum.* Pray the Lord of Mercy gives all of us the special grace to see our whole life in an instant before we die, so we can repent and make a final act of love for God & neighbor. God bless you. †