

USCCA Chapter Notes

USCCA Chapter/Title: #13 Our Eternal Destiny

CCC Paragraph Reference: CCC [#988-1065](#) – I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body/
Believe in Life Everlasting

Doctrinal Premise. *What is the underlying truth behind the doctrine of this chapter?
Connecting it to Christ, summarize the chapter in 1-2 sentences.*

Christ's goal for each person is to defeat Original Sin (including actual sin, suffering and death) completely and lead us to share eternally, body and soul, in the divine nature. We are given the invitation to respond to God's love completely and share in eternal life with Him.

Three questions adults might have about this topic. *What life-issues do I need to connect with in the people at my session?*

1. What is the connection between good deeds and eternal life?
2. If God is merciful, why do people go to hell?
3. What hope do we have of getting to heaven if we are all sinners?
4. Is purgatory just a Catholic invention?
5. What is heaven like?
6. What is our purpose here on earth?

Three Points from the Story of Faith/Testimony. *How is the underlying truth taught in this chapter brought to life?*

Person of Faith: [St. Katharine Drexel](#)

1. St. Katharine was born in Philadelphia in 1858 to a wealthy family. She realized that her money and life was meant to be share with others. She said that love for God is proved by doing good deeds for others.
2. She devoted her life to serving native and African Americans and eventually founded a religious order called the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.
3. She taught us that by our example we can help others to love God completely and share eternal life in heaven. She showed that devotion to the Eucharist provides spiritual strength to do God's will. She died on Marcy 3, 1955 and was canonized by Pope John Paul II on October 1, 2000.

Essential Points from the Teaching Section. Add in sub-points as needed. *What points need to be made explicit and cannot be left to chance?*

1. Our particular judgment takes place immediately after we die.

a. Death is the separation of the soul from the body.

b. The soul is immortal, while the body perishes.

Death's finality gives an urgency to our lives.

The body perishes, but will be restored!

c. Death ends our opportunity to accept or reject God's grace given to us through Christ.

We are judged on the state of our soul.

d. Each person receives their eternal retribution in their immortal soul at the very moment of death. This is the particular (individual) judgment.

The three options a person has at the moment of death are:

i. Heaven, entering into it either:

1. Immediately.

2. After purification (purgatory).

ii. Hell.

2. Heaven is the blessed community of all who are perfectly incorporated into Christ.

a. In heaven, all our deepest longings will be fulfilled.

b. In heaven we behold the beatific (blessed) vision, because there we will see God face to face.

Heaven is beyond our imagination.

3. Purgatory refers to the final purification of the elect.

a. This purification happens after our death and is different than hell.

b. In purgatory, we are cleansed of any effects (temporal punishments) from our sin.

We are purified from sin in order to enter heaven.

- c. Purgatory is a grace-filled process God gives us in order to:
 - i. Help prepare us to experience Him face to face.
 - ii. Be free from sin in its entirety.
- 4. The term 'Communion of Saints' refers to:
 - a. The faithful on earth.
 - b. The souls in purgatory.
 - c. The faithful in heaven.
- 5. Hell is the permanent state of eternal separation from God.
 - a. Those who willfully and knowingly persist in a state of serious sin make a decision to reject God's love permanently.
 - b. God desires that no one goes to hell, but allows people to make a free decision to reject Him.

No one goes to hell by chance or predestination.
 - c. The Church has never said that anyone is in hell.
 - d. God calls all to conversion and repentance.
- 6. The Church teaching on the end of time includes:
 - a. The Resurrection of the Body.

When Christ returns in glory, all (righteous and unrighteous) the dead will rise from grave and receive back their bodies. The Resurrection of the Body shows us God's complete victory over Original Sin (which affected both soul and body).
 - b. The Last Judgment.

When Christ returns, He will judge all people. He will not change the individual judgments we received at the moment of death; rather, the Last Judgment will be the 'closing ceremonies' of the reign of sin and death.
 - c. The New Heaven and the New Earth.

After the Last Judgment, sin and death will be no more. God will renew the heavens and the earth, and will live with God for all eternity.

Scriptural Foundation. List the two to three primary Scripture passages that support the teaching. *How is this teaching rooted in the saving events of Scripture?*

1. 1 Corinthians 2:9.

1 Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written: "What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him,"

2. Romans 8:11-13.

¹¹ If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you. ¹² Consequently, brothers, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

3. John 11:25-26.

John 11:25-26. ²⁵ Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

4. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in an instant, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For that which is corruptible must clothe itself with incorruptibility, and that which is mortal must clothe itself with immortality.⁵⁴ And when this which is corruptible clothes itself with incorruptibility and this which is mortal clothes itself with immortality, then the word that is written shall come about: "Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brothers, be firm, steadfast, always fully devoted to the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

5. 1 Timothy 2:4.

1 Timothy 2:4. (God)... wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.

6. Matthew 25:31-46.

When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all of 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. 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 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.

Summary of the Sidebar material.

1. When we die, our soul is separated from our body. As Christ is risen body and soul, we will rise united body and soul on the last day.
2. The beatific vision refers to God showing Himself to us directly and clearly in Heaven.
3. The Last Judgment calls us to respond to God's grace.

Relationship to Culture. *What does the USCCA both challenge and affirm in our culture?*

- **Affirmations of US Culture:**

Most Americans believe in heaven and hell. We show respect for the dying by caring for them and by reverencing their deceased bodies, as with wakes, funerals and burials.

- **Challenges to US Culture:**

We do not like to think about death. Much in our culture influences us to look at the present moment, not eternal life. We often have a focus on earthly goals, such as wealth, fame and personal happiness.

People are not concerned about the eternal consequences of their daily actions and do not relate them to their eternal life.

Additional Questions for Discussion. *Given what the USCCA has in its discussion questions, are there other questions to add to further the discussion?*

1. From our culture, what distracts people from keeping their focus on getting to heaven?
2. How are we called to help others attain heaven?
3. Why is important to think about death before we are sick or old?
4. How would you respond to a person who said that Purgatory was simply a 'Catholic' invention?
5. In reflecting on God's presence in your daily life, how have you seen Him help and influence you to help you stay free from sin...and prepare for life with Him in heaven?

Action/Ritual to add with the meditation/prayer. *How can you help the participant respond to Christ's invitation given in this chapter?*

Page 162 of the USCCA gives us a meditation from the Second Vatican Council's 'Constitution on the Church in the Modern World' 'Gaudium et Spes'. Read that meditation slowly and prayerfully, and invite those gathered to ponder the following question: How you can more surrender your life to God? After a few moments of silence, invite each person to offer a prayer of 'hope' to the Lord, asking Him to help us keep our love focused on Him, no matter how difficult the situation.