

GROUP



FIRE OF MERCY

A Retreat Guide for All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day

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FIRST MEDITATION

DEATH AND JUDGMENT

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION/GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How often have I reflected on the reality of death and judgment, and on what they mean from Christ's perspective? What are some of the reasons why I might not reflect on it so often? Are they good reasons?
2. What kind of reaction does the thought of judgment elicit in my heart and mind? Why? What kind of reaction should it elicit? Why?
3. What would I like to be remembered for in time and in eternity? What would I like Jesus to say to me at my personal judgment?

THREE QUOTATIONS TO HELP YOUR MEDITATION

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct.

—Matthew 16:24–27
NABRE

“The Christian who unites his own death to that of Jesus views it as a step towards him and an entrance into everlasting life. When the Church for the last time speaks Christ's words of pardon and absolution over the dying Christian, seals him for the last time with a strengthening anointing, and gives him Christ in viaticum as nourishment for the journey, she speaks with gentle assurance:

*Go forth, Christian soul, from this world
in the name of God the almighty Father,
who created you,*

*in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living
God,
who suffered for you,
in the name of the Holy Spirit,
who was poured out upon you.
Go forth, faithful Christian!
May you live in peace this day,
may your home be with God in Zion,
with Mary, the virgin Mother of God,
with Joseph, and all the angels and saints. ...
May you return to [your Creator]
who formed you from the dust of the earth.
May holy Mary, the angels, and all the saints
come to meet you as you go forth from this life. ...
May you see your Redeemer face to face.*

—CCC, 1020

“From the earliest times, the prospect of the Judgment has influenced Christians in their daily living as a criterion by which to order their present life, as a summons to their conscience, and at the same time as hope in God's justice. Faith in Christ has never looked merely backwards or merely upwards, but always also forwards to the hour of justice that the Lord repeatedly proclaimed. This looking ahead has given Christianity its importance for the present moment. In the arrangement of Christian sacred buildings, which were intended to make visible the historic and cosmic breadth of faith in Christ, it became customary to depict the Lord returning as a king—the symbol of hope—at the east end; while the west wall normally portrayed the Last Judgment as a symbol of our responsibility for our lives—a scene which followed and accompanied the faithful as they went out to resume their daily routine.

—Pope Benedict XVI
Spe Salvi, 41

NOTES



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FURTHER READING

If you feel moved to continue reflecting and praying about this theme, you may find the following books helpful:

- *Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing*
by Peter Kreeft
- *All You Ever Wanted to Know about Heaven but Were Afraid to Ask*
by Peter Kreeft
- *The Great Divorce*
by C. S. Lewis
- *The Biblical Basis for Purgatory*
by John Salza
- *Fire of Love! Understanding Purgatory*
by St. Catherine of Genoa

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