

The Great Truths

Meditations for the Month of September



The Last Judgment, attributed to Carlo Saraceni the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille, France; early 17th century;.

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Nicene Creed

/ believe in one God, the Father Almighty, / Maker of Heaven and earth, / and of all things visible and invisible. / And in one Lord Jesus Christ, / the Only-begotten Son of God. / Born of the Father before all ages. / God of God, / Light of Light, / true God of true God. / Begotten, not made; / consubstantial with the Father: / by Whom all things were made. / Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from Heaven. /

AND WAS INCARNATE BY THE HOLY GHOST / OF THE VIRGIN MARY: / AND WAS MADE MAN. /

He was crucified also for us, / suffered under Pontius Pilate, / and was buried. / And on the third day / He rose again / according to the Scriptures. / And He ascended into Heaven, / and sitteth at the right hand of the Father. / And He shall come again with glory / to judge the living and the dead: / of Whose Kingdom there shall be no end. /

And in the Holy Ghost, / the Lord and Giver of Life: / Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son. / Who, together with the Father and the Son, / is adored and gloried: / Who spoke through the Prophets. / And in One, Holy, Catholic / and Apostolic Church. / I confess one Baptism / for the remission of sins. / And I look for the resurrection of the dead, / and the life † of the world to come. / Amen

September 1st

God Our Lord

God hath made all things for Himself. (Prov. xvi. 4)

We are all of us jealous of what belongs to ourselves. We resent it if any one interferes with it, or deprives us of any portion of it. Yet no one owns anything by a title so absolute as that by which God is the Lord and owner of all creatures in the universe. My body and my soul are His; everything I possess is His; every action, every thought belongs to Him. He has given all these in charge to me to use for Him. Do I do so?

God is moreover a God infinite in knowledge and in power. His all-seeing eye overlooks nothing, forgets nothing, passes nothing by. No one shall escape who takes anything from Him, and does not give Him His due. God will not forget the ill use that men make of His gifts, though they themselves soon forget it. Have I not therefore cause to tremble when I think how often I have behaved as if I were my own master, independent of God?

Yet in the end I must recognize God's ownership; if I do not do so willingly and with joyful loyalty, I shall have to do so unwillingly and in misery and pain. Everything I have taken from God and appropriated to myself will have to be given back to Him. I shall have to pay the penalty for each misuse of what was entrusted to me. How much wiser and happier to recognize Him now in all things as my Lord and Master!

Offer yourself to God with loyal submission as your God and Lord.

September 2nd

God Our Creator

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power, because Thou hast created all things. (Apoc. iv. 11)

Why is it that God has such an absolute and all-embracing claim to us and to all that is ours? It is because we are made by Him, and not only made, but created. We are His, not only as the statue is the sculptor's and the picture the painter's, but He made out of nothing the very materials of which we consist. There is therefore nothing in us which is not God's. Every sort of excellence, strength, virtue, talent, beauty, skill energy, affection--all are God's not our own.

God created every one with certain gifts of his own that He did not give to another, and He gave him those gifts to do a special work that God had for him to do. He created me with a certain object; from all eternity He had been planning my soul and body, and providing me with all that I needed, that both one and the other might serve Him. Have I on the whole carried out God's plan? Shall I be able to say, when I come to die: "I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do?"

What a serious thought this is, that God had a plan for my life! He meant me to occupy a certain position in society and to have certain employments; to influence certain persons for good; to overcome certain temptations; to practise certain virtues beyond the rest to attain a certain place in Heaven. Has my life been ordered by God's holy inspirations; has not my own self-will too often had part in it?

Pray that you may not fail in fulfilling God's intentions concerning you.

September 3rd

God Our Preserver

In Him we live and move and are. (Acts xvii. 28)

If God had merely created us and then left us to ourselves, there would have been some excuse for our forgetting how completely we belong to Him. But we are not like a picture that the artist finishes and then leaves to itself. God continues throughout our whole life the act of creation in the shape of preservation. Without this we should at once lapse into our previous nothingness. We depend upon Him for our being as the rivulet depends on the spring, or the smoke on the fire.

But we not only live in Him, we also move in Him. He co-operates with our every action. We cannot lift a hand or move a finger, unless He not only sanctions the act but actually helps us to perform it. Every breath we breathe, every pulsation of our heart, depends on God's co-operation. How completely dependent we are on Him! How careful should we be that our every action is one suitable to the Divine co-operation!

God does more than this. He not only preserves us, but tends us with watchful care, delivers us from dangers, warns us when we are going wrong, shows a never-failing interest in us, and an unceasing desire for our happiness. For all this we are dependent on Him! What folly then to neglect the One to whom we owe everything.

Pray for a sense of continual dependence on God.

September 4th

God Our Best Friend

All are Thine, O Lord, who lovest souls. (Wisdom xi. 29)

Friendship is one of the consolations of man upon earth. One faithful friend is worth a hundred acquaintances. A friend, who values our friendship for its own sake, is a treasure without price. Such a friend we have in God. He has nothing to gain from my friendship. His infinite happiness is not increased by it. Yet His infinite goodness includes an intense desire to make me happy.

When we have a faithful friend who is possessed of unlimited influence and power, we consult him in all our difficulties. God is of all friends the most faithful and the most powerful; He desires to be consulted by us in things small as well as great, never tiring of our requests, more ready to hear than we to pray. Yet how little have I had recourse to Him hitherto! How little I have trusted Him!

The best proof of a friend's love is a desire for our company. In this respect what friend is like God? He asks us, begs us, commands us, to be always in His Presence: "Walk with God and be thou perfect." All those who have served God the best, have done so because He was continually in their thoughts. He desires that we should be always with Him, both here and hereafter. His one object in all His commands to us is to secure our company for ever in Heaven. Why am I so indifferent about His presence, so soon weary of God?

Pray that you may appreciate and enjoy the Divine friendship of God.

September 5th

God the End of Our Life

Seek ye, therefore, first the Kingdom of God. (St. Matt. vi. 33)

Our life is a circle: whence it first came, thither it must return. As we proceeded from God, so we must go back to Him if our life is to be a success. We can never find repose or lasting satisfaction in anything except God. As long as we do not tend to Him, we shall be fluctuating, inconstant, uncertain. Until we make Him the end of our life, we shall feel that we are wandering about in the dark.

What do we mean by making God the end of our life? We mean that to do His pleasure shall be the motive which shall be first and foremost, and that when there is a choice between God's pleasure and our own, when the two seem to be opposed, our disposition shall be to do God's will and not our own. In spite of the pain involved in giving up his own will, the man who makes God the end of his life will abandon it without hesitation, and so will draw nearer to God, his last end.

Every time we do this we break down a barrier between God and ourselves; we come nearer to the enjoyment of Him, we get a little closer to Heaven. The self-willed man is never satisfied; the man whose will is perfectly subjected to God is always happy. The Angels are always happy because they have no will but God's. If I want to find happiness in this world or the next, the first thing is to learn to submit my will to God's.

Pray God to break down your self-will at any cost.

September 6th

How to Attain our End

One thing I do; forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark. (Philipp. iii. 13, 14)

Every one desires to succeed in life. A man who desired ultimate failure would justly be regarded as a lunatic. If I am to carry out my desire, I must look around me and see what sort of men succeed.

When I look at successful men, I find, in them three characteristics:

(1) A spirit of cheerfulness and confidence. They know how to look at everything from its best side. They are always hopeful about the future and confident of success. This it is that brings success. Hence I must pray for confidence.

(2) A spirit of perseverance. They are not discouraged by failures. They recover themselves without delay. What a lesson for me not to lose heart, but to say : "*When I fall I will rise again, and that promptly.*"

(3) A spirit of single-mindedness. They keep the end in view steadily before them. If I am to achieve the purpose of my life, to succeed in coming to God at last, I must keep Him always before me.

What can make my life so happy as this-- to know that I am drawing nearer to God? Yet there will be dark times and days of despondency. Still, beneath the surface, there will be hope and peace, even amid the darkness.

Pray for cheerfulness and an earnest purpose to live for God.

September 7th

The Models to be Imitated

They are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His Temple. (Apoc. vii. 15)

Example is better than precept; and we shall often learn more from watching those who possess perfectly what we are trying to acquire, than by any set of rules. Let us watch the Saints in Heaven that we may learn from them.

Their continual occupation is the praise of God, the tranquil delight of basking in the light of God. This satisfies every longing of their heart, this fills them with perfect and unfading joy. This is the highest praise they can render to God. How can I imitate them? - By a continual remembrance of God, by visiting the Blessed Sacrament, by a frequent raising of my heart to Heaven.

The Saints also find a constant joy in showing reverence to God, in falling down in prostrate homage before the Throne, in recognizing their dependence upon Him, and their indebtedness to Him for all their joy. This too I can copy by great reverence both of body and soul; reverence before the Altar, reverence in my prayers, reverence and resignation to the will of God in my thoughts.

The Saints and Angels also serve God by doing His bidding, whether by their homage in Heaven, or by carrying His graces and messages to men. Their joy is to do the will of God and finish His work. I, too, in my feeble way can serve God; I can really be of service to Him by every act of love, and especially by every act of kindness to others.

Pray that your life may prepare you for the company of the Saints in Heaven.

September 8th

The Means Provided

Thou hast subjected all things under His feet. (Psalm. viii. 8)

We are all inclined to overlook our own importance in God's sight. So dearly does He love us, so anxious is He that we should attain our end, that we should succeed in life, that He has heaped around us all kinds of means and helps.

All that is lovely and beautiful in the world is intended by Almighty God to help me on my road to Heaven, to remind me of Him and of His infinite beauty. God cares more for me than all the material universe together, all irrational creatures. I can give Him more glory by one act of love than they can by all their natural perfections.

God has also given me my parents, companions, superiors, to assist me in serving Him. They were all created for me; even those who cause me pain are in God's design to be sources of merit and even of happiness to me. They may be my best friends. If, for instance, I am patient towards those who are trying my patience, kind towards those who treat me unkindly, I derive from them a solid gain: they help me on the way to Heaven.

All the various circumstances of my life are moreover ordained by Almighty God to aid me in serving and praising Him as He wishes. If they are pleasant, they must teach me gratitude; if painful, resignation. Even if they are a source of temptation to me, by fighting bravely against the temptation, I can gain great merit before God.

Pray for grace to carry out God's intentions by using rightly all the circumstances around you.

September 9th

The Dispositions Necessary

If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome. (St. Matt. vi. 22)

In order to make a good use of the various means afforded us of making progress towards true happiness, we must consider what should be our state of mind respecting them.

We must be on the watch to see that our inclinations do not run away with us. Most of the foolish things we do are the result of acting on the impulse, of being led by our inclinations, of being influenced by wounded self-love. How many a golden opportunity of merit we have missed because we would not accept patiently what wounded us or hurt our self-esteem.

We must try to make ourselves ready to accept whatever God sends, whether painful or pleasant. We must take willingly and cheerfully sickness, pain, unkindness, neglect, failure, poverty; and though nature may cry out against it, yet we must keep our will united to God's so as to be always able to say: "Not my will be done, O my God, but Thine."

We must try to look on the bright side of everything. There is nothing in the world that has not a bright side. This will make us always patient, and, what is more, always happy. We shall acquire a facility for ignoring or passing over the painful side of things, to look at the joyful and hopeful. Do I try to do this, or do I often grumble and repine?

Offer to God your willingness to endure whatever He sees to be good for your soul.

September 10th

The Cause of Our Failure

He that shall sin, shall hate his own soul. (Prov. viii. 36)

Hitherto we have been speaking of the means of reaching the end for which we were created and in which alone we shall find true and lasting satisfaction. We now come to the cause of our failure, and the obstacles in our way.

There is only one obstacle in our way, only one real hindrance to our progress towards happiness and peace, only one barrier between us and God. This obstacle is sin. As long as it remains it is an insuperable obstacle. A single unrepented mortal sin will shut me out for ever from the presence of God. A single unatoned venial sin will prevent me from attaining happiness until the debt has been paid.

What do we mean by sin? We mean any conscious violation of the law of God. Whenever we do that which God has declared to be a serious offence against Him, we become the enemies of God, we forfeit all hope of Heaven, except in so far as God of His free compassion may afterwards give us the grace to repent and be forgiven. Have I ever thus lost sight of God and of Heaven? And if so, am I sure that I have regained His love?

Why is sin so terrible? - Because it is an outrage on a God of infinite holiness, of infinite majesty. Because it is an act of ingratitude to One Who has laden us with benefits, Who loves us with a love that surpasses all bound or measure; because it is a deliberate rejection of the Divine friendship, and, as far as we are concerned, forever.

Pray for a hatred and detestation of sin.

September 11th

The First Sin

God spared not the angels that sinned. (2 St. Peter ii. 4)

There was a time when sin was unknown in God's universe. All creatures obeyed Him and were happy and at peace. Thousands and tens of thousands of holy Angels showed forth the glory of God by their joyful obedience. Created in a state of supernatural grace, they were each in his own degree full of wisdom, of perfect beauty.

Their trial during their time of probation consisted in having to acknowledge their dependence on, and their subjection to God. The larger number of them did so in a spirit of loyal and unwavering obedience. But a third portion of them, led by Lucifer, refused to obey. They conceived an inordinate love of themselves, and from this arose a desire to be independent of God. They would not humble themselves; they considered it unworthy of themselves that they should submit to the will of God in all things. Thus pride grew up within them; and they deliberately placed themselves in opposition to God.

This open rebellion to God lasted but a moment. In an instant all their supernatural beauty was gone, the malice of their souls corrupted their whole being. All their beauty was turned to loathsome foulness. Cast out of God's Heaven, they were hurled down to the lowest Hell; outcasts for all eternity, filled with eternal misery and despair. And all this the effect of one sin, and that a sin of thought!

Beg of God an appreciation of the unspeakable evil of sin.

September 12th

Man's First Sin

Pride is the beginning of all sin. (Ecclus. x. 15)

In Paradise before the Fall, Adam and Eve enjoyed a happiness beyond compare. They knew no pain, no sickness, no sorrow. They were created immaculate, and adorned with a high degree of supernatural grace; they were exempt from all concupiscence; their lives passed in a continual round of unending delight; each evening God Himself came to hold sweet converse with them.

What was it that ruined their happiness? The tempter came and suggested to Eve a distrust of God, whispered into her ear motives of disobedience. Eve listened and consented, and in her heart deliberately revolted against God. Pride brought with it concupiscence; she looked at the fruit that God had forbidden, took it, ate it, gave it to Adam. He also ate it, and thus lost for himself and all his posterity the gift of original justice and all the graces and blessings which accompanied it. One single sin ruined the world. How I ought to dread and hate sin!

What was the history of this first sin? - The same as of every sin. First the listening to the tempter's voice; then a jealousy of God as of one who interferes with our happiness; then a positive revolt and undisguised pride; and after this every other sin, especially the indulgence of bodily appetite and depraved desires. If I examine myself I shall find that each sin I commit follows the same course.

Pray to avoid the first beginnings of sin.

September 13th

The Temporal Consequences of Adam's Sin

In Adam all die. (1 Cor. xv. 22)

No sooner had this first sin been consummated than a blight fell upon the world. It had become the devil's empire, for he had made Adam its king, his slave. What are the consequences to the inhabitants of the world?

Adam and Eve were cast out of Paradise never again to enter. Their peace was gone; there was confusion within them, concupiscence fought against reason. Pain and sorrow, disease, and death came upon them. For nine hundred years they toiled painfully in weariness upon the earth, and after their death had to wait three thousand years before they were admitted to the Heavenly Paradise. And all for one sin!

The effects of their sin were not limited to themselves alone. All their descendants received from them an inheritance of woe. All the wars, famines, pestilences, all the broken hearts, all the wretched lives of millions had their source in this one sin. How almost infinite are the consequences of sin! Yet I think so little of my sins, and of the punishment that I shall have to pay for them.

If we would behold the full malice of Adam's sin, we must stand beneath the Cross, and watch our God dying in unutterable anguish. It was sin that nailed Him to the Cross. It was sin that forced from Him His agonizing cry: "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Pray for a horror of sin corresponding to its intensity of evil.

September 14th

The Sins of Individual Men

*I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul.
(Isaias xxxviii. 15)*

When we look at the sin of Adam and see the consequences it entailed, what shall we say of the consequences that the sins of each one of us are likely to bring upon our heads? Adam's was a single sin, as opposed to our countless offences. He did not appreciate the results of sin as we do, he had not witnessed the misery that comes from it as we do, he had not seen the flames of Hell kindled by sin as we do. How much more grievous, then, are the offences of each one of us!

We must remember, too, that Adam's sin was forgiven the very day it was committed, and God in His mercy sealed His forgiveness by the promise of the Redeemer, Yet see the consequences of forgiven sin! The long penance, the spread of moral corruption, the disease and death, the misery and sorrow, the banishment from the face of God, all these still remained although the guilt of sin was gone. What reason then for me to tremble at the thought of all my past sins!

I will glance over my past life and try to recall a few of my many offences. What a career mine has been! What ingratitude to God! What selfishness, what uncharitableness to others, what meanness, what unfaithfulness to grace, what impurity, what low motives of action, what forgetfulness of God, what idle words, what waste of time, what continual following of my own inclinations! How can I hope to escape the just judgments of God?

Pray for shame and contrition at the sight of your sins.

September 15th

The Eternal Consequences of Sin

Whoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the pool of fire. (Apoc. xx. 15)

Try to represent to your imagination the eternal prison-house. Listen to the shriek and cries of despair that issue thence; see the agony written on the faces of the inmates; approach if you can to the devouring flame.

What is it that the lost are suffering here? - The pain of fire. Touch a piece of red-hot iron and see how long you can bear it. Yet the lost souls in Hell endure an agony far worse than this. The fire surrounds them like water; nay, it is within and without them, it dries up their tongue, it consumes their entrails, it penetrates to the very marrow of their bones. My God, may I never incur this agony!

This fire is no ordinary fire. It is a supernatural fire; the breath of God kindles it. The torment of burning as known to us is a suffering far less than the torment of Hell. If the lost could be transferred to a bath of seething, molten lead, their suffering would be less severe than that under which they now groan.

About this fire there is none of the light of ordinary fire. It carries with it the blackness of darkness. No ray of light will ever pierce its hideous gloom, no word of comfort, no sort of relief, no hope of change. Nothing will alleviate the eternal misery that comes of sin.

Pray that if the love of God or hope of Heaven does not keep you from sinning, at least the fear of Hell-fire may stop you in time.

September 16th

The Aggravations of Hell

Here will I dwell for I have chosen it. (Psalm cxxxi. 14)

Every thought of the lost will aggravate not alleviate, their sufferings. Let us review one or two of the thoughts that will be ever present in their minds.

They might so easily have been saved! One act of contrition at the last, one grace accepted out of the countless graces that were deliberately set at naught, and they might have been with the Angels in Heaven instead of with the devils in Hell. To know that we have just missed some advantage that we might with a little trouble have secured for ourselves is always a tormenting thought. How much the more when it is Heaven that is lost!

If the advantage is lost purely through our own fault, this greatly increases our misery. We fools! We had so many chances, we knew so well that we were forfeiting our eternal inheritance! It is this that changes sorrow into remorse, and adds to suffering the horror and blackness of despair. All through our own fault! What a thought to dwell with me through all eternity!

What is it that we have lost? That will be the bitterest thought of all. We have lost the sweet music of Heaven, we have lost the company of the Saints and Angels, we have lost the enchanting happiness of gazing on the Sacred Humanity of Jesus in all its glory, and, above all, we have lost the unspeakable joy of the Beatific Vision. We fools!

Pray God that the dread of this thought may hereafter keep you from sin.

September 17th

The Eternity of Hell

This is my rest for ever and ever. (Psalm cxxxi. 14)

The worst aggravation of the sufferings of Hell is that they will never end. If only they would cease or be alleviated after a thousand or a million years, the ray of hope would shine on the inmates of that prison-house. It is the knowledge that at the end of countless millions of years they will still be suffering as now, that makes the agony of the lost so intolerable.

Add to this the frightful monotony of their torments. How wearily the time drags on through a night sleepless on account of acute pain! But what will be the monotony of anguish that will make those endless ages drag along in unchanging misery? - Nothing to vary the blackness of darkness around them; nothing to vary the worm of remorse ever gnawing at their heart; nothing to vary the excruciating agony of the fire that will never be quenched.

All this is the necessary result of their being fixed in an unchanging enmity to God. If only they could receive in their souls one spark of the love of God, Hell would at once cease to be Hell. One thought of love would turn their agony of despair into joyful hope. But no such thought will ever come to them. They have deliberately chosen separation from God, and must endure that choice and all its consequences for ever.

Make acts of love of God, and ask Him that you may never be separated from Him by sin.

September 18th

Venial Sin

With these wounds I was wounded in the house of them that loved me. (Zach. xiii. 6)

Venial sin does not, like mortal sin, kill the soul and make us the enemies of God, but it is a disease which disfigures the soul and renders it unfit for union with Him until it has been purged away. It is the path that leads to Hell by paving the way little by little for the entrance of mortal sin. It is an unkindness which destroys the warmth of our love and creates a coldness towards God.

Venial sin is small in comparison to mortal sin, but is small only as ten thousand years are small compared with eternity. It is the greatest evil in the whole world with the exception of mortal sin. It is committed against an Infinite God. It can only be expiated by the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. It will add to the sufferings of those lost for all eternity.

Venial sin is of two kinds: (1) deliberate, when, knowing that what I am about to do will give pain to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I nevertheless do it to gratify myself. This is the worst kind and the guilt of it is sometimes very great. (2) Indeliberate, or semi-deliberate, when on impulse or without thinking I do what is faulty. Here there is not the same guilt, but there is always some negligence and neglect of grace. I might have foreseen the danger and been more vigilant.

Ask God to help you to appreciate the evil of one venial sin.

September 19th

The Punishment of Venial Sin

Thou shall not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing. (St. Matt. v. 26)

Venial sin is the great evil in the world next to mortal sin, and therefore it deserves a punishment: greater than any of the miseries of earth. God has taught us what sort of an evil it is by one or two instances of the way in which He punishes it in this life.

Moses, the friend of God, the chosen ruler of His people, the meekest of men, to whom God conversed as friend with friend, once committed a venial sin. He gave way to momentary impatience. For this God sent him up to die on Mount Nebo before the Jordan was crossed. All the forty years of weary travel did not avail him; the venial sin cut him off before the goal was reached.

David, the man after God's own heart, in a moment of vanity determined to number the people, boastfully priding himself on the strength of his fighting men. In punishment of this God sent a pestilence, which in less than three days destroyed seventy thousand of the Israelites. Jerusalem itself would have been decimated had not David entreated God to avert His destroying hand. How God must hate venial sin!

After death there will remain for most a debt for venial sin still to be paid. It is in Purgatory that we shall see its true character. No earthly agony even approaches the agony of the purgatorial fire. The souls that God loves must be tormented there till they have paid the last farthing. Alas! what do I still owe? Am I doing my best to pay the debt and avoid adding to it?

Beg for an intense dread of venial sin.

September 20th

Death

It is appointed unto men once to die. (Heb. ix. 27)

Why is death a terror to men? Because it is the punishment of sin, the penalty that was attached by God Himself to the first transgression of His law--"***In the day that thou eatest of it thou shall die the death.***" For this reason we shrink from it as the mark and sign of our fallen and degraded condition. Disease, corruption, old age, decay are its forerunners, and are invested with the same reproach as testimonies to our being born in sin.

Death is the end of our time of trial. After it our destiny will be irrevocably fixed. No more chance of doing penance, no more opportunities of contrition, no more merit, no more grace, no more calls to repentance, no more hope for those who reject God in this life. No wonder then that men dread it if they are not at peace with God, or if they still retain any affection even to venial sin. Yet death is standing at our very doors: at any moment the King of Terrors may summon us away. Am I prepared for the summons?

Yet to those who love God death loses all its terrors. For them it is the beginning of their true life. All their hopes have been directed to the unseen world; why should they fear? Their heart is in Heaven and their treasure is in Heaven, their King and Lord is there, and there, too, are all their dearest and best friends, and the Angels and the Saints. How happy are those who are thus detached from this world and ever look to the world to come!

Pray for a happy death.

September 21st

The Particular Judgment

*We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ.
(2 Cor. v. 10)*

At the Particular Judgment we shall see our lives as they never appeared to us before. In an instant we shall live them over again. Each thought, word, act will be clear and distinct, with its true character no longer hidden by our own willful blindness, but in all its foulness, baseness, ingratitude, revealed to us in the bright light of God.

We shall then stand face to face with Jesus Christ, no longer as our Advocate, but as our Judge; no longer pleading for us, but dealing out strict justice, according to our deserts. He will be clothed with a Divine glory that will attract us and at the same time fill us with dismay at the thought of having offended Him. St. Teresa said that what struck her most forcibly in the vision she had of Him was, how awful would be the anger of One so full of Divine sweetness!

Yet we need not fear the Judgment if we make Christ our friend now. If we earn His gratitude by doing all we can to please Him, He will not remember our former sins. He will look to what we are, not what we have been. He will not remember the sins of those who love Him with all their hearts. The same St. Teresa said: "Why should I fear the Judgment when my Judge will be my best friend?"

Pray that you may forestall the Judgment by a careful examination of your conscience now, and an earnest desire to please your Judge.

September 22nd

The General Judgment

Behold He cometh with the clouds, and every ey shall see Him, and they also that pierce Him. (Apoc. i. 7)

At the General Judgment, Christ as man will be the Judge of men, because He is at once God and man. He will therefore have not only the most intimate knowledge of all our lives, but a sympathy with us, an understanding of our nature from experience, that will give Him in the natural order the highest qualifications for being our Judge.

On that day what a complete reverse there will be of all the world's unjust verdicts! How many, now ridiculed, despised, condemned, will then be glorious and honored before men and Angels! How many that were highly esteemed on earth will then be covered with shame and contempt! What will be my lot? What will my sentiments be on that day when the thoughts of all hearts will be revealed?

On the right of the Judge will be the sheep, on the left the goats; the one overflowing with celestial delights, the other already filled with the despair of Hell. What will distinguish them? - Simply this, whether they have shown charity to others for Christ's sake. This and nothing else will be the test--"**Inasmuch as you have done it to one of My least brethren you have done it to Me.**" Has my kindness to others been done purely for Christ's sake? How shall I stand this test?

Ask God to teach you how to secure a place on the right hand of the Judge.

September 23rd

The Final Sentence

The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just unto life everlasting. (St. Matt. xxi. 46)

The sentence pronounced at the Last Judgment will be one of perfect justice. Every little circumstance will be taken into account; inherited character, natural disposition, fierce passions, favorable or unfavorable circumstances, early training, opportunities of grace, sacraments, temptations, everything. All who are lost will confess that they have been treated with perfect justice, that it was their own fault, that it was they who condemned themselves to eternal separation from God.

The sentence will be not only just but merciful. All the lost will acknowledge that their punishment is less than they deserved. They will recognize an element of mercy, and will be forced amid their despair and hatred of God, amid their curses and blasphemies, to confess that they have been leniently dealt with in comparison with their sins.

The sentence will be irrevocable. Even at the Particular Judgment the soul will know its final destiny. But at the General Judgment the sentence will be confirmed and ratified in the presence of the holy Angels and the assembled crowd. How strange is it then that in view of this we take so little trouble to secure a favorable sentence!

Pray that to you may be addressed the gracious words: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord."

September 24th

The End Attained

Then shall the King say to them that are on His right hand, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (St. Matt. xxv. 34)

What will be the sentiments of those who at the General Judgment will find themselves on the right hand of the Judge, and listen to His words of love? First of all they will overflow with a delicious sense of happiness and peace; they will scarcely be able to contain themselves with delight; unmixed and unalloyed will be their cup of joy, unlike any of the joys of earth, intoxicating them with its ineffable sweetness.

They will also be amazed and astonished at the reward given to them. What have I done, O Lord, to deserve all this? When did I minister to Thee as Thou sayest? When did I do anything to earn Thy words of gratitude? Who am I that Thou shouldst thus exalt me? The little I have done came from Thee, and now Thou rewardest me as if it were my own. We bless Thee, we praise Thee for Thy great goodness. Thine unspeakable generosity.

They will also look back with wonder on their earthly life. While it lasted it seemed so long, so tedious, perhaps so miserable, and now it is like a moment in the past, like a shadow that flitted by. How infinitesimal all its sorrows and pains will then seem, all compensated by that first moment of ineffable delight!

Seek to bear these thoughts in mind when earthly sorrows press heavily.

September 25th

Heaven

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man with things God hath prepared for those who love Him. (1 Cor. ii. 9)

These words convey the best idea that the Apostle, who had been carried up into the third Heaven, could give of the happiness of the redeemed. All the loveliest things we have ever seen are as nothing in comparison to the sight of Heaven; all the sweetest sounds are discord compared with the music of Heaven; all the joys that have made the longest hours only too short do not deserve the name of joys compared with the joys of Heaven. One moment of Heaven is worth them all!

Whatever God does He does on a scale worthy of Himself. The happiness of Heaven will be immeasurable because it is derived from union with the God of infinite love and beauty. It will be a joy like the joy of our Lord Himself, since He will say to each of the redeemed: "**Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.**" Am I doing what I can to insure these words being addressed to me?

In Heaven all will be perfectly happy. Even those who have the lowest places will have all that their hearts desire. There will be no unsatisfied wish in Heaven, no craving after what we do not possess. Every one will have an overflowing cup of pleasure. O what fools we are not to do more to insure the joys of Heaven!

Pray that you may often think of Heaven and its joys.

September 26th

The Essential Happiness of Heaven

We shall see Him as He is. (1 St. John iii. 2)

The one central source of Heaven's happiness will be the Vision of God. We shall see Him face to face in all His Divine beauty; everything will be swallowed up in the absorbing delight of gazing on the majesty of the Most High. From this fount of joy all other joys will spring. This will in itself be Heaven. If the lost in Hell could see God for a single instant, Hell would at once become Heaven to them.

Why is this? Because in God are united every perfection and every beauty and every joy and every delight that exist or can exist, and all in an infinite degree. Every other joy is but a shadow as compared with the substance, a grain of dust compared with the loftiest mountains, a drop of water compared with the ocean. O my God, help me to despise the passing joys of earth when I think of the joy of seeing Thee!

The Beatific Vision will not convey the same degree of happiness to all who gaze upon it. It will depend upon our union with God on earth, on our faithfulness to grace, on our personal sanctity. One star differs from another star in glory. All will be happy in Heaven, but the happiness of some will be incomparably greater than that of others. What folly then if we let slip any of the eternal reward for the sake of some perishable trifle or miss any opportunity of adding to our treasure of heavenly delight!

Pray that you may appreciate your heavenly treasure and strive continually to add to it.

September 27th

The Employments of Heaven

His servants shall serve Him. (Apoc. xxii. 3)

While faith and hope will be at an end in Heaven the virtue of charity will remain. There is nothing on earth so sweet as love; nothing that fills the heart with such continual joy; nothing that so occupies the soul and causes men to forget all else. This is the case when the object of our love is a perishable imperfect creature like ourselves. How much more when the object of our love is the God of infinite beauty, containing in Himself every possible earthly perfection, not only multiplied to an infinite degree, but altogether higher in kind, and therefore a source of greater joy than all possible created beauty.

A strong love makes the long hours pass away in a scream of unceasing delight; no weariness, no monotony, no desire for anything else. One thing only checks the perfection of the happiness of love, and that is the thought that it cannot last forever. In Heaven there will be a stream of delight immeasurably richer, and the joyful consciousness that there is no fear of its ever coming to an end.

As God is infinite in His perfections, they will necessarily be inexhaustible. The various phases (if we may use the term) of His Divine loveliness will never come to an end. After a million years there will still be the same inexhaustible treasure of multiform delights to be enjoyed, and after a million years it will not be diminished. No fear then of sameness in Heaven, no fear of monotony, it will ever be the same and yet ever new.

Pray for a greater love of God here on earth.

September 28th

The Music of Heaven

They sang as it were a new canticle. (Apoc. xiv. 3)

Everyone has read the story of the monk who once sat down in a wood near a monastery and wondered whether Heaven would not after a time lose its charm. A little bird began to sing a song so sweet that he sat entranced. After a few minutes, as it seemed to him, the song ceased and he returned to his monastery to find that he had sat there and listened for twenty years. If this could be the case when it was but one little bird singing, what must be the absorbing delight of the music of the Angels and Saints in Heaven?

This music will combine the beauty of every earthly instrument and of the sweetest of earthly singers. No notes were ever heard on earth like the notes of the virgins, boys and girls, men and women, who will sing a heavenly melody that will never cease; and each note will be such that, if we heard it on earth, we should despise all pain and suffering, nay, death itself, for the joy of listening to it.

There will be a still sweeter music for the blessed in Heaven, a music which makes the music of the Saints and Angels seem almost discord. The Voice of Jesus Christ will be Heaven's sweetest melody. If on earth men hung on His every word, if never man spoke like that Man, what will be the Divine attraction of every word, every sound that will proceed from His lips in Heaven? How each word will ravish the souls of all the Saints in Heaven! O my God, grant that I may hear that Voice in Heaven.

Pray to dwell now in spirit in the company of the Voice speaking to your heart on earth.

September 29th

The Companions of Heaven

Their lot is among the Saints. (Wisdom v. 5)

*H*ow much of our happiness depends upon those among whom we dwell! There are some whose very presence is enough and more than enough to satisfy us. The mere fact of being in their company is a source of continual pleasure. If this is the case with those who are still full of imperfections and faults, how much more in Heaven, where everyone will be purged of all that offends us in them on earth. Every one of the Saints and Angels will be not only a congenial but a most delightful companion.

*B*ut there will be some who will feast our souls with their company and conversation beyond the rest. Our friends on earth will be our friends in Heaven, we shall recognize each and all. All to whom we have done any kindness for Christ's sake will come to thank us; above all, any whom we have had the happiness of saving from sin, by precept or example, will never tire of pouring out upon us the abundance of their gratitude. What more delicious pleasure than this!

*Y*et there will be dearer companions still. The Saints of God, our Patron Saint, our Guardian Angel, how shall we linger in their sweet society? The Saints to whom we have had a special devotion, before all, St. Joseph and our Lady, how surpassing sweet to be with them! Yet all this is only a reflection of the joy we shall derive from beholding the Lamb Who had been slain, our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

*P*ray to dwell in spirit in the company of the Saints and Angels.

September 30th

The Memories of Heaven

What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me? (Psalm cxv. 12)

One of the chief sources of our gratitude to God and of our ceaseless joy in Heaven will be derived from looking back upon our lives.

Even in this world we can catch a glimpse of God's wonderful goodness to us, of all that He has done to save us from sin, to help us on our way to Heaven. In Heaven we shall see dearly what we now see very darkly, and we shall never cease to admire the unceasing care that God has exercised towards us, making all things work together for our good.

What joy, too, we shall feel at the thought of all we have done for God on earth! Each act of self-denial, each raising of the heart to God, each little deed of charity will then be remembered. Christ our Lord will thank us for each, and our hearts will leap with gladness and eternal joy.

Even our sins will be indirectly a source of happiness to the saved. There will be the overflowing gratitude to Him who has washed us from our sins in His own Blood, there will be the joyful contrast between what we might have been and what we are! How eagerly we shall cry: "We are bought with a great price." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive honor and glory and benediction and power!"

Make acts of gratitude for all God has done and will do for you.

