

The Judgment Day

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time – Mal 3:19-20a / 2 Thes 3:7-12 / Lk 21:5-19
Ave Maria Catholic Church, November 13, 2022 – Fr. David M Vidal

This Sunday is the second to the last Sunday of our liturgical year. Next Sunday, we will conclude the liturgical year by celebrating the Feast of Christ the King. This Sunday, the Church invites us to consider Jesus' predictions and teachings about the end of the world.

In the first reading, the prophet Malachi tries to open our minds to a reality that is just ahead of us: *“For the day is coming, blazing like an oven,”* (Mal 3: 19). The prophet announces a day of justice. This is a day when evildoers will be stubble and set on fire. This is a devastating fire, a consuming fire, a terrifying fire.

But on the other hand, the prophet offers a consoling message: *“But for you who fear my name, the sun of justice will arise with healing in its wings,”* (Mal 3: 20). Here, the prophet does not speak of a fire, but of the sun itself communicating healing to those who love and fear the Lord.

Isn't it one of the first questions we learn in our Catechism? Who is God? God is infinitely perfect. Creator of heaven and earth, who rewards the good and punishes the wicked.

If God would not reward the good and punish the wicked, God would not be just. And if God is not just, God would not be perfect, and consequently, He would not be God.

The prophet Malachi announces the day of judgment. And we need to pay close attention to it. On that day, our most important business is defined! That is our eternal retirement! That is our eternal inheritance!

Sometimes, we miss this point. We work for things that, sooner or later, will perish, and we forget that our work for our eternal life is the most urgent and needed business!

Today's Gospel also presents the image of the last judgment. When people are talking about the *“costly stones and votive offerings of the temple”* Jesus simply says: *“All that you see here – the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone,”* (Lk 21: 6).

Jesus also speaks about powerful earthquakes, famines, plagues, and mighty signs in the sky. Jesus speaks about persecutions and tribulations. Then, the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and He will render to every man according to his works.

We do not know when the last judgment will be; however, we do know that the particular judgment will come, and we must be ready. Not being ready means not caring about eternal life and eternal happiness. This is a mistake that is all too possible for us to make, and the consequence of this mistake is terrifying!

Why do we not often think about our last end and particular judgment? Perhaps, this is the answer. We can name it either amnesia or forgetfulness. We forget the great truth of our Christian faith that a judgment follows death.

Why do we forget? Perhaps, because there is too much unpunished wrong, too much prosperity of the evil, too much pleasure for those who disobey God's laws, too much good reputation for those who sin without being seen, too many glorified sinners, too many proud people who say: *"I have sinned, and nothing has happened to me."*

But the day will come, just as once a year every businessman balances his accounts, so too, that most important hour will come when every soul will balance its account before God.

Let us imagine life like a cash register, in which every account, every thought, and every deed, like every sale, is registered and recorded. And when the business of life is finally done, then God pulls out from the registry of our souls that slip of paper on which is recorded our merits and demerits, our virtues and our vices—the basis of the judgment on which shall be decided eternal life or eternal death.

We may falsify our accounts until that day. We may pretend that we have an outstanding balance, a very positive one; however, on that particular day, the exact amount will be given.

What is the particular judgment? The particular judgment is a declaration on the part of God and admittance on the part of the soul.

First, it is a declaration on the part of God. Imagine two souls appearing before the sight of God, one in the state of grace, the other in the state of sin. Grace is a participation in the nature and life of God. When God looks upon a soul in the state of grace, He sees in it a likeness of His own nature. Christ recognizes the soul in the state of grace in virtue of likeness to Him and says to the soul: *"Come blessed of My Father, come into the Kingdom prepared for you from all eternity."*

But God looks into the other soul that is in the state of sin and has not that likeness, so too God, looking at the sinful soul and failing to see the likeness that comes with His grace, does not recognize it as His own, and says to it *"I do not know you"*—and this is a terrifying statement.

Second, it is admittance on the part of the soul. When a soul is before the sight of God, standing before the tremendous and majestic presence of almighty God, the soul does not argue and does not dispute the judgment, for it sees itself as it really is.

How do we face the reality of our judgment? We must face the day of judgment with confidence and faith, knowing that God, who called us to existence, gives us the graces we need to be eternally blessed.

We must also face the day of judgment with wisdom. To be wise means to see things according to God's eyes. It means to judge things according to God's view. We must not wait for the particular or even the final universal judgment. We must have a clear understanding of ourselves and examine our actions daily.

Being wise means rejecting what God detests and being sorry for it. Being wise means welcoming every grace and virtue in our life.

We must face the day of judgment with courage and determination. We want to live a holy life because we want to have a holy death. Then, we also say with great determination what Saint Paul says in today's second reading: "*We wanted to present ourselves as a model for you,*" (2 Thes 3: 9). Saint Paul wanted to be a model of virtue, and this is what we should also be. We should also say with Saint Paul: "*Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*" (1 Cor 11: 1).

If we live in this way, the judgment day – as difficult as it is – becomes a day of hope, a day of love, and a day of happiness.

Today's liturgy presents to us the image of the final judgment. Let us entrust our lives to the protection of the Blessed Mother. Let us ask her to shape our lives according to the life of Jesus. In this way, when we are called before the Lord, finding the likeness of Jesus in our souls, He will say, come blessed to my joy. Amen