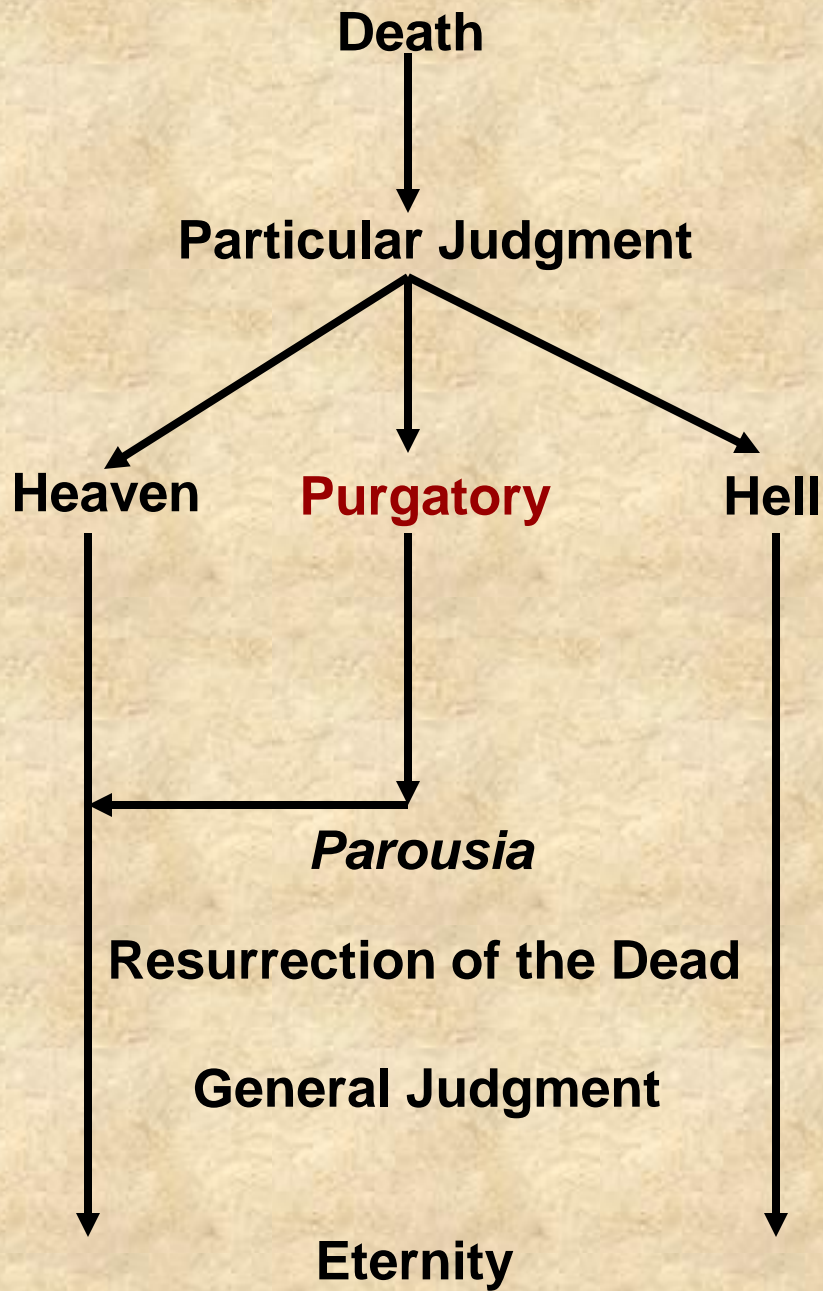


ESCHATOLOGY:

The Last Things

**Part VIIIc:
Purgatory,
Limbo,
Parousia**

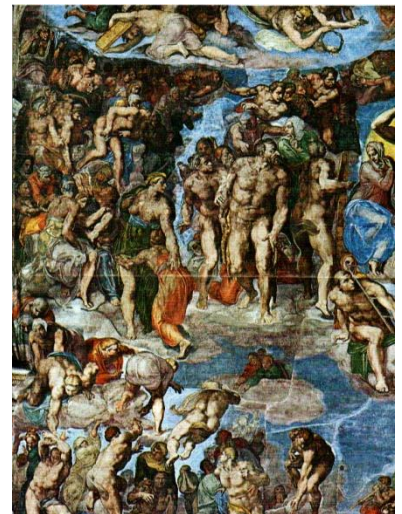




Purgatory

Sacred Scripture and the constant faith of the Church affirm that heaven and hell, as places, exist. Catholic Christians and other Christians also profess belief in a *state of being*, not a place, called “purgatory.”

The term “purgatory” is not found in the Bible; but neither are other such important Christian beliefs such as “Trinity” and “Incarnation.”



Purgatory is defined as a state of being, the continuing process of purgation or purification of the soul after human death.

It is a state of perfection--begun in baptism and faith-consummated after death, *entered into only by those who are saved*. In other words, our transformation in Christ (Romans 13:14, “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ”), our perfection in the holiness of the Father (1 Peter 1:16, “Be holy, because I (am) holy”) is not ended at our physical death.

Purgatory is a sign of God's mercy on those who have honestly sought to know God and to do His will in this life and yet die in some degree of bondage to sin or the effects of sin.

The Church has only two official teachings concerning purgatory:

- ✓ it exists, and
- ✓ our prayers help the souls in purgatory.

God is revealed as perfect interior holiness.

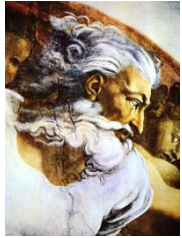
Isaiah 6:3



“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!” they (the Seraphim) cried one to the other.

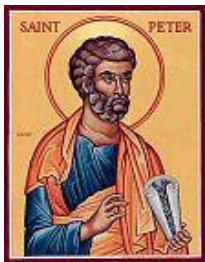
We are called to that same holiness.

Leviticus 19:2



Speak to the whole Israelite community and tell them: Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.

1 Peter 1:15-16



As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, for it is written, “Be holy because I (am) holy.”

Who can stand in the face of the holiness of God?

Psalms 15:1



Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy mountain?

Psalms 66:18

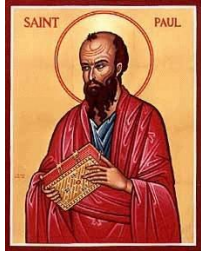
Had I cherished evil in my heart, the Lord would not have heard.

Hebrews 12:14



Strive for peace with everyone, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Ephesians 5:3



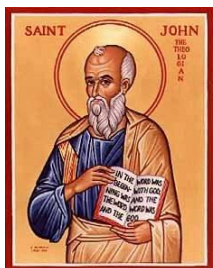
Immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be mentioned among you, **as is fitting among holy ones.**

Exodus 33:18-20



Then Moses said, “Do let me see your glory!” He (Yahweh) answered, “I will make all my beauty pass before you, and in your presence I will pronounce my name, ‘Lord’; I who show favors to whom I will, I who grant mercy to whom I will. But my face you cannot see, for **no man sees me and still lives.**”

Revelation 21:27



... but **nothing unclean will enter it** (the City of God), nor any (one) who does abominable things or tells lies. Only those will enter whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Ephesians 5:25-27



Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her (the Church) to sanctify her, **cleansing her** by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, **without spot or wrinkle** or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

We are deprived of the vision of God because of our sinfulness. But there is a divine purging fire which can heal us.

Hebrews 12:29

For our God is a **consuming fire**.

Hebrews 12:6,10



For whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; **he scourges** every son he acknowledges. ... but he does so for our benefit, in order that we may share his holiness.

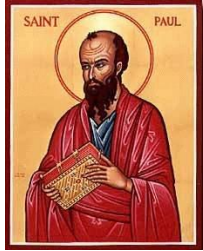
Isaiah 6:5-7



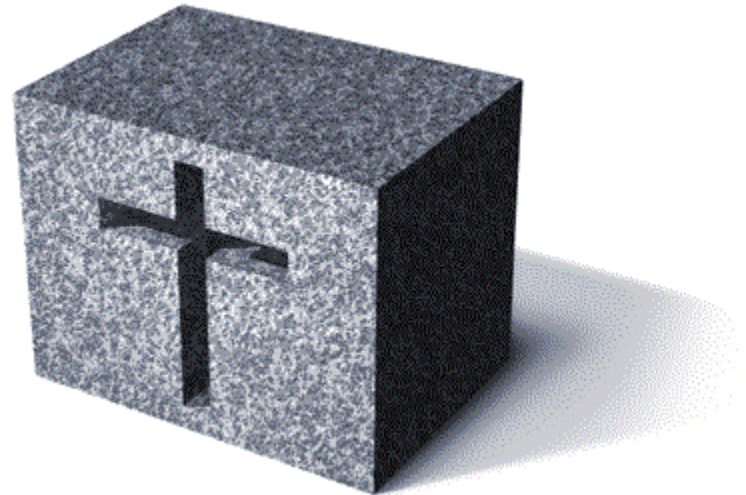
Then I (Isaiah) said, “Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding **an ember which he had taken with tongs from the altar**. He touched my mouth with it. “See,” he said, “now that this has touched your lips, **your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.**”



1 Corinthians 3:11-15

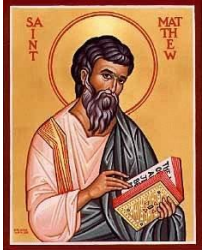


For no one can lay **a foundation** other than the one that is there, namely, **Jesus Christ**. If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, the work of each will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. **It will be revealed with fire, and the fire (itself) will test the quality of each one's work.** If the work stands that someone built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage. But if someone's work is burned up, that one will suffer loss; **the person will be saved, but only as through fire.**



Jesus implies that our sins can be forgiven in the next world.

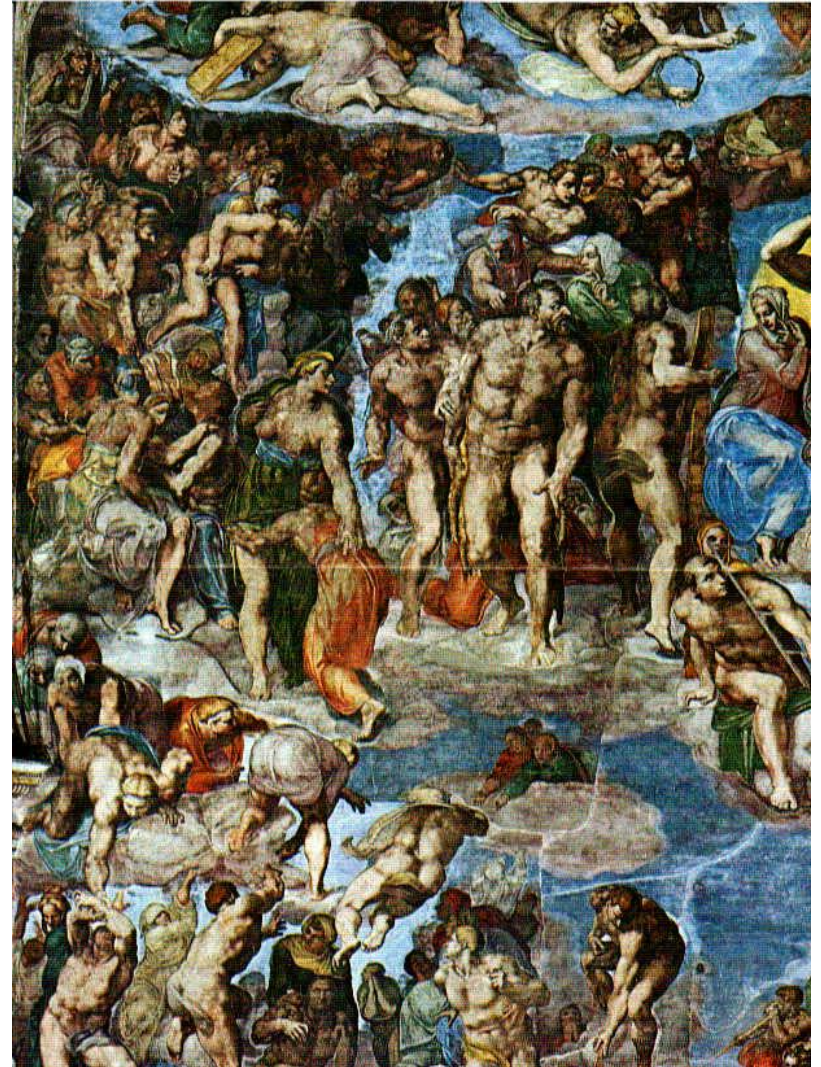
Matthew 12:32



And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or **in the age to come.**



Scripture from the Greek Septuagint, the Old Testament of Christ, the Evangelists and Paul, and of the councils of Hippo and Carthage, affirm purgatory.



2 Maccabees 12:42-46



Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out. The noble Judas warned the soldiers to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem **to provide for an expiatory sacrifice**. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection of the dead in view; for if he were not **expecting the fallen to rise again**, it would have been useless and foolish **to pray for them in death**. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Thus he **made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin**.

Experience teaches us that there are people who die so suddenly, they have not had the opportunity to confess their sins, but are not guilty of serious “death dealing” sin and separation from God.



**Gathering the objects,
he 'sent 12,000 Drachmas
to Jerusalem to offer a sin
offering...' (II Maccabees 12, 39-46).**

Peter-Paul Rubens: Judas Maccabaeus praying for the Dead

The constant faith of the Church affirms the belief in purgatory. From the earliest of times, the Fathers of the Church taught the existence of purgatory:

Tertullian (Rome, 160-220?), Origen (Alexandria, 185-254?), Cyprian (Carthage, 200-258), Ambrose (Tier, 340-397), Augustine (Numidia, 354-430), Basil (Caesarea, 329-379), Gregory of Nazianzus (in Cappadocia, 329-389), John Chrysostom (Antioch, 349-407), Gregory the Great (Rome, 540-604), and many others.



The teaching magisterium of the Church also affirms the belief in purgatory.

Council of Lyons II (1274)

“We believe ... that the souls, by **the purifying compensation** are **purged after death.**”

Council of Florence (1438)

Repeated the Council of Lyons II (1274).

Council of Trent (1545-1563)

“We constantly hold that **purgatory exists**, and that the souls of the faithful there detained are helped by the prayers of the faithful.”



The Catechism of the Catholic Church 1031

“The Church gives the name **Purgatory** to **this final purification of the elect**, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned.”

“The Church **formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent**. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire. [Cf. 1 Cor 3:15; 1 Pet 1:7.] “As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, **there is a purifying fire**. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church 1472

“To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church, it is necessary to understand that **sin has a double consequence**. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the **‘eternal punishment’ of sin**. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the **‘temporal punishment’ of sin**. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as **following from the very nature of sin**. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain.”

Limbo

The word limbo comes from the Latin word *limbus* which means a border, a hem, or fringe around the edge of a garment. The term is associated in common parlance to mean some in-between state of being.

It is often associated, in a religious context, with **some state of being in neither heaven nor hell**, therefore on the fringe of either. It has been used to refer to **the abode for the dead who were neither capable of committing deadly sin** (1 John 5:16) which excluded the soul from hell nor were baptized in water and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5) which excluded the soul from heaven.

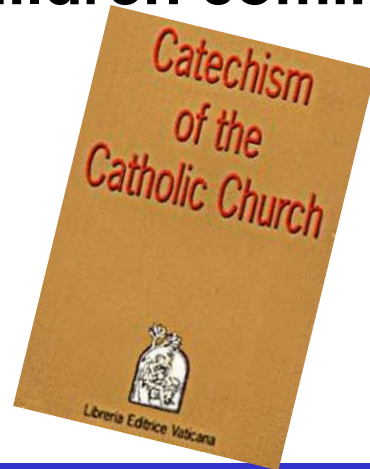
The first official Roman Catholic doctrinal teaching on the existence of or state of limbo was promulgated in 2007, in the document, *The Hope of Salvation for Infants who Die Without Being Baptized*.

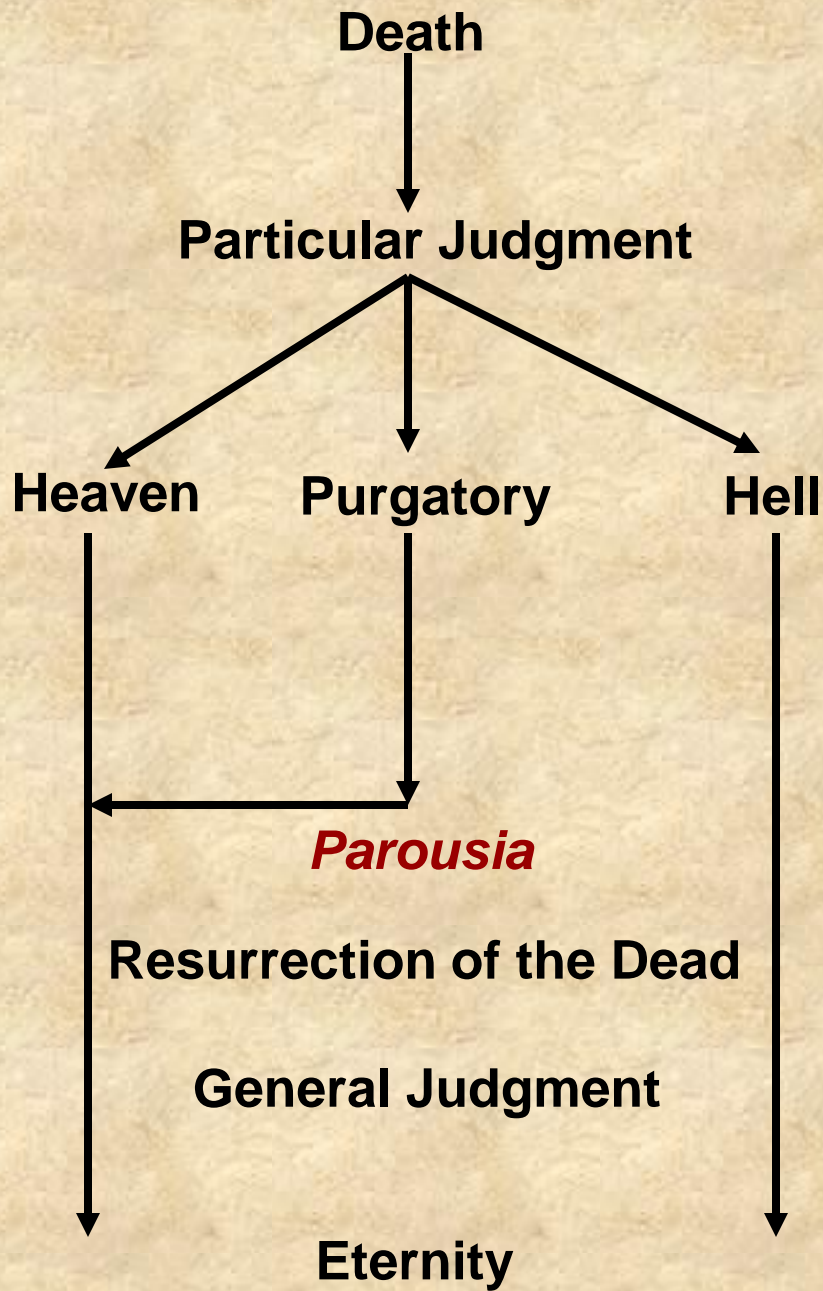
The conclusion of this study is that there are theological and liturgical reasons to hope that infants who die without baptism may be saved and brought into eternal happiness.

Limbo received a lot of attention in **pastoral practice** when pastors needed to explain the mind of God to distraught parents whose newborn infant had died without being baptized.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1261

“As regards **children who have died without baptism**, the Church can only **entrust them to the mercy of God**, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God, who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children, which caused him to say, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them" [Mark 10:14, cf. 1 Tim. 2:4], allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without baptism. All the more urgent is **the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy baptism.**”





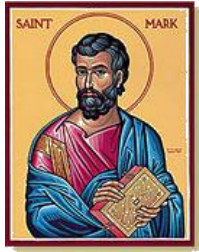
The Parousia: Christ's Second Coming

Catholic Christians have always believed that Jesus Christ would come back to close the current period of human history in earth. The time when Jesus will return is given many names: **the Day of the Lord, the *Parousia*, the end time, and the Second Coming of Christ.**



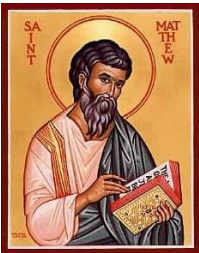
The Bible describes the events of Jesus' return in apocalyptic images.

Mark 13:26-27



And then they will **see the Son of Man coming in the clouds' with great power and glory**, and then he will send out the angels and gather (his) elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.

Matthew 16:27



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.

Acts 1:11



They (two men dressed in white) said, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will **return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.**”



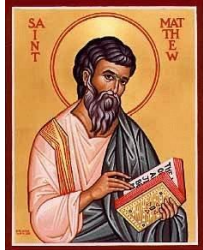
1 Thessalonians 4:16-18



For **the Lord himself**, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, **will come down from heaven**, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words.

The parousia will be unmistakable because it will be accompanied by unprecedented signs.

Matthew 24:27



For just as **lightning comes from the east and is seen as far as the west**, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

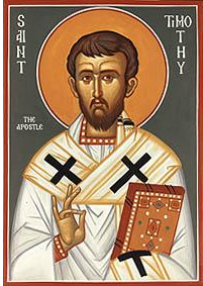
Some signs are general events concerning the evangelization of the world.

Matthew 24:14

And this **gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world** as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come.

Other signs are more proximate. Mark (Chapter 13), Matthew (Chapter 24), and Luke (Chapter 21) all describe the unmistakable signs with apocalyptic images.

2 Timothy 4:1-2



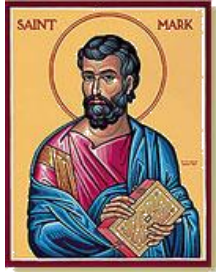
I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: **proclaim the word ...**

2 Timothy 3:1-5

But understand this: there will be **terrifying times in the last days**. People will be self-centered and lovers of money, proud, haughty, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreligious, callous, implacable, slanderous, licentious, brutal, hating what is good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, as they make a pretense of religion but deny its power. Reject them.

No one knows exactly when this will occur.

Mark 13:32



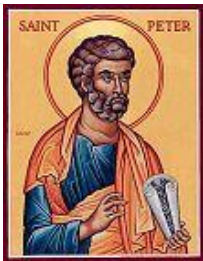
(Jesus began his discourse ...) “But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but **only the Father.**”

1 Thessalonians 5:2



For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come **like a thief at night.**

2 Peter 3:10



But the day of the Lord will come **like a thief**, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out.

The Catholic Church teaches that we should avoid pointless speculations about the time, the details of the signs, the nature of the difficulties, etc. The Church focuses instead on the need for living the Gospel so as to be prepared for the parousia whenever it happens.

Mark 13:33,35-37



(Jesus began his discourse ...) “Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. ... **Watch, therefore; you do not know when** the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: **'Watch!'**”

1 Peter 1:13-16



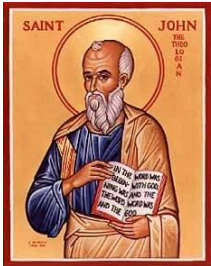
Therefore, **gird up the loins of your mind, live soberly,** and **set your hopes completely on the grace** to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Like obedient children, do not act in compliance with the desires of your former ignorance but, as he who called you is holy, **be holy yourselves** in every aspect of your conduct, for it is written, “Be holy because I (am) holy.”



Millennialism: A Thousand Year Reign

There exists among many Evangelical Protestants a dogma based on some passages in the Bible called *millennialism* which means a “thousand year reign.” The basis for millennialism is found in the Book of Revelation.

Revelation 20:1-15



Then I saw an angel come down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the abyss and a heavy chain. He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, which is the Devil or Satan, and tied it up for **a thousand years** and threw it into the abyss, which he locked over it and sealed, so that it could no longer lead the nations astray until **the thousand years** are completed. After this, it is to be released for a short time. ~

Then I saw thrones; those who sat on them were entrusted with judgment. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image nor had accepted its mark on their foreheads or hands. They came to life and they reigned with Christ for **a thousand years**. The rest of the dead did not come to life until **the thousand years** were over. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over these; they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for (the) **thousand years**.~



When **the thousand years** are completed, Satan will be released from his prison. He will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. They invaded the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city. But fire came down from heaven and consumed them. The Devil who had led them astray was thrown into the pool of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Next I saw a large white throne and the one who was sitting on it. The earth and the sky fled from his presence and there was no place for them. I saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. ~

Then another scroll was opened, the book of life. The dead were judged according to their deeds, by what was written in the scrolls. The sea gave up its dead; then Death and Hades gave up their dead. All the dead were judged according to their deeds. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the pool of fire. (This pool of fire is the second death.) Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the pool of fire.



The **Magisterium of the Church** has never commented on a thousand year reign of Christ. Rather, as is already clear from what is covered in this series, the Church does not see the Second Coming of Christ at any other time than at the general judgment of all men and women which is the same as the resurrection of the dead followed by definitive reward or punishment for souls.

The Church interprets the expression "**a thousand years**" not literally but according to the literature in which it appears-
-prophetic and apocalyptic. In apocalyptic literature, a thousand years would simply indicate a long period of time, in this case, the time period before the Second Coming of Christ.

Apocalyptic literature is **not to be taken literally**.

End of
Eschatology--Purgatory, Limbo, Parousia, Part VIIIc

Go to
**Eschatology--Resurrection, General Judgment,
Eternity, New Creation, Part VIII d**