+JMJ

Memento Mori



Remember that you will die

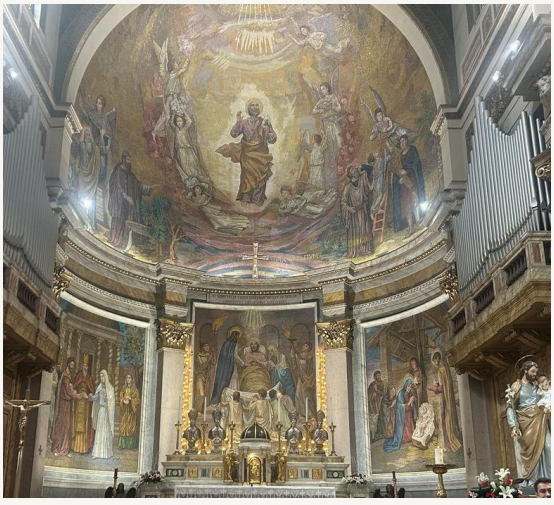
Preparing with Catholic faith and hope

Fr. Mike Keucher
November 15, 2026

1

Prayer by Bl. John Henry Newman

O my Lord and Savior, support me in my last hour by the strong arms of Thy sacraments and the fragrance of thy consolations. Let Thy absolving words be said over me, and the holy oil sign and seal me; and let Thine own body be my food and Thy blood my sprinkling; and let Thy Mother Mary come to me, and my angel whisper peace to me, and Thy glorious saints and my own dear patrons smile on me, that in and through them all I may die as I desire to live, in Thy Church, in Thy faith, and in Thy love. Amen.



Why are we here?

Our eternal destiny gives meaning to the choices we make today.

Planning ahead helps our families when illness and grief make decisions difficult.

Christ and his Church have something to teach us about these important topics and they accompany us through suffering, death and mourning.

The four last things

Death	Earthly life ends. We await the resurrection of the body.
Judgment	We meet Christ and answer for our response to his grace.
Heaven	Eternal communion with God and all the blessed.
Hell	Eternal separation from God through a final rejection of his love.

Particular and final judgment

At death	The particular judgment determines our eternal destiny.
At Christ's return	The dead rise. The final judgment reveals the truth and consequences of every life.
God's justice	The final judgment reveals God's mercy and justice. It does not change our destiny.

CCC 1021–1022, 1038–1041

05

5

Heaven and hell

- Heaven is the fulfillment of our deepest desire: life with God forever.
- Hell is real. Our freedom and our choices have eternal significance.
- Christ calls us to repentance and offers mercy. **Now** is always the time to respond to his grace.

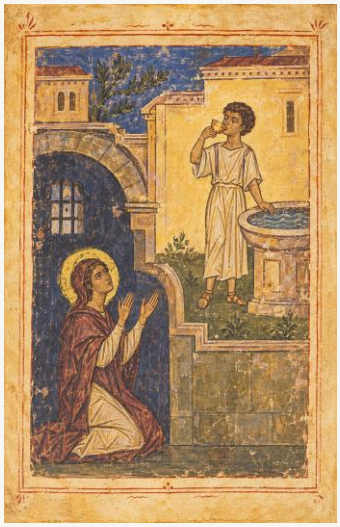


CCC 1023–1029, 1033–1037

06

6

What is purgatory?



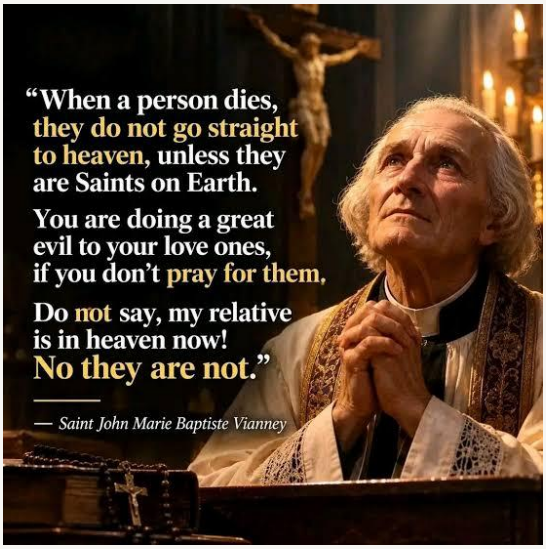
- Purgatory is the final purification of those who die in God's grace.
- Everyone in purgatory is assured of heaven. It is not "another chance"
- Our prayers, especially the Mass, help them.
- St. Perpetua's visions of her brother (203). St Augustine discusses purifying fire after death (*Enchiridion* 69). In 6th century, St. Gregory the Great speaks explicitly of a purifying fire for certain lesser sins before the final judgment (Dialogues, Book IV)

CCC 1030–1032; Revelation 21:27

07

7

What is purgatory?

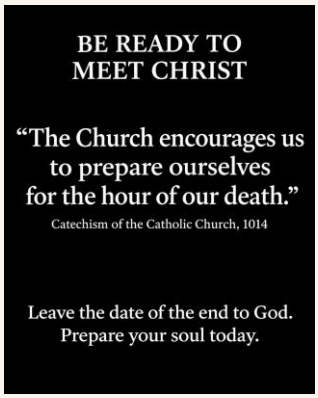


08

8

Spiritual preparation

- Sunday Mass, regular Confession and daily prayer keep us close to Christ.
- Forgiveness and reconciliation matter.
  Say what needs to be said while you can.
- Charity. A letter of love and faith can bless your family.
  Pray for a happy death through St. Joseph.



07

9

Calling the priest early

"Please call a Catholic priest."

Tell your family now. Call when illness becomes serious, while the person can still participate.



CCC 1514–1515

08

10

What Catholics mean by last rites

Confession	Reconciliation with God and sacramental absolution.
Anointing	The Church prays for strength and healing through the priest's prayer and holy oil.
Viaticum	Holy Communion as food for the journey when death approaches.

CCC 1517, 1524–1525

09

11

Anointing of the Sick

- For Catholics seriously endangered by illness or the frailty of old age.
- Grace brings strength, peace and courage, forgiveness of sins and, if God wills, bodily healing.
- The sacrament may be repeated if illness worsens or another serious illness occurs.

James 5:14–15 and CCC 1514–1532

10

12

The celebration of anointing

Opening rites	Greeting and Confession or the Penitential Act. [Apostolic Pardon]
God's word	Scripture and intercessions for the sick person.
The sacrament	Laying on of hands, thanksgiving over oil, anointing and the prayer after anointing.
Conclusion	The Lord's Prayer, Communion when included [Viaticum], and the final blessing.

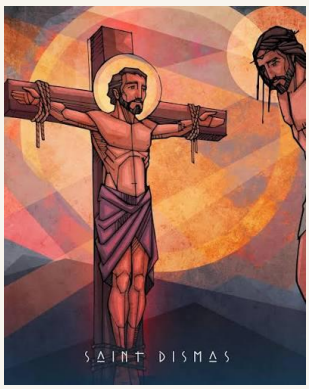
Order of the Anointing of the Sick and CCC 1517–1519

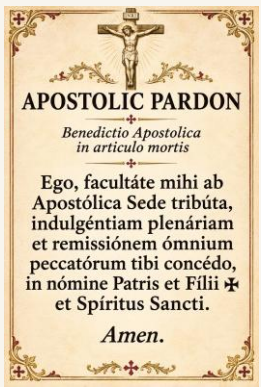
11

13

Viaticum and the Apostolic Pardon

- Viaticum is the Eucharist received when a person is approaching death.
- Request it while the person can still receive. It is the last sacrament of the Christian journey.
- The Apostolic Pardon carries a plenary indulgence at death.





CCC 1524–1525 and Manual of Indulgences, grant 12

12

14

Dignity during suffering

- Every person retains dignity, even with dementia, disability or dependence on others.
- Euthanasia, assisted suicide and intentionally causing death through neglect are **never permitted**.
- We may allow natural death when treatment no longer offers proportionate benefit.



Indiana Catholic Conference guide, 2023, Ethical Principles

13

15

Required and optional treatment

Ordinary care	Reasonable hope of benefit without excessive burden.
Extraordinary means	Little hope of benefit or excessive burden or expense.
Each situation	Weigh this treatment for this person, with medical and moral guidance.

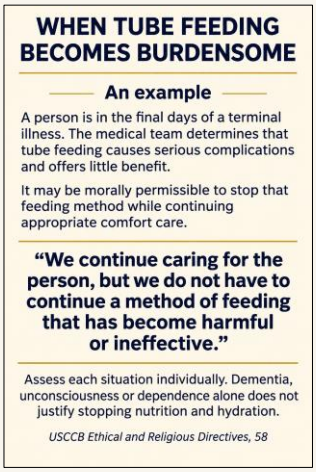
ICC guide, 2023 and USCCB ERDs 56–57

14

16

Food and water

- Presume in favor of food and water, including medically assisted nutrition and hydration.
- Assisted means can become optional if the body cannot benefit or their use is excessively burdensome.
- **Food or water must never be withdrawn with the intention of causing death.**



ICC guide, 2023, Ethical Principle 5

15

17

Pain relief, palliative care and hospice

- Catholic care includes relief of pain and other distressing symptoms.
- Proper pain relief is permissible even with an unintended risk of shortening life.
- Palliative care and hospice can support faithful care while families continue presence and prayer.

ICC guide, 2023, Ethical Principles 6–7

16

18

Questions for the medical team

Benefit	Likelihood of success that the treatment offers, degree of success of the treatment in this case, think immediate and long-term
Burdens	Pain, Emotional strain, financial burden to self and family, “inconvenience” (e.g., bi-weekly treatments requiring elderly person several hours in large city)
Alternatives	Could another approach or a trial for a limited period help?
Next steps	If benefits outweigh burdens, morally required If burdens outweigh benefits, morally optional

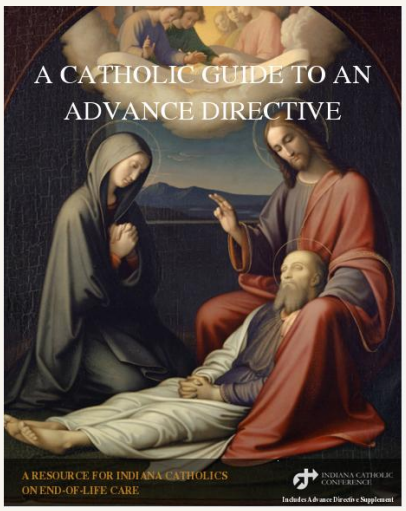
ERDs

17

19

Advance directives

- An advance directive records health care wishes and can appoint a representative to speak for you.
- Choose someone who will uphold Catholic teaching when you cannot make or communicate decisions.
- Talk through your wishes before a crisis.
  Use the Indiana Catholic Conference guide and form HERE.



Indiana Catholic Conference guide and form, 2023

18

20

Choosing a medical representative

- Choose a mature adult who accepts the role and can speak up during a difficult situation.
- Explain your faith and wishes, including your request for a Catholic priest.
- Name a backup and speak with your family so they understand the arrangement.

ICC guide, 2023, Advance Directive Q&A

19

21

Documents and medical orders

Advance directive	Your health care wishes and appointment of a health care representative.
Living will	Written treatment instructions for circumstances in which you cannot speak.
DNR order	No attempt at CPR if breathing or heartbeat stops. Other appropriate care continues.
POST orders	Medical orders for serious illness. Review them with the clinician and representative.

ICC guide, 2023 and supplied USCCB advance directive handout

20

22

Keeping your plan accessible

- Give copies to your representative, doctors and close family members.
- Keep documents where others can find them and review them after major changes.
- Include your desire for the sacraments and for care consistent with Catholic teaching.

ICC guide, 2023, Advance Directive Q&A

21

23

Wills and your family

- Make or update your will and name an executor. Parents should provide for minor children.
- Review beneficiary designations and financial powers of attorney.
- Tell a trusted person where documents and essential account information are kept.

22

24

Remembering the Church in your estate

If you have two children, consider the Church a third.

An invitation to generosity, with due care
for your family's needs and responsibilities.

25

Free Catholic planning resources

CatholicWill.com
CatholicLegacy.com

Free Catholic will preparation
and Catholic funeral planning.

26

Your funeral wishes

Tell your family clearly:
“I want a Catholic Funeral Mass.”

Plan with the parish and funeral home:
readings, sacred music, burial place and costs.

Give your family and parish an accessible copy,
separate from your will.

27

Planning a Catholic funeral

The vigil	Prayer with family and friends before the funeral. Often a Rosary.
Funeral Mass	The Church offers the Sacrifice of the Mass for the deceased.
The committal	The Church accompanies the deceased to burial or entombment.

28

The purpose of a Catholic funeral

Pray for the souls of the deceased

Comfort and support for those who mourn, especially renewed faith.

Worship of God and His victory of Death.

- For this reason, “At the Funeral Mass there should, as a rule, be a short homily, but never a eulogy of any kind” (GIRM 382)
- Eulogies are wonderful, but they belong either at the vigil or at the meal after the burial

CCC 1680–1690

27

29

Why the Church prefers burial

The body received Baptism, the sacraments and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Burial expresses reverence for the body and hope in its resurrection.

The Church permits cremation for reasons consistent with Christian faith.



Ad resurgendum cum Christo, 2016, 2–4

28

30

Care for cremated remains

- Arrange burial or entombment promptly after the funeral, including for ashes.
- Remains need to be buried reverently.
- Scattering, jewelry and division among relatives do not express the Church's ordinary discipline.

Ad resurgendum cum Christo, 5–7 and DDF clarification, 2023

29

31

CHRISTIAN BURIAL AND CREMATION

Tradition and belief

Since the earliest times of the Church, Christians have traditionally buried the bodies of the faithful departed, in contrast to cremation practiced in many pagan cultures.

As professed in the Creed, we believe that at the end of time Our Lord Jesus will come in glory to judge the living and the dead. The souls of the faithful departed will be reunited with their glorified, resurrected bodies.

1963: The Church permitted cremation under certain conditions. The 1983 Code of Canon Law reaffirmed that permission.

1997: The U.S. Order of Christian Funerals received an appendix on cremation, including the following:

412
The body of a deceased Catholic Christian is also the body once washed in baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the Bread of Life. Thus, the Church's reverence for the sacredness of the human body grows out of a reverence and concern both natural and supernatural for the human person. The body of the deceased brings forcefully to mind the Church's conviction that the human body is in Christ a temple of the Holy Spirit and is destined for future glory at the resurrection of the dead. This conviction in faith finds its expression in a sustained and insistent prayer that commends the deceased person to God's merciful care so that his or her place in the communion of the just may be assured. A further expression is the care traditionally taken to prepare the bodies of the deceased for a burial that befits their dignity, in expectation of their final resurrection in the Lord.

413
Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites.

414
The Church's teaching in regard to the human body as well as the Church's preference for burial of the body should be a regular part of catechesis on all levels and pastors should make particular efforts to preserve this important teaching.

415
Sometimes, however, it is not possible for the body to be present for the Funeral Mass. When extraordinary circumstances make the cremation of a body the only feasible choice, pastoral sensitivity must be exercised by priests, deacons, and others who minister to the family of the deceased…

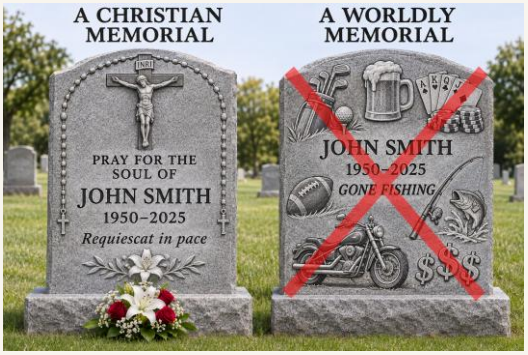
417
The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires. Whenever possible, appropriate means for recording with dignity the memory of the deceased should be adopted, such as a plaque or stone which records the name of the deceased.

Order of Christian Funerals, Appendix on Cremation, 412–415, 417. Historical permission: 1963; *Code of Canon Law,* canon 1176 §3.

32

A reverent grave and memorial

- Choose a cemetery plot or place of entombment and make the location known to your family.
- A cross, sacred image or Scripture can express Christian hope.
- “Pray for the soul of…” invites ongoing prayer. Choose reverent wording and follow cemetery rules.



Updated handout and Order of Christian Funerals

30

33

Prayer for the faithful departed

- Have Masses offered for the deceased, including on anniversaries.
- Pray the Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Eternal Rest prayer and prayers for the holy souls.
- Offer sacrifices, works of charity and indulgences applicable to the departed.



2 Maccabees 12:44–46 and CCC 1032

31

34

A prayer associated with St. Gertrude

Eternal Father, I offer You the most precious Blood of Your Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the holy souls in purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the universal Church, those in my own home and within my family. Amen.

Traditional devotional prayer

35

At the bedside and after the funeral

- Be present, listen and speak gently.
  Ask about the person's fears and needs.
- Pray familiar prayers and call the priest.
  Support those providing daily care.
- Keep accompanying the family after the funeral, especially on anniversaries and difficult days.

36

Practical Things

1. Go to Confession.
2. Talk with your family about your faith and wishes, especially for a priest.
3. Appoint a medical representative and a backup.
4. Make or update your will.
5. Write down your funeral and burial wishes.
6. Buy a cemetery plot if you don’t have one.

37

**Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.**

May they rest in peace. Amen.
St. Joseph, patron of a happy death, pray for us.

38