

On Death

*** *Read Wisdom 1:13 - 2:24; 13; Mk. 15:33-41*

I. What is death?

A. Cessation of life

1. Images in OT
 - a. Breath
 - b. Blood
2. Definition
 - a. Soul separating from body

B. Characteristics of death

1. It is definitive
 - a. "It is given by God that man die once"
2. It is passive
 - a. God determines time and mode
 - b. Man chooses his response
3. It is decisive
 - a. Determines one's eternal destiny
 - (1) effect of union of body and soul
 - (2) effect of break of this union

II. The Problem of Death

A. It's naturalness

1. Experience of created reality and its cycle

a. “God formed him of the dust of the earth”

B. It’s absurdity/unnaturalness

1. Man’s transcendence and insatiable desires

a. Natural

b. Supernatural

2. “God breathed into his nostrils His Spirit”

C. The fear of death

1. Man’s mortality and state of being creature

2. Dissolution of person and integrity

a. Process/humiliations

3. Guilt and future existence

4. Love and human attachments

5. Insulation of our culture from death

III. Why Death?

A. “What has parts comes apart”

B. Gift of bodily integrity

C. Loss of this gift with sin

1. “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat...By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dirt and to dirt you shall return” (Gen. 3:17,19).

2. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world and with sin death, death thus coming to all men inasmuch as all sinned...” (Rom 5:12)

D. Relationship with Divine Life (Immortal/Eternal Life) is broken

1. Thus gift of immortality lost
2. Final consequence of sin to be experienced

IV. Death of Christ

- A. Meaning of the Incarnation
- B. Meaning of Christ's Death
 1. Most completely one with us in His death
 2. Last consequence of sin changed - meaning and reality changed by Christ

V. Death of the Christian

- A. A participation and consummation of participation in the Mystery of Christ's Life
- B. The "narrow gate" which must be traversed in order to enter into life
 1. "Just a word of consolation, Father, for the family"
- C. Power of this "greatest act"
 1. Revelation/witness
 - a. Disposition/resignation/love
 - b. "Seeing the manner of His death, he declared, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'"
 2. Christ coming to full stature
 - a. Head and members
 3. Forwarding the Kingdom
 - a. Definitive beatification
 - b. Definitive loss to Satan

VI. Temptations at Death

- A. Despair and withdrawal from God

- B. Difficulty to pray
- C. Lack of human hopes
- D. Purifications/vicarious sufferings - meaning

VII. Preparations for Death

A. Remote

1. Sacramental Life

a. Baptism

- (1) a share in Christ's death and priestly action

b. Confirmation

- (1) a perfection in the life the Holy Spirit and "special grace not to be afraid of the Cross of Christ"

c. Holy Eucharist

- (1) The making present of the death of Christ until He comes
- (2) Holy Communion a conforming to Life/Death of Christ

d. Penance

- (1) A standing in judgment and reception of mercy

e. Marriage

- (1) a life of service and "foretaste of the Divine nuptials"

f. Priesthood

- (1) a life of sacrifice and giver of Divine Life

2. Purgatory on Earth

- a. Life of sacrifice prepares for the ultimate sacrifice of one's gift of self into the hands of the Father

3. Interior Life

a. Theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity

- (1) Seeing beyond
- (2) Stretching beyond
- (3) Loving/desiring beyond

4. Prayer

a. Compline

b. Prayer

- (1) “vibrating at the Spirit’s touch” (Sistine Chapel)

c. Meditation upon death

- (1) Being present to death of others

B. Immediate

1. Triduum of Sacraments

a. Confession

- (1) removal of guilt, medicine, grace
- (2) prepares for the purgative effect of death

b. Anointing of the Sick

- (1) Spiritual palliation
 - (a) Divine Hope
- (2) Consecration with special power
 - (a) at heart of Church - offering suffering and death for Church

c. Viaticum

- (1) Food for the Journey
 - (a) “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood will never die”
 - (b) “Fear not, I am with you!”