

## **THE FOUR LAST THINGS.**

- 1.** The end of man is *death*, immediately followed by *judgment*, and *heaven* or *hell*.
- 2.** It profits us to be always thinking of these four last things, for thus indeed shall we be turned away from sin and filled with ardour for the service of God. Holy Writ warns us: « In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin. » (*Eccli.* VII, 40.)

### **Death.**

- 3.** Death is the separation of the soul from the body, the passage from time into eternity.
- 4.** It was the sin of our first parents that brought into the world. God had given Adam and Eve this warning: « Of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise you shall not eat, lest perhaps you die. » (*Gen.* III, 3) They did not heed the warning, but yielding to the perfidious advice of Satan, ate of the forbidden fruit. The result was that they were driven out of paradise and they and their descendants have been subject to the miseries of life and death.
- 5.** Thus it is certain we have all to die as a punishment for the sin of our first parents. Says St. Paul: « It is appointed unto men once to die. » (*Heb.* IX, 27.)
- 6.** Death will come when God wills it. That it will come is certain, but when and where it will overtake us none can tell.
- 7.** God has willed that the hour of our death shall remain hidden from us in order that we may always be prepared to meet it, since any day may be our last.
- 8.** To be fully prepared for death we must have led a truly Christian life and have received the last sacraments.

**9.** We ought not to wait until sickness comes upon us before preparing ourselves for death. To do so would be an act of utter madness, it would be putting our eternal happiness into jeopardy. It is what the bad rich man in the following parable from the Gospel did: -

« And one of the multitude said to Him: « Master, speak to my brother that he divides the inheritance with me. » But He said to him: « Man, who hath appointed me judge or divider over you? » And He said to them: « Take heed and beware of all covetousness, for a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of things which he possesses. »

« And He spake a similitude to them, saying: « The land of a certain rich man brought forth plenty of fruits. And he thought within himself, saying, « What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? » And he said: « This will I do I will pull down my barns, and will build greater, and into them will I gather all things that are grown to me, and my goods. And I will say to my soul: *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer!* »

But God said to him: « Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? » So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.! »  
(*Luke* XII, 13-21.)

## **Explanation of the Plate.**

**10.** Death has been made the subject of these pictures in order to impress upon us the necessity of always keeping it before our minds, so as to bring home to us the utter vanity of earthly things and to impel us exclusively towards the things of the world to come.

**11.** *In the large picture* Francis Borgia, a gentleman of the court of Charles V, is seen standing before the dead body of the empress Isabella. Francis had been ordered to convey it to Granada for interment. When the funeral cortege reached that city, the coffin, as was the custom, was opened so that Francis might certify that it really contained the body of the empress; but the features had become so swollen and distorted that they were unrecognizable, and decomposition was so far advanced that the stench was unbearable. This hideous spectacle made so deep an impression on Borgia that he at once resolved to renounce the world and

all its pomps and vanities. Later on he entered the Society of Jesus and became a great saint.

**12.** *In the top two corners at the top* are depicted respectively a man and a woman looking at their reflection in a mirror. Immediately above them, we read the word, « Today », while over their reflection, presaging their death, the word « Tomorrow » is inscribed. The contrast between what one is today, when he is in the enjoyment of life and health, and what he will become tomorrow when death shall have overtaken him, ought to urge every one to place spiritual things, which will endure for ever, before temporal things which will pass away with this life.

**13.** *At the bottom* we see a cemetery dotted all over with crosses and tombstones bearing epitaphs. Two opened graves disclose a skeleton inside each.

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