

Wisdom for the Way: Letters from Eternity

Project-Based Lesson Overview

Topic:

Eschatological Foundations: The Four Last Things

Driving Question(s)

How is God's justice, mercy, and love revealed in the Catholic Teaching of the Four Last Things?

How can knowledge of the Four Last Things help us understand the purpose of human life according to the Church?

Objectives

- Explore to understand the Catholic teaching on the Four Last Things.
- Analyze and interpret Scripture passages, textbook excerpts, the Catechism, and artwork related to the Four Last Things.
- Collaboratively synthesize interpretations to theologically ensure accuracy in creating an individually written first-person creative narrative on one of the Four Last Things.
- Produce, compile, and publish a class anthology of the narratives to share with others.

Materials

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
 - Pp.988-1065; 1691-1770; 1776-1876; 1877-1948
- *A Journey Through the Catechism*
 - Chapter 8 (pgs. 113-123)
 - Questions 75, 77-80
- *Catholic Bible*
- *Google Doc/Word Doc*
- *Writer's Guide*
- *Brainstorming Page*
- *Peer Edit & Self Reflection Sheet*
- *Rubric*
- *Wisdom for the Way: Letters from Eternity-Overview and Directions Sheet*

Important Info to Know

Vocabulary:

Beatific Vision:

The contemplation of God in His full glory, the sight of which perfectly fulfills us and makes us happy for all eternity. The ability to contemplate God in His full glory when we are in heaven. It is a gift from God that is essential to our eternal happiness.

Eschatological:

Related to the "last things" (death, judgment, heaven, hell, Purgatory, the second coming of Christ, and the resurrection of the body).

Mortal Sin:

A grave infraction of the law of God. Mortal sin is personal sin that involves serious matter, sufficient reflection, and full consent of the will. It results in total rejection of God and alienation from Him.

Purgatory:

The final purification of all who die in God's grace and friendship but remain imperfectly purified. It is the final cleansing away of all sin and of all punishment of sin.

Resurrection of the Body:

The Christian belief that when Christ comes again, he will unite the bodies of every human with their soul.

Saint:

A "holy one" of God who lives in union with God through the grace of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit and whom God rewards with eternal life in Heaven.

Venial Sin:

A sin that weakens and wounds your relationship with God but does not cause the loss of grace in your soul.

Outline and Timeline

*****This is an in-class project. Only work on this at-home if you do not finish the project in the workdays allotted to you. *****

Day 1: Eschatological Foundations

- Lecture on the Four Last Things.
- Whole Group Discussion.

Day 2: Expert Groups & Synthesis

- Close Reading and Annotation.
- Small Group analysis and interpretation.

Day 3: Project Overview

- Review overview/expectations of upcoming project.

Day 4: Four Last Things Analysis

- Create brief Writer's Guide for Four Last Things.
- Whole Class Review of Writer's Guides.

Days 5-6: Synthesis & Writing

- Mini-Lesson on Creative Writing.
- Choose Last Thing to write about.
- Brainstorm and create a rough draft.

Days 7-9: Write & Review

- Create Rough Draft.
- Peer Edit and Conference.
- Create Final Draft.
- Finish Final Draft as needed.

Day 10: The Anthology

- Submit writing and self-reflection.
- Whole class design on anthology.

Wisdom for the Way: Letters from Eternity

Project Instructions

In this project, you will come to an understanding of the eschatological foundations of the Four Last Things (*heaven, hell, purgatory, and final judgement*) to develop a deeper appreciation of your physical and spiritual life. The end product of this project is to create a **one-to-two-page first person narrative letter** from the perspective of **one** soul experiencing one of the Four Last Things to an individual on earth. You will work independently and in small groups to analyze, interpret, and synthesize Church documents, Sacred Art, and Scripture on these four topics. Through your findings, you will engage in a whole-class discussion to ensure the theological accuracy of your synthesis. Then you will individually choose one of the four topics and compose your letter. You will peer edit your letter and turn in your final draft to your teacher to create a digital anthology to be shared with the wider Church community. The goal of this project is to not only to compose a creative writing for class to be shared with others, but it is also to awaken a desire to grow your connection to the Father and cultivate daily habits/choices to live a life aimed toward heaven.

INDIVIDUALS

- You will create a **one-to-two-page first-person narrative letter** from the perspective of **one** soul experiencing one of the Four Last Things (*heaven, hell, purgatory, and final judgement*) to an individual on earth.
- You get to choose the Last Thing you would like to write about *after* learning in-depth about all four.
- To ensure the theological accuracy of your letters, before writing you will work with a small group to become an expert on your topic and engage in whole-class discussions.

GROUPS

- You will form a small group of students to become an expert on **one** of the Four Last Things using:
 - o Scripture (*commentary as needed*)
 - o The Catechism of the Catholic Church
 - o *A Journey Through the Catechism*
 - o Sacred Art
- You will perform an individual close reading and annotation of the materials given to you.
- You will collaborate with your group in discussions and analysis of the materials to eventually create a *Writer's Guide* that will serve as a tool to share your group's findings and interpretations to the class.
- **Below is an overview of what is expected of the group to accomplish:**
 - o Share personal reflections, insights, and takeaways.
 - o Create a *Writer's Guide* using large Chart Paper to share finding with the class:
 - Emotional Themes: *What thoughts, images, words, scenes come to mind? How would you describe the "feeling" of a person in that environment? What would you be trying to convey to the person on earth?*
 - Voice: *Tone, feelings, background of the individual in that environment? Same goes to who they might be addressing in their letter.*
 - Misunderstandings: *What could be some possible do's and don'ts involved in writing a letter like this? Think of theological fallacies, how to address the letter, etc.*

TASK:

This is a step-by-step breakdown of what is expected of you for this assignment. Use it as a checklist as you work to ensure you are completing all requirements.

- ☐ **What is required to turn in:**

- **ONE** final draft of a first-person creative writing narrative on **one** of the Four Last Things either on a WordDoc or GoogleDoc.
- **ONE** brainstorming page for writing.
- **ONE** rough draft of narrative on a digital document or on paper (*it should include edits as well*).
- **ONE to TWO** peer editing sheets (*must be signed at the bottom by you as well*).
- **ONE** self-reflection form.

□ **Content:**

- What you base your narrative on should be all theologically accurate. Resources and brainstorming should only come from these sources down below:
 - *Catholic based commentary (can be found in your Bible or other Catholic books/podcast available to you)*
 - *Sacred Art*
 - *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
 - *Scripture*
 - *A Journey through the Catechism (textbook)*

□ **Letter requirements:**

- **Four Last Things**
 - You only need to choose **one** of the following topics to write on:
 - *Heaven*
 - *Hell*
 - *Purgatory*
 - *Final Judgement (this is not Jesus' second coming, but an individual's final judgement)*
- **Length & Format**
 - Length:
 - 1-2 pages max.
 - Format:
 - Final draft **must** be on a Word or Google Document to be turned in.
 - **LETTER FORMAT**
 - Includes:
 - Greeting: *Dear....., Hello....., etc...*
 - *Your greeting can be to one fictional person or generic to the world: you choose*
 - Introduction: *Give context, introduce who the voice is*
 - Body Paragraphs: *Give the plot, the story/message being conveyed*
 - Conclusion: *Wrap up story/message with a call to action: for the reader to do something*
 - Salutation: *Sincerely....., Yours Truly....., Prayers....., etc...*
- **Structure Notes**
 - **Only ONE** voice or character should be speaking. You may reference other characters, but they should not be the *main* character, only supporting ones. Having more than one character named must **NOT** confuse your reader.
 - Ensure you specifically **specify where you are** (*heaven, hell, purgatory, experiencing final judgement*) **do not make it ambiguous.**
 - Clearly state the message and/or Catholic truths you are trying to convey to the living. Craft your story to support this message.
 - Create a **realistic story**. You want your audience to be able to relate to the individual that has passed on. Use real-world examples and call to actions that are practical and are often what people may experience in their life.

■ **DO NOT:**

- Write the letter to a person or group of people you know.
- Write the story/background about a person you know.
- Make fun at, discuss, or condemn any political, religious, or social beliefs, especially Church teachings.
 - These letters are to express emotion and desire to be with our loving and merciful God for all eternity, to enhance the reader (*and your own*) spiritual life.

□ **Examples of letter topics**

- A soul rejoicing in Heaven.
- A soul longing for God in Purgatory.
- A soul warning other after rejecting God.
- A soul reflecting at the moment of judgment.