

And life everlasting. Amen.

This twelfth and last article of the Creed teaches us (1) that after this short life there is another which will be without end; (2) that this future life will be the happy life of paradise, of which the just will partake, whilst the wicked will be enslaved in hell, according to these words of the Saviour: These shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just, into life everlasting.

Thus we see that the eternal life of paradise is the opposite of the punishment of hell, which is eternal death.

The truth of the future life is made known to us (1) by faith, since God has revealed it to us, and the Church proposes it to us for our belief; (2) by reason, which argues the necessity of its existence. For often in this world the virtuous are afflicted and persecuted, whilst the wicked prosper and enjoy every temporal happiness; divine justice therefore demands that there be another life, where the good may be rewarded and the wicked punished, each one according to his works.

The eternal life reserved for the just that is to say, the felicity of paradise consists in the vision and beatific possession of God and of all the riches of God. The blessed shall partake of all the joys of the soul, of the heart, and of the senses, unalloyed by a sorrow of any kind, during all eternity.

This happy life Jesus Christ has merited for us by His death; provided, however, that on our part we render ourselves worthy of it. It is proposed to us as a recompense which is granted only to faithful servants, to observers of the commandments of God: If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments (St. Matt. xix.). They enter heaven immediately after death who bear with them from this world no obstacle to their admittance.

To understand this doctrine, we must remember that there are three classes of people who die. First, impenitent sinners who die in the state of mortal sin: these are condemned without delay to hell.

Secondly, the just who die in the state of grace, but who have not as yet satisfied the divine justice for the temporal punishments due to their sins: these souls are committed to purgatory.

Thirdly, the just who have nothing to expiate: these souls are at once received into eternal life.

We end the Creed by saying Amen, which expresses a strong affirmation, to remind us that we must most firmly believe these divinely revealed dogmas of faith, and consequently make them the rule of our life.

Ah! why is it that so many who firmly believe these dogmas fail to live as Christians? Since eternal life is of greater value than anything else we can conceive, should we not at any price, my brethren, assure ourselves the possession of it? And since this can be accomplished only by living a truly Christian life, let us, before all things and above all things, strive to live as good Christians.