7 Quotes From the late Cardinal Pell on Life and Death

‘While all Catholics are not called to be priests or religious, all are called to follow Christ in a serious way, to imitate Christ’s wholeness of life …’

Katie Yoder
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Cardinal George Pell, who served as prefect emeritus of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy, died on Tuesday at the age of 81. Here are seven quotes from the Australian cardinal about the meaning of life and death.

“While all Catholics are not called to be priests or religious, all are called to follow Christ in a serious way, to imitate Christ’s wholeness of life in what we traditionally call holiness.”
— Commencement address to the Class of 2008 , Thomas Aquinas College

“The afterlife is a mystery, but Christ’s bodily departure reminds us that we believe in the resurrection of the body as well as the final judgment on the last day. We are not only members of the People of God but in some mystical way we belong to the Body of Christ. Despite all our sins and weaknesses we are divinized, made a bit like God’s only Son, especially in the next life.”
— 2013 homily

“Don’t spend your life sitting on the fence, keeping your options open, because only commitments bring fulfillment. Happiness comes from meeting our obligations, doing our duty, especially in small matters and regularly, so we can rise to meet the harder challenges.”
— World Youth Day homily , 2008

“I have never had a problem with the doctrine that purification might be needed before we can be in God’s presence or cope with his goodness. I have compared it to the discomfort we experience when woken by a sudden bright light. But I have always struggled to reconcile the twin notions of a loving God and eternal punishment. … My late Jesuit friend Father Paul Mankowski supported the argument of John Finnis that the failure to take seriously Jesus’ claim to judge everyone on the last day ‘is at the heart of the crisis of faith and morals.’ I now agree. Christian hope for the triumph of the good requires Jesus’ judgment.”
— *First Things* , “Last Things,” 2020

“We will bring forth good fruit by learning the language of the cross and inscribing it on our hearts.”
— World Youth Day homily , 2008

“Whatever our situation, we must pray for an openness of heart, for a willingness to take the next step, even if we are fearful of venturing too much further. If we take God’s hand, he will do the rest. Trust is the key. God will not fail us.”
— World Youth Day homily , 2008

“I believe that both democracy and religious freedom are at the heart of the good life. Philosophical discussion is indispensable for their survival, but democracy and religious freedom can only be defended by determined citizens who recognize the issues and have the political will to act.”
— *First Things* , “The Heart of the Good Life,” 2021

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