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The Last Judgment is a fresco by the Italian Renaissance painter Michelangelo covering the whole altar wall of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City. It is a depiction of the Second Coming of Christ and the final and eternal judgment by God of all humanity. But before this General Judgement there will be a particular judgement of each soul immediately after death. Scripture says "all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ" (Cor 6:10).

Well, we needn't get too worked up about this day of reckoning if we don't let the mercy of God go a begging in this life. Firstly, God is a merciful judge beyond compare. St Theresa said that the sum-total of our confessed sins can be compared to a cube of ice dropped into a blazing furnace – the furnace of God's mercy. It is well known that Saint Augustine, quite wayward in his youth, had first-hand experience of that mercy mainly due to the prayers of his mother, Monica. She never gave up praying for him even when he joined a heretical sect. As in the Fatima prayer given by Our Lady in 1917 we too should never give up praying for 'those who are most in need of God's mercy'.

Unlike us, when God forgives, He suffers from total amnesia. Psalm 103 says it all: 'as far as the East is from the West, so far does He remove our sins'. Scripture reassures us that when we repent of our sins, God will never drag them up again, like we do sometimes when we want to bring someone down. And even if our CV of life appears to have some shady areas my reading of scripture is that God will be looking for any loopholes He can find to secure for us a place in Paradise. We may however, have to undergo purification in Purgatory first.

When St Paul was speaking about the nature of true love he said: 'love takes no pleasure in other people's sins - it is always ready to excuse.' Now, if we, **mere humans**, are expected to make allowances for the mistakes of others, then how much more will God, the author of love. He knows us inside-out and

when we appear before His judgement seat, He will have taken into account the times when our judgement was clouded and our ability to act as free human agents somewhat impaired. That doesn't at all mean that God just turns a blind eye to evil and forgives us without any effort to repent on our part. However, there is a strong resistance in all of us to repent because human pride gets in the way. St Peter says: "God resists the proud and gives his grace to the humble".

We know that one of the sure ways to escape a harsh judgement is not to sit in judgement on others. 'Judgement will be without mercy for those who have shown no mercy'. Jesus said: 'blessed are the merciful, they shall have mercy shown them' and 'the merciful need have no fear of judgement'. Their names will be written in the Book of Life.