

THE FOUR LAST THINGS

As we near the end of the liturgical year, the Church encourages us to meditate on the four last things – death, judgment, heaven and hell. Because I retired this year from my job I slowed down somewhat and have had more time to reflect on my spiritual life, my commitment to Christ, and these last four things. As my wife and I discussed this she reminded me that we are really embryos in this life, awaiting birth in eternal life. I had never thought of it that way – it is worth some time in meditation. Sooner or later we will all die and face the judgment of Christ. I remember when I was young I thought I was indestructible and hardly gave thought to death, but as I have aged I have become much more aware of the reality and truths of our belief in life after death. Of course we never know when we will die, and this makes it all the more critical for us to confront the reality of death and to use our time well, no matter how old we are.

Sacred scripture reminds us many times that our lives are short and that we need to live with this in mind. St. Jose Maria Escriva said, “When a Christian kills time on this earth, he is putting himself in danger of “killing Heaven” for himself, that is, if through selfishness, he backs out of things and hides away and doesn’t care.” Christ asks us to live in the present and not to worry about our past life or the future. He asks us to use our God-given gifts, our talents, for the good of all humanity. That is the meaning of the gospel reading about the landowner who distributed the talents to his servants according to their varying abilities to make use of them. But the laziness of the one servant and his fearfulness caused him to forfeit all.

When our life comes to an end, perhaps we may think something like a candle has gone out. But we should also see death as the time when something like a tapestry has been completed. We have watched the tapestry unfold from the reverse side where the image is somewhat blurred, while God has watched the good side unfold. He is pleased to see a finished work that shows good effort to make good use of time.

Also I would like to briefly discuss another important issue. As we are nearing Advent and Christmas I’d like to remind all of you who made a commitment last March to spiritually adopt a child in the womb and pray for that child for nine months, to continue to pray for him or her regularly. For each of us this is a great personal ministry in which we can make a huge difference for an unborn child. Thanks to all of you for your commitment to life.

In the Gospel today Jesus said, **“Come share your master’s joy.”**