

The Four Last Things

Eschatology is the study of the end of life and the end times; it focuses primarily on what the Church has traditionally called the “Four Last Things,” namely: Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. They are called as such because they are concerned with the passing of man from this world and his final destiny.

The Four Last Things has been the preoccupation of Christians since the early Church, as St. Paul writes: “Brothers, concerning times and seasons... you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night. When people are saying, ‘Peace and security,’ then sudden disaster comes upon them... they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness, for that day to overtake you like a thief... Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-5). Let us now take a deeper look at each of these Four Last Things:

How should a Christian understand Death? Despite all the modern technical definitions of death, most people understand death simply as the end of life. However, death has a deeper meaning for Christians. In his book on Eschatology, Joseph Ratzinger tells us that the Christian dies in the death of Christ. For Christians, dying in the death of Jesus means that one has victory over death and will live forever in God's love. But how does this happen? In greatly simplified terms, it is a process: First, the Christian sees the great power of love in the death of Christ, who willingly gave up His life to redeem sinners (cf. Galatians 1:4). Second, the Christian learns to believe in Christ and to trust in His powerful love. Third, this loving trust enables a Christian to conquer not only the fear of death but death itself. Many people, Christians included, would prefer a painless and instantaneous death. However, the Christian attitude towards death should be an attitude of acceptance to die in a death like Christ's, if God wills it.

There are two kinds of Judgment: Particular Judgment and Final Judgment (sometimes also called General Judgment or Last Judgment). The Particular Judgment takes place immediately after death, whereby the soul is judged before God. If the soul is in the state of mortal sin, the final destination is Hell. If the soul is free from any mortal or venial sin, then the final destination is Heaven. If the soul is free from mortal sin but is not free from venial sin, it undergoes purification in Purgatory before finally reaching Heaven. We should make no mistake: Heaven is real, hell is real and Purgatory is real. And, while living on this earth, we should aim for Heaven by living lives of virtue. Aim for heaven, not just Purgatory!

The Christian understanding of Heaven is that it is not a location into which one goes. The Catechism defines heaven as eternal life with God and communion with the Holy Trinity and the saints; heaven is the state of supreme and definitive happiness (cf. CCC 1023-1024). How do we get to heaven? Jesus said, “store up treasure in heaven” (Matthew 6:20). Some people misunderstand this as a call to accumulate something, so they say many prayers or do many good deeds, thinking that they are making a deposit in the bank of heaven. However, the way one can store up treasure in heaven is not by accumulation, but by distribution – the generous spending our time, talent and treasure to those in need around us.

The Christian understanding of Hell cannot be isolated from God's respect for the free will of man. “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16). God gave man His great love so that man can be transformed; the assent to this great love is not something that man can achieve by his own power, yet the freedom to accept or resist it

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每周公告 Weekly Bulletin

2024年十一月十七日 November 17, 2024



is within his own power. Therefore, it is the damned who will their own damnation. Hell is not so much a threat to be hurled at people, but a challenge for every Christian to face seriously.

The Four Last Things should be an important consideration in a Christian’s life decisions. Do our actions and attitudes lead us towards the Lord or away from the Lord? Is our direction towards Heaven or are we heading in the opposite direction?

PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS



The Advent/Christmas Mass schedule is now available. Please pick up a copy at the church foyer. The same schedule is also posted on our church website: hnojatl.org.

Today is potluck Sunday! If you are celebrating your birthday in the month of November, we have ordered a birthday cake for you. Lunch begins after the 10:30am Mass.

December 3 is Giving Tuesday. This year, we hope to raise funds to support the first "Chinese Track" at the 2025 Eucharistic Congress and to help defray the cost of hosting our special guests who will hold seminars and worship activities in our church from June 18 to 24, 2025. We are accepting donations now - please use the iGiveCatholic envelopes. If you are writing a check, please make your check payable to HNOJ and write CHINESE TRACK in the memo. Thank you for your support!



On December 21, Saturday, Fr. Wu Biao will lead our Advent retreat. The Advent retreat begins at 10:00 am and ends at 4:00 pm. Lunch will be provided at noon. The next day, Sunday, Fr. Wu will preside over the Sunday mass and will do a sharing with everyone after Mass. Fr. Wu is from Shanxi, China, and is currently working on a master's degree at Seton Hall University in New Jersey.



“Helping Mamas” is an organization that helps families, women and babies in need. Our church volunteers will be there on January 11, 2025 from 9am to 11am to help organize all donations. If you are interested in participating, please sign up with Angela Ooi.

Reserve the date: Fr. Bill encourages all parishioners to make plans to participate in the Eucharistic Congress in Atlanta next year on June 20-21, 2025. Our church will host the first-ever Chinese Track in the Eucharistic Congress. We have invited the

Most Reverend John Lee Juo-wang, Bishop Emeritus of the diocese of Tainan, Taiwan and Fr. Francis Ching of the Companions of the Cross based in Toronto, Canada as guest speakers. We have also invited a Chinese band led by Mr. Jianren Zhu from Los Angeles.

Mass Schedule	Confessions	Bible Study
Sundays 10:30 AM (Chinese)	Sundays 9:00-9:30 AM	Wednesdays 10:00 AM (Chinese)
Sundays 2:00 PM (English)	Tuesdays 2:00-3:00 PM	Mondays 6:00 PM (English)
	By Appointment	
Mondays 12:00 PM (English)		Eucharistic Adoration
Tuesdays 12:00 PM (English)	Anointing of the Sick	Sundays 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM
Wednesdays 12:00 PM (Chinese)	First Sundays after 10:30 AM Mass	Tuesdays 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM
Fridays 12:00 PM (English)		
First Friday 7:00 PM (English)		
First Saturday 10:00 AM (Chinese)		