

THE FOUR LAST THINGS II: “MISERICORDES SICUT PATER”

The day I received my first AARP mailing, I knew that I had turned a corner. When a dear friend remarked out of the blue—“You realize, don’t you, that you have more years behind you than you have ahead of you on this earth?” Yes, I can do the math, and have known that for some time! I then recalled one of the first pieces that I learned on my saxophone at age 10 was “Nearer my God to Thee.” I’d play it accompanied by my great aunt on the piano! Yes, no matter what, we will all face the judgment seat of Christ, just as Saint Paul recounts to the Corinthians, “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.*” Whether or not that kernel from Scripture is good news is entirely up to us. Do you ever stop to think about this reality? Do you consider judgment day? As the Year of Mercy draws to a close today, it may seem counterintuitive to discuss judgment. But in truth, judgment is not at all in conflict with the Year of Mercy theme, “Merciful as the Father,” because God’s mercy figures prominently in our judgment. So too does His Justice.

We’d be delusional to think that our actions in this life ought to be free from scrutiny. I have watched the pundits break down the recent election in excruciating detail, highlighting each candidate’s campaign miscalculations and merits. I wonder what would happen if we broke down our lives the same way? The Church in her wisdom calls for balance. A healthy fear of the Lord does not allow for living life constantly doubting our salvation any more than we ought to think we have it all locked up. As Saint Paul urges us in Philippians 2:12, “*work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*” This is accompanied with a hopeful assurance but not with a false sense that it’s a “done deal” either.

Our faith reminds us, “Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ” (CCC # 1021). The Particular Judgment occurs at the moment of our death, when all will be laid bare. At that moment, our souls will come before the Lord and we will either be counted among the saved or we will not. Period. If we are counted among the saved, we will enter into the fullness of God’s life and love in heaven, either immediately or after a period of purification in Purgatory. It is a matter of perspective. One could legitimately say that “God sees everything that we do...He sees all.” One could also say, “God loves us so much that He cannot take his eyes off of us.” Both are equally true, just from different perspectives. Indeed, we will see our life as it was, both each act of sin and its consequences as well as every act of goodness and virtue that we exhibited while on earth. We will see ourselves as God sees us.

The Universal Judgment, on the other hand, refers to the ultimate victory over sin and death manifested at the end of time. Before the second coming of Christ, the Church must undergo a final trial that, according to Scripture, will shake the faith of many believers (see CCC # 675, Luke 18:8, and Matt. 24:12). The secrets of our hearts will be revealed. “When he comes at the end of time to judge the living and the dead, the glorious Christ will reveal the secret disposition of hearts and will render to each man according to his works, and according to his acceptance or refusal of grace” (CCC # 682). For the person of faith, this ought not to instill panic, but neither ought we to believe that we are freed from providing an account of our lives. Saint John of the Cross, the 16th century Spanish Carmelite friar, beautifully wrote: “When evening comes, you will be examined in love. Learn to love as God desires to be loved and abandon your own ways of acting” (*Sayings of Light and Love*, #60). These pithy phrases were often written on scraps of paper and given to people as a starting point for their own prayerful reflection. Just a nibble of wisdom from a spiritual giant can set us off on a most profitable path. We will be judged on love.

How do I “picture” the particular judgment? It is a question upon which I have reflected for some time, especially during this month of November. What would be my epitaph? How would I like to be remembered? Frankly, it is cross between “I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith,” (2 Tim. 4:7) and “Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom,” (Luke 23:42— the cry of the good thief Dismas). Somewhere in that delicate balance, I pray that God will receive my soul mercifully and tenderly. *Pie Jesu Domine, Dona eis requiem.* Tender Lord Jesus, grant them rest. (Next week: Heaven)

- Mexican lawmakers have rejected a move by President Enrique Nieto to legalizing same-sex marriage all

across the country. It is legal in several jurisdictions already. The Mexican Bishops Conference endorsed the dozens of pro-family marches that have occurred, which were laity led. The Apostolic Nuncio to Mexico chimed in: “When we are speaking of the constitution, it has to become something that all Mexicans, or at least a great majority of Mexicans, can share.”

- The U.S. Catholic Bishops have published an English translation of the Vatican’s “Compendium on the Eucharist,” a handy summary of Catholic teaching, piety and practice. It includes prayers, explanations of the Eucharistic Prayers and other useful aids for a correct understanding, celebration and adoration of the Sacrament of the Altar. The 414-page book is available from the USCCB online at store.usccb.org
- **Deacon Russ Shupe** is in his twelfth year of faithful service to the Cathedral. Please stop by Hayden Hall after the Sunday 10:00 a.m. Mass to greet him. I am especially grateful for his thoughtful homilies, his commitment to the poor, and his gentle spirit, all borne from his deep and abiding faith. I have been so honored to have worked alongside him these past four and a half years.
- We published approximately 12,000 pamphlets on the Holy Year Indulgence. Available just outside the Holy Door, our staff would routinely replace them and we would order more. Thousands upon thousands have come through these doors, and I am convinced that the Holy Year has been a great success. I believe it has been the most effective and impactful initiative of Pope Francis to date.
- Did you happen to see the “Supermoon” very early last Monday morning? At 5:22 a.m. the moon was larger and 30 percent brighter than the smallest full moon, though honestly it did not look significantly different to me. The last time the moon was this close was in 1948, when Truman stunned Dewey and gasoline was 16 cents a gallon. If you missed it, don’t worry. It’ll happen again in 2034!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,

Rector