

Chancellor's Reflections, December 2022

What Every Catholic Must Know About the “Four Last Things” – Your Soul Depends on It!



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We are all going to die someday – but your soul will have the chance to live on. This is because God Loves us all and unless by our own human choice - we have separated ourselves from God – all Souls will return to Him.

The Catholic view on the afterlife can get [a bit complicated](#), but to keep it simple Catholics have traditionally boiled it down to the “Four Last Things” as defined by many theologians.

Here is what every Catholic needs to know about them:

1) Death

Unless the [Second Coming](#) happens during your lifetime, you're going to die. Nobody knows when, but it's going to happen.

Death is when your soul separates from your body. Your body will start to decompose, but your soul will live on forever (eventually being reunited with your body at the final resurrection).

If your soul is living on, where does it go? That's determined by the second "thing."

2) Judgement

Right after you die, you will face judgement before God. He knows everything about you: the good, the bad, and the ugly.

God is the perfect Judge, so there's no concern that his judgements will somehow be unfair or unjust. He will determine if you should spend eternity in Heaven or Hell.

3) Heaven

This is where you want to go, if that wasn't already obvious. Heaven is a place of eternal, loving union with God, the source of all being, goodness, and beauty, the fulfillment of every human heart.

So how do you go here? *Only* by dying in in a state of grace through Christ and as taught in his Church. There's no other way!

If you're wondering how our past discussions on Purgatory fit in here, it's a temporary place where the imperfect souls of some people who are sent to Heaven will have to endure in order to prepare for Heaven. It's not one of the "last things" because it's not a final state.

4) Hell

This is where you go if you don't go to Heaven.

Hell is a place of eternal separation from God and punishment for our sins. All people who die in a state of Mortal Sin go to Hell, no exceptions.

It's been traditionally understood that there are two kinds of possible punishment in Hell. The first is called the punishment of the damned, and it is the pain of eternal despair knowing that you have forever lost the opportunity to be with God in Heaven. The second is the punishment of sense, and it is eternal torment by fire in proportion to our sins.

How You Should Live considering the "Four Last Things"

Follow Christ! Repent of your sins! Go to Mass! Receive the Sacraments of the Church frequently!

Likewise, do not count on the minimum. Do not wait to the end of your life to wish you would have done more. Show God that you are willing to do more by attending more than Sunday Mass, signing-up for Adoration, etc.

It's only by God's grace in Jesus Christ that we can face Death, endure Judgement, gain Heaven, and avoid Hell.