Four Important Things Death

Sermon November 1 2026

And the Lord God took man, and put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it, and to keep it. And He commanded him, saying: Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat: but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Blessed are the poor in spirit:
for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

Dear friends, in a few weeks, thousands upon thousands of American families will gather around the dinner table. Ostensibly, they will be gathered to give thanks to the Most Holy Trinity for His generous bounty over the year past, and to pray His blessing upon the year to come.

Now, I do not doubt that some families will do just that. Even so, I suspect that many an American family will observe a different sort of ritual. You might call it the ritual of silence.

Now, I am not saying that these gatherings will be absent of noise and carryings-on. There is certainly bound to be drama—and, in some cases, a lot of it. Yet, despite all the hustle and bustle, untold thousands of American families will gather for a feast: a feast for the eyes and the ears, a feast for the nose, and the stomach too. But as they feast upon delicious food and drink, they will enjoin a fast: a fast from any and all conversation about the consequential things.

For, at this annual feast, the seats formerly reserved for religion and politics have long been removed, and their wood used for fires which have grown cold.

Such is the state of things. The families of a country drowning in the waters of opulence have plenty of time and energy for the pursuit of the trivial, but precious little time to converse about the things that really matter—the important things.

To be sure, I have no idea how long these two rituals have occupied the same event space. Perhaps it has been this way since the first gathering after Thanksgiving Day was declared a national holiday in 1863. But despite my ignorance about the time of its first appearing, it remains true that, while American families across the land enjoy the externals of the Thanksgiving feast, many will also engage in a self-policed ritual of silence.

And it is in anticipation of, and into, this ritualized quiet—and in deference to the holy souls in Purgatory—that our mini-catechesis about four important things, the Four Last Things, starts today.

In those days: Behold I, John, saw another Angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the sign of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four Angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying: Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we sign the servants of our God in their foreheads.

My dear friends, whether we like it or not, we are all in the dying age. While each of us possesses an immortal soul—that is, a soul that was brought into existence by God at a particular point in time, a soul that will never die—while each of us possesses an immortal soul, the fact remains that every body dies.

The bodies of the Prophet Elias and of Enoch, who walked with God, excepted, of course—and perhaps even that of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And also excepted are the bodies of those who are alive,

many of whom will have wished to have been dead, when Our Lord Jesus Christ returns in terrible power and great glory to judge the living and the dead at the end of days.

But these too, however, will experience death—*the separation of the soul from the body*—although, in the case of those who are alive when Christ returns, their bodies will be instantaneously resurrected, as the approved theologians teach:

It is appointed unto men once to die,
and after this the judgment.

But, friends, while death visits people of every age group, and the percentage of deaths within each age group increases steadily from the age of six onwards, there is one period of life that has become more deadly than every other period until the age of seventy-six. And that period is the first trimester of pregnancy, during which—because of induced abortions—the American death rate exceeds twenty percent for that age group.

Did you catch that? The first trimester of life in utero has been rendered as dangerous to human life by elective induced abortion as is the cumulative effect of seventy-five years of aging.

Friends, as you can see, unlike taxes, death is certain. And this certitude begs a question: If everybody dies, then what is the purpose of life?

And since the principal religions of the world have offered various and contradictory answers to this question, and since each of those religions was founded upon the wisdom of men long dead—the religion of Jesus Christ being the sole exception—since the founders of Hinduism, Buddhism, rabbinic Judaism, and Islam are all quite dead, it seems eminently prudent to give ear to the voice of the only Founder of a religion Who, though, like His merely human peers, has spent time in the grave, but, unlike them, both prophesied His own Resurrection and then raised Himself from the dead by His own power.

Given this One's stature as the only Founder of religion Who still now lives, it would seem especially wise—yea, even praiseworthy—that we, who most certainly will die ourselves, should hearken unto His voice: a voice still heard as the pages of the Gospels are read aloud at Holy Mass; still heard through the noiseless pens of the Holy Apostles; and again in the perennial dogmas and doctrine of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, which the same Founder prophesied that He would build upon St. Peter, and then established that same fisher of men as that Rock when, after His Resurrection, He said:

Feed My lambs. Feed My lambs.
Feed My sheep.

And I heard the number of them that were signed: an hundred forty-four thousand were signed, of every tribe of the children of Israel.

Dear friends, through His Holy Roman and Apostolic Church, Our Lord teaches that the years of our lives are granted to us so that we might use the allotted grace and time to save our souls. Listen to how the approved theologian Joseph Pohle has summarized this Catholic doctrine:

God gives sufficient grace to all adult human beings without exception. The wayfaring state—that is, the status viae—is merely another name for life on earth. Death closes the time of meriting. Nothing is more clearly taught in Holy Scripture than that we must sow in this world if we desire to reap in the next.

And Father Pohle is simply echoing the doctrine of the Council of Trent, which teaches:

God does not command impossibilities; but, by commanding, both admonishes thee to do what thou art able, and to pray for what thou art not able to do, and aids thee that thou mayest be able; whose commandments are not heavy; whose yoke is sweet, and whose burden light.

And Trent's doctrine is a reiteration of the doctrine of the Apostle Paul, who commanded all Catholics, saying:

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, with fear and trembling
work out your salvation.

Let me put it another way. You and I have been given a limited number of years of life on this earth. The exact number of those years is unknown to us. Those years are given to us for the purpose of saving our immortal souls.

Blessed are the clean of heart:
for they shall see God.

Dearest friends, the number of our days is unknown to us, but our death is certain. It is for this reason that Moses cries out:

Teach us to number our days:
that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Three questions remain. When our souls are separated from our bodies, will we be found among those who, in this life, resisted the world, the flesh, and the devil until the end? Will we be numbered among those who confessed their sins, did penance, and amended their lives accordingly? Will we be counted among those who, by cooperating with the unmerited grace of God, died in the state of grace —among those who died in the friendship of the Most Holy Trinity?

After this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

My dear friends, let this truth sink deeply into your souls. You are on probation, and so am I. Yes, we are on probation, but we are not alone. And we are not without the help of many who have already run the race in which we now compete:

And we also, having so great a cloud of witnesses over our head, laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us.

So, on this Feast of All Saints, with the saints in view, as we come to receive upon our tongues and in our persons the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, let us implore our Heavenly Father, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, to grant us the grace to run the race, to finish the course, to keep the Faith, and to receive the crown of life which the Lord has reserved for all those who love His coming; to grant us the grace to be made ready for the hour of our death, so that St. Michael will come and receive us as we pass from this life, and add each of us to the company of all saints—those who have won the prize, the salvation of their souls—saying:

Almighty and everlasting God, Who hast granted us to honor in one solemn feast the merits of all Thy saints: we beseech Thee that, since we have so many to pray for us, Thou wouldst pour forth upon us the abundance of Thy mercy for which we long. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

All ye holy saints, pray for us.
Queen of All Saints, pray for us.
Christ the King, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.