**November Chaplain’s Report**

***The Four Last Things***

Toward the end of the Church year the focus of our Sunday liturgies begins to center on the last moments of Jesus’ ministry leading up to his Passion, Death and Resurrection. In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, this means a series of teachings/parables focusing on the end or what the Church has traditionally referred to as the Four Last Things (the Eternal Truths): Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell.

The thought of these truths can engender in the heart an understandable “unpleasantness.” The thought of heaven is nice enough but who wants to reflect on death, judgment and hell along with it? Fear has its place in our consideration of these truths but a very particular kind of fear. Not the fear of a servant for his strict Lord, but of a son for his merciful Father. The Fear of the Lord, is a loving reverence for and motivation toward obedience for the faithful Christian.

The Four Last Things can help strengthen our hearts in this most fundamental gift of the Holy Spirit, those dispositions that enable us to heed the promptings of that same Spirit promptly, readily, spontaneously, and with joy.

***Death***, and the healthy reflection on death, has the chastening effect of putting all material and passing things in their proper place/aspect. We realize in death that the end of our time of meriting God’s grace on earth is brought to an end. We also realize that death in Christ is not the end pure and simple but the pathway to eternal life for the righteous dead. The best preparation for a “good” death is by living a “good” life. Some things that the Church points out as helping us specifically are:

1. Dying free of mortal sin and receiving the Apostolic Pardon
2. The Sacrament of the Sick (Extreme Unction) and Viaticum (Last Communion)
3. To have the prayers of the dying/dead offered over us

***Judgment*** is twofold. Judgment refers to our ***particular judgment*** at the moment of our death and the ***universal judgment*** at the end of time. At our particular judgment we come before God and opened before us is the book of life containing all that we have done/not done. So too are our good deeds and merits. In this moment God’s justice and mercy (which are ultimately one) are fully manifest to the individual soul. At the universal judgement, Christ will return and bring about the creation of a new heaven and new earth – the end of time.

***Hell*** is that objective place created for the Devil and his angels and home to all those who tenaciously holding on to their sin and self will find themselves for all eternity. Many artistic/poetic expressions such as the works of Dante and C.S. Lewis, as well as the writings/visions of the saints can help us to “see” what Hell and Heaven too might be like. The visualization of and reflection on this awful place has the effect of helping us to appreciate the ugliness and also seriousness of sin in its various forms. Spurring us to virtue and away from vice.

***Heaven*** is that place wherein the righteous will behold God for all eternity; seeing him as he is. It is this place to which Christ was sent to call us; to this place of ultimate communion with the lover of our souls. The thought of and longing for heaven helps to strengthen us in faith, hope and love. In prayer this longing is revived and deepened.

The souls in purgatory have been found worthy of heaven and in God’s mercy are allowed to suffer in purgatory that they may be able to abide in his presence for all time and eternity. If they could have – they would have aimed for heaven above and before all else on earth.

As we mount toward the Feast of Christ the King on November 25th and the beginning of a new liturgical year this Advent, let’s take some time to, as our motto has it: ***“Memento Mori.”*** Taking time to remember death, and all that follows, serves to remind us of the importance of our spiritual life and the immortality of the soul. As the book of Sirach has it: ***“…remember your last days, and you will never sin.”* (Sir 7:36)** The lot of the sinless is heaven – what more motivation is needed than God himself.

**Practical Tips:**

***1) Read up on the Four Last Things:***

* *The Four Last Things: A Catechetical Guide to Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell* by Fr. Wade Menezes
* *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Allegheiri trans. Anthony Esolen (Random House Press)
* *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis

***2) Pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory this November and for the Grace of a Happy Death.***

***3) View this video from Fr. Mike Schmitz on the Four Last Things:*** [***https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FMgVbcLagM***](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FMgVbcLagM)

**Coming Up:**

***November***

* Forty Hours at OLMC – Sunday, 11/11-11/13/2018
* Thanksgiving – Thursday 11/22/2018
  + Attend mass and celebrate Thanksgiving by offering ultimate prayer of Thanksgiving, the Eucharist
* Feast of Christ the King – Sunday 11/25/2018
* Month of the Holy Souls
  + **Plenary Indulgence** available to those who visit a cemetery in first eight days of November under all other ordinary conditions:
    - Complete detachment from sin, even venial sin
    - Receive Communion
    - Go to Confession (within twenty days before or after)
    - Pray for intentions of the Holy Father (Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be)

***December***

* 1st Sunday of Advent – Sunday, 12/2/2018