

# Maronite Monks of Adoration

Most Holy Trinity Monastery  
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November  
2004

## Last<sup>the</sup> Things

death  
judgment  
heaven  
hell

During the month of November, in both the Maronite and Latin Churches, the liturgical year concludes. This traditionally becomes the time to reflect on the Last Things: death, judgment, heaven and hell. Nature itself aids us in this reflection. The daylight grows shorter, the trees are bare and the gusty chilly wind makes us shiver. Nature, so to speak, goes to sleep. All this reminds us, that one day our earthly lives will end and we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ where our condition for eternity will be determined.

We should not count on the current fashionable heresy, which says, "God is love so everybody automatically gets to Heaven." Remember of all Biblical figures, Jesus Christ speaks the most about hell and eternal damnation. A good antidote for this heresy is to read the accounts of the visions of hell given to St. John Bosco and St. Faustina among others. More importantly, we must remember that where we spend eternity will depend on the choices and worldview we embrace in this life. Our Lord Himself says, "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; but he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God." (Luke: 12: 8-9)

Because we live in society, the worldview we hold and choices we make necessarily affects others. We can either help or hinder others to eternal salvation. Remember also, God will hold us accountable, not just as individuals, but also as a nation. We are "our brothers' keeper."

November also brings national elections where

we don't just elect individuals to public office, but more importantly, choose

what worldview will predominate. Our reflection of the last things should be present to us as we are reminded that "Here we have no lasting city." As the ancient Christian work called the *Didache* (The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles) starts, "Two Ways there are, one of Life and one of Death, and there is a great difference between the Two Ways." Never before has the choice between the two ways been so obvious. Conscious of eternity and God's wish "I do not wish the death of the sinner," we need to bring a fully-informed Christian consciousness into the public sphere as we make this choice. But how do we accomplish this? We're constantly told that "there is separation of church and state" (a statement that nowhere appears in the U.S. Constitution), and that "religion is a purely private matter for the home and church building only." What do we do? Let us look to Our Lord.



Illustration:  
Maronite Monks

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When confronted on this issue by the Pharisees, Our Lord said: “*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.*” (Matthew 22: 21) Give Caesar what is his due, but no more, because God must assuredly be given what He has a right to. God and Caesar are on two quite different levels. What has Caesar a right to receive? Taxes, which are necessary for legitimate state expenses. What must God be given? Obviously, obedience to all His commands — which implies personal love and commitment. Jesus’ words show that He recognized civil authority and its rights, but He made it quite clear that the **superior** rights of God must be respected, and pointed out that it is part of God’s will that we faithfully fulfill our civic duties.

The Christian does not hold up in a wilderness fortress awaiting the end of the world. Neither does he withdraw into isolation from the world contending that society is hopelessly corrupt and he must have nothing to do with it. Rather as ancient Israel was the “light unto the Gentile nations” we, the New Israel, are to be the “leaven in the dough.” St. Peter said: “*Fear God. Honor the emperor.*” (1Peter 2: 17) We bring the Gospel wherever we go, allowing its light to transform all. The motto of Pope St. Pius X would serve us well here: “*To renew all things in Christ.*”

Never before has this motto assumed such urgency. The culture of death surges ahead and many of us have abandoned the battle or just don’t care. How can it be that in a country where 85% of the people say they believe in God we have this culture of death so ascendant?

We have in essence forgotten about eternity and forgotten the words of Our Lord that “*we are in the world but not of the world.*” We’ve settled in for a comfortable stay. When life becomes simply the accumulation of material things and feel-good experiences, the last thing on our mind will be eternity. We’ve taken our eyes off Christ and focused them on this passing world. As Dr. Charles Rice of the Notre Dame School of Law

states, “Legalized abortion and euthanasia are essentially symptoms of a loss of faith in God.” We should remember the history of ancient Israel, especially the Northern Kingdom. That nation adopted a worldview strikingly similar to our own today. Materialism, sexual license and child sacrifice just to name a few. In His love and patience God sent many prophets to them including the greatest prophet of all—Elijah. But the people responded in the same way that so many respond today to Christ and His Vicar, “We don’t want to hear it!” God’s justice would not be mocked and today those people are known to history as the Ten **Lost** Tribes of Israel. They vanished without a trace after being overrun by the Assyrians.

Our Lord promised that “*the gates of hell shall not prevail against my Church.*” (cf. Mat 16:18) While that promise holds true for the Universal Church, it does not guarantee that the Church in any one individual nation will survive, especially if it abandons its Lord for the world. But no matter how dark the times, God always raises up saints to the occasion. And as one book is entitled, *The Saints Show Us Christ*, let’s look at two saints who showed us how to give to Caesar and to God what are theirs and how these choices were also for eternity: one for the clergy and one for the laity.

St. John Fisher was bishop of Rochester England when King Henry VIII broke with the See of Peter and made himself head of the Church. There were 22 bishops in England at the time. 21 went with the king and 1 stayed loyal to Peter: John Fisher. The national episcopal conference supported the king. (Obviously John Fisher was not a “team player”). John Fisher lost his earthly life but gained eternal life and sainthood. As St. Peter said, “*We must obey God rather than men.*” (Acts 5:29)

At that same time St. Thomas Moore was chancellor of England (number 2 in the government) and a great personal friend of the

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king. He also would not go along. Everyone he knew pleaded with him with their version of “say you’re personally opposed **But.**” Instead he said the words, the sentiments which are missing from virtually every Catholic politician these days, “*I die the king’s good servant, but God’s first.*”

Returning to today, let’s close with the words of a very saintly priest, the late Fr. John Hardon

S.J. who said: “*Unless we recover the zeal and the spirit of the first century Christians—unless we are willing to do what they did and to pay the price that they paid, the future of our country, the days of America are numbered.*” May our reflection on the Last Things during November help us recover that zeal and be the leaven of Christ. ✠