

## **Waiting for the End of the World One Catholic's Perspective on Armageddon Madness**

Its seven minutes to midnight on the Atomic Scientists' Doomsday Clock. Seemingly there is little time to waste before al-Qaeda's promised American Hiroshima. Earthly upheavals all point to the start of a chastisement with more fearsome events to follow.

The end-of-the-world mindset is nothing new. The Left Behind series fueled the Evangelical belief in the Rapture, when all the justified will be swept up into the heavens. The Church of Latter Day Saints instructs the faithful to put aside sufficient supplies to last a family for at least a year. Other doomsday groups have actually secured physical "safe" locations for paying members.

Catholics are not exempt from Armageddon madness. Stocking up on Three Days of Darkness supplies like blessed beeswax candles and heavy plastic sheeting to seal out the demons and poisonous gases is surprisingly a lot more common than one would imagine. The rush to hear the latest messages from seers throughout the world, whether they enjoy the official approval of the Church or not, inspires behavior that borders on obsessive.

All of these preparations carry a high price. Freeze dried survival meals fetch an average of \$60 for a case of 12. Shortwave radios at \$100 or more are a bargain for those who can understand Chinese, Russian or Arabic. And in case you are somehow oblivious of a nuclear blast, you can purchase a Nuk-Alert Radiation monitor for only \$179.

Perhaps the highest price is the loss of peace of mind when we place our faith in earthly preparations rather than heavenly ones. Not one of us knows the day we will be called before the Throne of Judgment. Whether the end of our earthly life comes during a maelstrom of fire and brimstone, or when a few molecules of blood form an artery-blocking clot, only God knows the hour at which we will be called.

This past summer, in the space of a couple of weeks, this lesson was illustrated most painfully in our family and community. On a peaceful summer night, returning home from a family wedding celebration, a sweet seven-year old girl was decapitated when a drunk driver struck the limousine she was riding in. Several days later, our own son, suffering from jet lag, fell asleep at the wheel, and crashed into a tree at the side of the road, completely destroying his car but suffering only a microscopic scratch on his hand. One child died, another lived. In our human understanding, it makes no sense, but in His infinite wisdom, the Good Shepherd knows when to call home each of His sheep. Trust in that Wisdom brings peace.

*"For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?" (Matt. 6 25-27)*

**Are there preparations that a good Catholic should make? Certainly.**

**First and foremost, remain in a state of grace.** For too many Catholics, the sacrament of confession, now called reconciliation, is “old fashioned” -- something that makes us uncomfortable. Dangerous modern individualistic morality implies that “God knows that I’m sorry for my sins. I don’t have to go to a priest.” Nothing can be farther from the truth. Aside from the sacramental remission of sin, Catholics who avail themselves of a thorough examination of conscience, admission of sins to a good confessor and sincere penance reap the rewards of solid spiritual growth and peace.

**Attend Mass** as often as you possibly can. Sundays and Holy Days are not optional. Make the effort to find a daily Mass that fits with your schedule. Even if you attend just one additional Mass each week, you will soon find that the grace and strength you receive from participation in the Holy Sacrifice is something that you will soon long for on a daily basis. The Mass is, indeed, our “daily bread.”

**Participate in Eucharistic Adoration.** The Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life. (Lumen Gentium, No. 11; cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1324). Some parishes offer Perpetual Adoration and others hold Holy Hours and First Friday Services. Adoration is such a simple concept that it confuses many modern Catholics who attempt to intellectualize the practice. If you don’t know how to “do” Adoration, don’t worry. Just go and sit in the presence of the Lord. It will come to you.

**Pray the Rosary.** Meditation on the Mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary is an unending source of spiritual growth and comfort. Ideally, we should try praying in groups, with our parish, with friends, with family. In a world where most are pressed for time, praying the entire rosary takes only 16 minutes a day. Start with just one decade a day. If you pray alone, you can pray while waiting on line, while you drive, while you’re on the treadmill at the gym. There are rosary CD’s and even a free downloadable program that starts the rosary on your computer when you turn it on each day. Carry a rosary with you always. If you forget it, you still have ten fingers that will work just as well. Don’t waste insomnia. Keep a rosary under your pillow, and ask your Guardian Angel to finish it for you in case you fall asleep. And forget about all the wild and improbable messages from countless seers who predict doom and gloom. Just remember that in Church approved apparitions, there is a clear message: Pray the Rosary.

**Read the Bible.** Find peace in the Word of God daily, especially the Gospels. The practice of daily scripture reading allows us to get to know Jesus on an even more intimate level. Review the readings of the day, pray the Liturgy of the Hours in union with the Church, or just keep a pocket sized New Testament with you for those spare moments we all find during the day. And do yourself a favor -- don’t just fast forward to Revelations.

**What about physical preparations?**

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy,  
and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,  
where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;*

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matt. 6:19-21)*

It's not a bad idea to keep some bottled water and non-perishable food on hand. You never know when there will be a storm or power-failure, or perhaps unexpected financial constraints. And, you'll always have a bit on hand to give to the poor. In everything we do as Catholics, there should be balance. The tendency to hoard survival goods removes us from trust in God's goodness and providence. As Catholics living a materialistic secular existence, we have forgotten the great value of precarity and voluntary poverty. The more we build, the more we acquire, the less we have to give to the poor and to the Church. A modestly filled cupboard, then, will allow us to share with those who are in need.

So, before you whip out your credit card to stock up on Iostat Potassium Iodide radiation protection pills at [NukPills.com](http://NukPills.com), make sure your soul is in good order. Our personal "end of the world" can come today.

O.K. Maybe you can order a couple of packets for the priests in your parish. If there *is* a nuclear holocaust, Catholics who haven't made these essential final preparations will need someone to give them final absolution.