

# Making use of your 'last time'

It happened several years ago, but the thought continues to bother me. John had made the comment at one of our group get-togethers. "Don't mention those words 'last time' to me," he said.

John was our next-door neighbor, and ever since he and Marie moved, several of us would still get together to discuss old times. John continued his conversation.

"The words 'last time' always remind me of that day we moved away from the neighborhood," he said. "I was in the shower getting ready for our settlement that morning and I suddenly realized that this would be the last time I would be taking a shower in this house. Nostalgia flooded my memory."

John's words stayed with me too, because my wife, Pat and I are slowly coming to that time when we had better be thinking of our own future. Will we be prepared for what is next when that inevitable last day arrives? But most of all, will we be ready?

One day last summer I took my annual walk around our gym's outdoor swimming pool, sat on a lounge chair and reminisced about that time a few days after I retired when I went there and did the same thing. I was happy then. No cares in the world. Life was still ahead of me. Little did I know I'd be around to reminisce about it 18 years later. I couldn't help but wonder, as I sat there recently, when that last time will be. Will I be back next year, next month ... tomorrow?

Try it yourself the next time you think about a recurring event. When will be the last time? We never know when each event in our lives will be the last. An even more important question: Will we have another opportunity to change if we need it?

With the holy season of Advent upon us, perhaps now might be the time for us to reflect on where we are now and where we will be in the future. Advent is the time designated by the church for us to prepare for the coming of the Christ child at Christmas. It is also the time for preparation in our own lives, for our own future. We never know when our "last time" will be ... for anything. Maybe that last time has already occurred, and we can only hope that we did our best with it.

Makes one wonder, doesn't it? For instance, when was the last time you went to confession? Would you be satisfied if you were to find out that it was your last?

William F. Eckert is a parishioner at St. Paul in Ellicott City.