

My paternal grandfather, of who I am justly proud, was the owner of a tavern in a working class section of Albany called Arbor Hill. His long-time patrons were mostly men looking to unwind after a day of hard work. Shortly before the closing of the bar late into the evening, the bartender would then make an announcement, one which the patrons expected. He cried out, "Last call". It was the last opportunity for the patrons to purchase a drink. At two in the early morning, the customers would then be asked to leave. They went out into the darkness and returned home for some sleep. The doors of the grill would be closed and locked for the remainder of the night.

As we read in John's gospel, Christ knows each of us by name. "The sheep hear his voice and he calls his sheep by name".

Until the day of our death, Christ never ceases to call us. That means that until we breathe our last breath there is, indeed, a "last call".

In Luke's account of our Lord's crucifixion, the so-called "good thief" heard the voice of heaven and turned to Christ in the final moments of his life. At the moment of his death earthly time ended and he entered eternity.

Given the many distractions in life, it is no wonder that so few give any thought to our eternal destiny. Too many are obsessed with the material comforts of life. It may not be until the end of life that one hears the inner voice speak to him about salvation. If nothing else, God is patient and persistent. He desires that we know the truth about ourselves and, in addition, the mystery of our death and resurrection.

One of the greatest poems of the last century was written by an Englishman and Catholic, Francis Thompson. "The Hound of Heaven" tells the enthralling story of God pursuing a wandering soul until he finally surrenders to God's call at the end of his life.

I am reminded that today I am celebrating the funeral mass of a bartender. How often had he provided counsel to his customers? How many turned to him for comfort in difficult moments?

Like all Christians, our deceased loved one, Charlie, likely heard Christ's "Last call". It is my hope that he turned to him at the hour of his death.