

# NOVEMBER

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Wednesday, November 1, 2017  
(Lec. 667)

- 1) Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14
- 2) 1 John 3:1-3
- 3) Matthew 5:1-12a

**ALL SAINTS**  
**- SOLEMNITY**  
**(Holyday of Obligation)**

Gospel related: **CCC** 520, 544, 581, 764, 1716, 1720, 2305, 2330, 2518, 2546, 2763 **CSDC** 492

FOCUS: We are clothed in garments made white in the blood of the Lamb.

For many of us, it is hard to separate All Saints' Day from All Souls' Day. It is, after all, a two-day celebration of the Communion of Saints. Today, we celebrate our ancestors of faith who are one with God in the heavenly realm and tomorrow, we remember those well on their way to heaven.

We are all familiar with the giants of the Church, such as Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Saint Augustine and Saint Anne. We study their lives and we celebrate their feast days throughout the year. Today, we celebrate *all* saints, whom we trust are now one with their Savior, having lived honorable and just lives among us. We celebrate saints who are clothed in garments made white in the blood of the Lamb.

We were privileged to have had three modern-day saints walk among us: Pope Saint John Paul, Saint Teresa of Calcutta and Pope Saint John XXIII. We also remember today our personal saints, Grandpa Frank or Great Aunt Philomena, and all the holy men and women of God who have touched our lives and are now part of that glorious kingdom of God.

Saint John paints a mystical vision of the kingdom of God in the Book of Revelation. It is a gathering of a great multitude, too many to count, all clothed in white. In our second reading, Saint John reminds us that, because of the love the Father bestowed on us, we may be called *children of God*.

As children of God, Saint Matthew gives us our marching orders in today's Gospel. We are to be detached from material possessions and focused on others. We are to mourn with those who are mourning, be meek and thirst for righteousness. We are to be clean of heart and show mercy. We will be blessed when we are persecuted, and are promised a great reward in heaven.

When we do our best to live out the beatitudes, we contribute to building up the kingdom of God here on earth. Let us ask for the prayers and intercessions of the saints we honor today to help and guide us along our path.

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Thursday, November 2, 2017  
(Lec. 668)

- 1) Wisdom 3:1-9
- 2) Romans 5:5-11  
or Romans 6:3-9
- 3) John 6:37-40

Or any readings from no. 668 or from the *Lectionary for Ritual Masses* (vol. IV), the Masses for the Dead, nos. 1011-1016 Pss Prop

**THE COMMEMORATION  
OF ALL THE FAITHFUL  
DEPARTED  
(ALL SOULS' DAY)**

Gospel related: **CCC** 161, 606, 989, 994, 1001, 2824

FOCUS: None of us is lost to God.

One of the places some people like to visit is their local (or parish) cemetery. They find walking through the cemetery to be a deeply spiritual experience, and a good time for prayer as they pass by the many markers and headstones. It is good to pause and pray for someone who has died, for it is a powerful way to remain connected with those who have gone before us.

As we gather and pray on this day, we have heard the Scriptures speak to us a very powerful message about how deeply God wishes to be a part of our lives, and how deeply God wishes for us to share in eternal life.

The Book of Wisdom helps us to recall that the souls of the just are in the hands of God, which speaks to us of an intimate and tender relationship with God. We pray that God's tenderness and mercy is experienced by all those who have died. We also pray that the same sort of tenderness and mercy was experienced in life as well.

In his Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul reminds us that the life of each baptized person is really about a constant sort of dying and rising. As God's grace and mercy work on us and in us, old ways of living – sinful ways of living – die over time. Those old and sinful ways are meant to be replaced with new life – life oriented toward God and shaped by Christ's love for each of us. In his beautiful words, Saint Paul is describing the life of faith and the life of discipleship. It is about constant growth toward deeper union with God.

Jesus' words in the Gospel offer immense comfort. He reminds us that no one is truly lost to God. Even when we feel quite distant from God, he will sweep every corner and search every nook and cranny in order to find us. The Father's will for each of us is that we should have eternal life.

That is why many find cemeteries to be such places of comfort. Seen from a distance, to some they may seem cold and bereft of hope. Seen up close, and through the eyes of faith, they are places that offer tremendous hope and comfort. These holy places, and this holy day, remind each of us of the gift and the possibility of eternal life. Let us pray to God that this gift may be shared with those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, and that, in God's good time, it might be shared with each of us as well.

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Friday, November 3, 2017  
(Lec. 483)

- 1) Romans 9:1-5
- 2) Luke 14:1-6

FRIDAY OF  
30<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Martin de Porres,  
Religious)

Gospel related: **CCC** 575, 582, 588 **CSDC** 261

FOCUS: To respond as Christ did.

For those of us listening to the account of the healing of the man with dropsy on the Sabbath, as written in the Gospel of Luke, it seems like Jesus is giving those around him a rather obvious lesson: If someone is in need, help him or her! Most of us probably see ourselves assisting someone without any hesitation, but for the observant Pharisees and those dining with Jesus, it would be a shocking shift from following a familiar law. No work was to be done on the Sabbath, so the heart of the question was whether curing someone was work, and if it was to be allowed.

But the bigger question Jesus addressed was, "What is more important, helping and assisting someone in need or strictly adhering to the letter of the law in all situations?" In the seventeenth century, Saint Martin de Porres, whom we celebrate today, faced that same question.

It is said that one day, when the friars where Saint Martin de Porres lived were kept separated due to illness, Saint Martin passed through locked doors to take care of them. He seemed to continue, in the seventeenth century, the model Jesus set forth in the first. Disciplined for disobeying the rules about separation from the sick, he responded by saying, "Forgive my error, and please instruct me, for I did not know that the precept of obedience took precedence over that of charity." Needless to say, he was given the freedom to move forward in mercy as his heart led him.

It is not difficult for us to realize, then, that what Jesus taught in the first century continues to be applicable to our lives even today, in the twenty-first century. That is because having love and mercy for others, and caring for them, is a profound witness to Christ. To respond as Jesus did, in putting people before the religious law, reflects the dignity of each individual. God loves us so much that his concern for us is of primary importance.

Of course, this does not eliminate the need to follow laws, such as the Ten Commandments and other commands given by Christ, as we must keep in mind that those are laid out for us to follow because they are good for us. This is another indication of the pure love God has for us. Whatever we may be expected to do as an act of discipline frees us from enslavement to that which is not good for us. Much like what Jesus was teaching the Pharisees and the others that day, to become attached to a practice at the expense of caring for others is not the way of God. May we have the wisdom and fortitude to respond as Christ did.

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Saturday, November 4, 2017  
(Lec. 484)

- 1) Romans 11:1-2a,  
11-12, 25-29
- 2) Luke 14:1, 7-11

SATUDAY OF  
30<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Charles Borromeo,  
Bishop)

Gospel related: **CCC** 575, 588 **CSDC** 261

FOCUS: Let us act with humility in loving and serving our neighbor.

In a society where selfies, narcissistic advertising and consumerism reign, it's easy to become self-centered and overrun by pride. Secular culture sees no danger in promoting such me-centered messages. As Christians, we must uphold the virtue that runs counter to this way of thinking – the virtue of humility.

Jesus teaches a lesson about humility in today's Gospel. During a Sabbath meal with the Pharisees, he tells a parable about how guests should behave at a wedding banquet. He says it is not appropriate to sit at the highest place of honor. Instead, guests should sit at the lowest position to avoid the embarrassment of having to move should a more distinguished guest arrive. Observing this rule also allows the host to seat you at a higher position.

The banquet represents the kingdom of heaven in which our Lord is host. The Pharisees assume they should sit at the most distinguished seats as his chosen people, but Jesus reveals that this invitation now extends to everyone. Others may arrive to claim their place. Our reading from Romans provides further context. Paul writes that salvation of the Gentiles comes from the transgressions and disbelief of the people of Israel. The Lord honors his covenant with the Jewish people, as his gifts and call are irrevocable, but opens his salvation and kingdom to additional guests.

On a personal level, Jesus teaches us to place others higher than ourselves. We are called to serve one another, and we can't serve someone if we consider ourselves better than them. Claiming the highest seat reveals our pride and can lead to embarrassment if another arrives more worthy of our place. Taking our place at a low position also allows our heavenly host, the Lord, to "raise us" higher than we place ourselves.

Today, we celebrate the feast of someone who took this lesson to heart. Saint Charles Borromeo was a bishop of Milan who lived in the sixteenth century. Born into a noble family, he sacrificed wealth and power for religious life. Saint Charles was pivotal in his role in the Council of Trent, which formulated and codified Church doctrine to bring about reform. He realized that if he expected change in the Church, he must set an example. In 1576, he stayed in Milan (after the governor and others in power fled) to feed the hungry during famine and care for those sick with the plague.

Saint Charles demonstrated humility with his life. Perhaps we can learn from his example and embrace the virtue of humility, so as to love and serve our neighbor.

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**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2017**

(Lec. 151)

- 1) Malachi 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10
  - 2) 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-9, 13
  - 3) Matthew 23:1-12
- Gospel related: CCC 526, 2367

**THIRTY-FIRST  
SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: Let God Be God!

They called him "The Lip of Louisville," a heavyweight boxer who followed his gold medal victory in the 1960 Rome Olympics with a professional career that quickly led to two things: amazing success and widespread animosity. There was no doubting his ability, but his brash personality and in-your-face arrogance led many to dislike him. His boasting eventually took the form of a simple anthem: "I am the greatest!"

Few genuine fans of the sport of boxing would challenge his claim of greatness, although many still remember and resent the boasting and bluster he continued to spew for a good part of his career. But time has a way of mellowing all of us, and Muhammad Ali was no exception. There's a story told of a traveler curious about the small crowd surrounding someone at Metro Airport in Detroit. The traveler had enough time to investigate and recognized "The Champ," as Ali became known later in his life, as the center of all the attention. Afflicted by Parkinson's disease that had robbed him of his gift of gab, he was wordlessly, even humbly, handing out leaflets. The traveler took one and read a message that began with: "God is the greatest."

That's the simple message of today's first reading from the prophet Malachi: *A great king am I, says the Lord.* There's a dire warning to the priests: *Give glory to my name... [or] your blessing I will make a curse.* It seems it is from this very perspective that Jesus speaks out so aggressively in our Gospel, as he confronts the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. How interesting that he doesn't dismiss them or question their authority, but warns all of us to go beyond words of faith and to act on what we profess.

Whenever Jesus says *I am* in the Gospels – and he does it a number of times, especially in John – he is making a clear reference to the First Commandment of the Ten, and to his own divinity. Remember that First Commandment? *I am the Lord your God. You shall have no strange gods before me.* It's very easy to dismiss it as hopelessly out of step with the modern world.

We might say there's not a lot of idol worship going on in our culture, at least worship of carved images of strange deities. But we do have our idols – power, wealth, fame, pleasure, independence. The most insidious and widely embraced idol, though, is the image we see when we look in a mirror. There is something within us that in subtle ways struggles mightily with the notion of allowing God to be God: it's that determined sense that "nobody is going to tell me what to do."

So how do we let God be God; let God be the greatest? One way is through prayer, when we pray the Lord's Prayer and say "thy will be done." Repeatedly returning to a posture of humbly seeking and following the will of God, no matter how challenging, no matter how contrary to our own will, is the heart and soul of humbling ourselves as Jesus calls us to. It allows God to be God. And God *is* the greatest!

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Monday, November 6, 2017  
(Lec. 485)

- 1) Romans 11:29-36
- 2) Luke 14:12-14

MONDAY OF  
31<sup>ST</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: The gifts and call of God are irrevocable.

Three things stand out in the readings today for making visible and clear to us who, and how, God is for us. The very first words we hear from Paul's Letter to the Romans today set the scene. *Brothers and sisters: The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.* Irrevocable. That means, unalterable; irreversible; unchangeable; unable to be repealed, annulled, revoked or taken back.

In contemporary society where so much is disposable, and commitments – whether professional or personal – are far from permanent, it is almost impossible to imagine something that is so certain, so final and so constant. And yet God makes his gifts irrevocable. We might squander those gifts. We might ignore those gifts and our call to relationship with him. We might even flat-out refuse those gifts and our call. But God never, ever takes them back.

A second insight also comes from Paul's letter. He says, *God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all.* Leaving aside the specific issue Paul is addressing regarding salvation being both for Jews and Gentiles, we can look at the broader meaning contained in his words: that God's mercy is the cause of our salvation. Salvation does not come from within ourselves, or from what we say or do. God's love, mercy and grace abound, and *by* it we are *unbound* – in our repentance and belief – from our sins. We are called, and cleansed, by mercy and grace. Irrevocable mercy and grace.

Finally, in Luke's Gospel we hear how we are to act as members of God's kingdom. It is good to remember that this lesson is not given to impose some supernatural behavior upon us, but to – once again – tell us something about who, and how, God is. God, with his irrevocable gifts of mercy and grace, invites us to his banquet without any expectation of repayment. For with what could we possibly repay God, anyway? God invites us to himself solely out of love. He calls to us solely out of love. Irrevocable love.

Understanding some of who God is, and how God is *for* us, is not just an exercise in intellectual awareness. It is also an encouragement to grow in our relationship with him. For God, who always reaches out with an irrevocable call and gifts, still needs us to answer and accept for those gifts to be used. Our salvation, freely offered, still needs our repentance and belief for our grasp of it to take hold. Love, continuously poured out, still needs our hearts as vessels to hold it for it to be returned and shared.

As we approach the altar that contains God's most holy, perfect and irrevocable gift, let us pledge to answer, to repent and believe, and to love as we are called to love.

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Tuesday, November 7, 2017  
(Lec. 486)

- 1) Romans 12:5-16b
- 2) Luke 14:15-24

TUESDAY OF  
31<sup>ST</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God calls us each day to lives of love and service.

The people in Jesus' parable today seem to offer such weak excuses to avoid attending this specially planned banquet! We can assume that the invitation came out well in advance. Why, then, did these invited guests choose this particular time to evaluate their new plot of land, examine their oxen or spend time with their new wife? Why could they not have set aside this time to attend a well-planned banquet by their friend?

In many ways, we are more fortunate than the invited guests in today's parable. God extends multiple invitations to be of service to him and his people. Today's first reading shows us examples of specific calls we might have received from God – and the ways to answer those calls. If one is a teacher, focus on educating students. If one is a parent or a leader in business or in government, exercise this call with diligence. If gifted with ample wealth, be both generous and cheerful in donations.

Along with these specific vocations and ministerial gifts, God invites us daily to follow our general calling as Christians. Each day, we have special opportunities to do the right thing, to honor the people in our lives through affection and service, to be zealous in our Christian vocation, to be present to others who are celebrating or grieving.

Accepting these daily invitations isn't always easy. So often, they require us to put aside our own agenda, our own plans for the day. Parents might have to put their own reading or specific household task on hold to listen to a child or spouse's tale of woe; perhaps we might have to leave the comfort of our home to help a neighbor in an emergency. Even rejoicing with those who rejoice can be a hardship if we ourselves are going through a difficult or sad time.

The good news is that God is more forgiving than the dinner host in today's parable. If we *do* fail through weakness or inattention to respond to God's calls today, we know that God will give us ample invitations to serve tomorrow. As we approach the banquet of the Eucharist, let us ask our host, Jesus, to grant us forgiveness for our failures yesterday – and the grace and strength we need to respond to today's invitations.

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Wednesday, November 8, 2017  
(Lec. 487)

- 1) Romans 13:8-10
- 2) Luke 14:25-33

Gospel related: CCC 1618, 2544

WEDNESDAY OF  
31<sup>ST</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Nothing should come between us and our commitment to Christ.

In the Gospel of Luke, we find different terms used to describe the audiences that Jesus addresses: disciples, the Twelve, the people, the rulers. But when Luke refers to the “crowds,” he specifically means those who are curious enough to come out to hear and see Jesus. They are potential disciples — on the verge of deciding whether or not to follow Jesus — but not yet committed to him. So when Jesus addresses them, he is speaking to their hearts as they consider whether or not to follow him.

They must have been surprised at his message, because he does not paint a rosy picture of discipleship. In today’s world, those who wish to sell things usually emphasize all of the wonderful benefits we will realize by accepting whatever it is they have to offer, while omitting or downplaying the costs. But Christ takes the opposite approach. He warns us to consider the costs of discipleship upfront before making a decision.

Being his disciple is not a sideline or a hobby — it is our vocation. Jesus cautions us about claiming discipleship too casually. He demands nothing less than total commitment: putting him before everything and everyone, even before our very selves. We must consider the cost first, before acting. And the cost is — the cross.

Think carefully of what Christ is asking. He is not preaching about sin, not asking us simply to renounce evil, avoid sinful acts and do good. Of course we should do this, but it’s not sufficient. Being his disciple goes far beyond this. At the very heart of discipleship is our relationship with Christ — and we must not allow anything to interfere with that relationship, even if those things are themselves good and beautiful things from God himself.

This may be confusing to hear, so just a word of clarification: It is not wrong to love the things of creation — especially those things of great goodness and beauty, including our family. It is a *disordered* love, however, if even these good and beautiful things become impediments to the fullness of discipleship and relationship with God. Properly ordered, our love for God, first, will enhance the love we have for the good things in our life. Adhering to this is not easy, of course! But this difficulty is part of the cross we bear, as we die to self in little ways, and is an aspect of what Jesus is referring to when he says we must weigh the cost of discipleship upfront.

Pope Benedict XVI summed up the call to discipleship very clearly in his encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”

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Thursday, November 9, 2017  
(Lec. 671)

- 1) Ezekiel 47: 1-2, 8-9, 12
- 2) 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17
- 3) John 2:13-22

Gospel related: **CCC** 575, 583, 584, 586, 994

**THE DEDICATION  
OF THE LATERAN  
BASILICA  
- FEAST**

**FOCUS:** God has given us the gift of the Church that we might be built together as living stones – his new dwelling place in creation.

Anyone who has ever visited the Lateran Basilica in Rome might find it difficult to connect this magnificent edifice with their own local parish church. But while they might differ in size and opulence, they share a common identity and role in the life of their respective faith communities. For what we celebrate today is not simply the mother church of all Latin Rite churches, but a deeper spiritual reality. For this great Roman basilica stands as a place where a community of faith gathers to worship and encounter the love and mercy of God. Here, as in all churches, the faithful find a home with love, encouragement and support, and experience a vibrant sacramental life that empowers them to go forth as witnesses of the Gospel.

As we celebrate today, we are reminded that our Christian faith is universal and never the preserve of one nation or people – for the Church exists across time and in all places. This underlying spiritual reality is beautifully summed up in one of the Opening Prayers for today's liturgy: *O God, who from living and chosen stones prepare an eternal dwelling for your majesty, increase in your Church the spirit of grace you have bestowed, so that by new growth your faithful people may build up the heavenly Jerusalem.* As the stones and bricks make up the basilica, so we are living stones who make up the Church as the people of God.

But such a spiritual reality is not something that materializes out of thin air, for it is rooted in our baptismal relationship with Christ where we are called and anointed to share in the building up of his presence in the world. This baptismal task can never be left to others, for we are all called to be vibrant and active members of the body of Christ. No one is exempt, just as no one can justify his or her inaction or failure. Everyone has something to give; no gift or talent is too small or insignificant. Just as all are called, all are invited to share in this divinely given task of making Christ known before the nations.

Let us embrace this invitation, and allow the Holy Spirit to build on our faith so that the example and fruits of our Christ-centered relationships can bring light and healing to the world in which we live.

Friday, November 10, 2017  
(Lec. 489)

- 1) Romans 15:14-21
- 2) Luke 16:1-8

FRIDAY OF  
31<sup>ST</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Leo the Great,  
Pope and Doctor  
of the Church)

Gospel related: **CCC** 952

FOCUS: We are called to be stewards of the gifts God has given to us.

Each and every one of us is called to be a steward of the gifts and abilities God has given to us. Each one of us has specific gifts and talents that we can use for God's glory, and we should certainly make a concerted effort to improve and use those gifts. But we also have been given a common gift: the saving truth of the Gospel. Although we may not be called to a far-off mission field, each of us can share the message of the Gospel, through both our words and actions, with those near us: our family members, friends, co-workers, classmates and neighbors.

Saint Paul provides us with a witness of what it means to pass on the Gospel to those around us. We are called to witness to the life-changing power of God that has been manifested in our lives. Saint Paul stresses that this is all God's work in him — that it is not his own power or his own message. Likewise we must, in humility, use our gifts for God's glory and share the message of the Gospel.

This mission is not always easy, and we see this in our Gospel. The dishonest steward has not performed his duty, and is about to be dismissed from his stewardship. While he should not be commended for being dishonest, he is commended for being prudent — for acting with foresight. How would his stewardship have been different if he had acted with this type of zeal and passion all along? How would his stewardship have been different if he had not taken for granted his position and gifts?

We, too, would do well to recognize the great gifts and blessings God has given to us. We, too, can act with great enthusiasm in proclaiming the Gospel and using our gifts for God's glory. We should not wait for things to go wrong as the dishonest steward did, but always strive to act with foresight by storing up for ourselves treasures in heaven. We do this, like Saint Paul did, through our own faithful stewardship. We do this by using the gifts God gives us for his glory, and by proclaiming the Gospel with zeal to all around us.

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Saturday, November 11, 2017  
(Lec. 490)

- 1) Romans 16:3-9,  
16, 22-27
  - 2) Luke 16:9-15
- Gospel related: **CCC** 2424 **CSDC** 453

SATURDAY OF  
31<sup>ST</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Martin of Tours,  
Bishop)

FOCUS: Remain trustworthy in the eyes of God.

*A person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones.* This statement from Jesus in Luke's Gospel seems to make good sense. We can probably affirm it from our own experiences — from working closely with other people, raising children or simply becoming close friends with another human being.

"Trust" and "trustworthiness" are important concepts. They are also necessary elements in all social interactions, and are often listed as being one of the top qualities looked for in a business partner or spouse. Trust exercises are popular at retreats, and job and life coaches take employee groups on trust trips, to bolster confidence and fidelity among the members.

Trust is also a topic with great potential for humor. A popular phrase found on Facebook and other social media sites these days offers the explanation, "Raisin cookies that look like chocolate chip cookies are the main reason I have trust issues." While amusing in its self-deprecating humor, it actually reveals the truth of Jesus' statement. After all, how can we trust and have faith in the larger things, if we cannot have it in the smaller ones?

Jesus wasn't speaking about trust exercises, or raisin and chocolate chip cookies. And while his declaration arose in the context of a parable about wealth, the lesson is not about money. The lesson is about choosing to serve God above all other things. And the little things — the *dishonest wealth* in the parable — matter.

The "little things" are things of this world — things that allow us to live our lives as we need to, but are of less importance than the things of God. So yes, it is necessary that we be trustworthy with our neighbor's tools, or our family's cars, but how much *more* necessary is it that we can be trusted and *entrusted* with larger matters such as our neighbor's dignity, our family's love, our children's souls?

For the things we consider ours that come from God are not ours to keep, but to share in the building up of the kingdom. Things such as love, dignity, our name, our vulnerability. Caring for and entrusting ourselves and each other with the protection of these aspects of humanity ensures we do not fall into the trap of thinking that the little things of this world are what matter most.

No one can serve two masters, Jesus tells us. And by serving those around us who also live in this world, for the purpose of the Kingdom, we remain faithful to, and trustworthy, in the eyes of God.

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**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2017**

(Lec. 154)

- 1) Wisdom 6:12-16
- 2) 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18  
or 4:13-14
- 3) Matthew 25:1-13

Gospel related: CCC 672, 1618

**THIRTY-SECOND  
SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME**

**FOCUS:** Jesus provides the wisdom needed for being ready to meet him when he comes again.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus cautions his listeners to *stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour*. He warns them not to be like the foolish bridesmaids who were unprepared. They assumed they could always get more oil for their torches whenever they needed it, and that the door of the house would be opened for them even if they arrived late. The foolish bridesmaids were shocked to discover that, at the decisive hour, because they were unprepared, they were excluded. Until then, there seemed to be no difference between the wise and foolish bridesmaids. *They all became drowsy and fell asleep*, Jesus tells us. But the midnight call to action finds the wise prepared and welcomed, and the foolish unprepared and left out.

*We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep.* These words from our second reading direct our attention to a subject we mostly try to avoid: death. The Church puts death front and center during this month of November. It begins with All Saints' Day, which is immediately followed by All Souls' Day, when we pray in a special way for our departed loved ones. Paul tells the Thessalonians that when the Lord Jesus returns in glory, those who have already died *will rise first. Then we who are alive ... will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*

How, then, can we best prepare to meet the Lord? Our first reading may have the key. Wisdom can be *found by those who seek her*. And the wisdom we seek – to be prepared to meet the Lord – is found in what Jesus teaches his disciples. His message is about how we are to live in the kingdom of God here on earth, so as to live with God after our death. His lessons are about forgiving others generously, being grateful for the generosity of others, following through on our word, and not expecting reward for doing the right thing. Most important, he teaches that loving God with all our mind, heart and soul, and humbly loving our neighbor as ourselves, are the greatest commandments.

The lessons Jesus taught his listeners as he prepared for his death provide us all the wisdom we need for being prepared for our own deaths. Let us stay awake in seeking to live in the wisdom he shares. Let us grow in wisdom by finding ways to grow in our love for God and in our love for our neighbors. In doing so, Scripture tells us we will not be disappointed. As we gain this wisdom, we will also grow in gratitude for God's kindness, and in certainty of the hope we have for being joined with the Lord and those who have gone before us.

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Monday, November 13, 2017  
(Lec. 491)

- 1) Wisdom 1:1-7
- 2) Luke 17:1-6

MONDAY OF  
32<sup>ND</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini,  
Virgin)

Gospel related: **CCC** 162, 2227, 2287, 2845

FOCUS: Having faith opens us to being sources of justice, goodness and generous forgiveness.

It is a happy coincidence that our readings today fall on the memorial of Saint Frances Cabrini, the first naturalized United States citizen to be canonized a saint. The author of our first reading, from the Book of Wisdom, never knew Mother Cabrini, but the initial verse of the passage can be easily applied to her life: *Love justice, you who judge the earth; think of the Lord in goodness, and seek him in integrity of heart.*

Born in Italy in 1850, Mother Cabrini felt called to religious life at an early age. Because of her fragile health, however, the local community of sisters thought it unwise for her to attempt to live the rigorous demands of the convent. Undaunted by this, Frances eventually made her vows and founded a new order of women religious, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

This supposedly fragile woman went on to establish sixty-seven institutions dedicated to caring for the poor, uneducated and sick, primarily serving Italian immigrants in the United States. In doing so, she managed to cross the Atlantic Ocean more than twenty-five times. By all accounts, her life reflected a love of justice lived out with integrity of heart. Her commitment to answering her call to religious life and to caring for the sick and poor reveals a deep and steadfast faith in God.

In today's Gospel, Jesus makes an important observation about the love of justice and having integrity of heart. *Things that cause sin will inevitably occur*, Jesus says, *but woe to the one through whom they occur*. In other words, personal sin is bad enough, but leading someone else into sin is much more serious. As if this teaching was not challenging enough, Jesus then calls his disciples to extreme generosity in granting forgiveness to those who repent. The Apostles respond to his message by asking for increased faith. Jesus assures them that even if they *have faith the size of a mustard seed*, they can meet these challenges.

Having faith is the key to meeting the challenges that are most difficult for us. By acting in faith, we grow to *love justice, think of the Lord in goodness, and seek him in integrity*. In doing so, we open ourselves to receiving the grace that helps us both to avoid sin and to forgive as he asks us.

Mother Cabrini's example of steadfast faith in zealously pursuing her goals provides hope and inspiration for us. Let us trust that the Lord will provide us the grace to both share his goodness in the ways we are called, and to grant the forgiveness needed to help heal the wounded hearts we might encounter today.

\* \* \*

Tuesday, November 14, 2017  
(Lec. 492)

- 1) Wisdom 2:23–3:9
- 2) Luke 17:7-10

Gospel related: CCC 586, 2463

TUESDAY OF  
32<sup>ND</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: *We have done what we were obliged to do.*

The imagery evoked in today's Gospel should ring true with any one of us who has more than one set of tasks to do every day. Even if we do not resonate with the master/servant analogy that is favored by Luke to communicate with the early Jewish and Gentile Christian communities, the idea that there is always something more to be done crosses generations.

When we as parents, or perhaps religious community members, arrive home after a long day of work, we are not offered the invitation to sit at table and be served – we instead come in and *prepare something for [the household] to eat*. Conversely, when we have been up all night with a sick child, a friend in need or some other personal or professional emergency, we do not then sit and rest, but *put on our [metaphorical] apron* and get to work in our daily jobs.

We do our duty. Unlike the servant in the Scripture today, however, we hopefully do it out of love, rather than law. And therein lies the heart of the lesson today: when we have done all that we have been commanded, we can say, *We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.*

That is a rather strange statement to make, no?

It is, unless we consider what Jesus is trying to convey: that Christian discipleship is demanding, and that carrying out those demands is simply what defines and describes a Christian disciple. In other words, it's not false modesty – as if we were saying, “aw shucks, it was nothing!” Nor is it an expression that some outside force has compelled us to act.

Instead, it is the humble truth: in serving others, in doing all that we have been commanded to do, we are in fact *being* what it means *to be* Christian. We are loving one another as Christ has loved us. For a true servant disciple, nothing more is commanded, nothing less is possible.

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Wednesday, November 15, 2017  
(Lec. 493)

- 1) Wisdom 6:1-11
- 2) Luke 17:11-19

WEDNESDAY OF  
32<sup>ND</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Albert the Great,  
Bishop and Doctor  
of the Church)

Gospel related: CCC 586, 2463

FOCUS: Every encounter with Jesus is an outpouring of grace and a gift.

Imagine the sight of those ten lepers standing at a distance, pleading with Jesus to have pity on them! Imagine, then, after he cleansed all ten, only one returning to give thanks! Did the others not realize that it was Jesus who had healed them? Were they too excited at being healed to even consider making an act of gratitude? Were they simply ungrateful? We do not know the answers to these questions, but we do know that Jesus connected faith and thankfulness in his words to the one who returned *glorifying God in a loud voice*.

Not only did he return glorifying God, but *he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him*. This wasn't simply a shake of the hand or a nod of thanks, but with his entire being it seems he returned to Jesus. The Gospel notes — not insignificantly — that the grateful one was a Samaritan. We hear in Scripture that the people of Samaria were the ones who rejected Jesus. They did not even want him going through their towns, and now we read that when the Samaritan lepers encountered Jesus, they were healed.

The mercy of God falls upon everyone, whether they appear to deserve it or not, for it is not by our own merit that we are healed, but by the power of God's love which overshadows us each time we are touched by him. When do we encounter Christ today? Every single time we come to a sacrament. The sacraments of the Church are an intimate opportunity for us to meet Jesus. He continues his healing mission in them. Sometimes a physical healing, sometimes spiritual — but always the grace of God, pouring out his love upon us.

What a gift the sacraments of the Church are — hopefully they are a gift that elicits acts of gratitude from us. After all, we don't want to be among the nine who were healed but did not return to give thanks. Let us pray that we can be more like the one leper who returned and knelt at the feet of Jesus in almost inexpressible gratitude. Let us be among those who, over the centuries, have lived without restraint as they rejoiced in the glory of God. Let our faith be strong and resilient when we are in need of healing, and our hearts open to anticipate God's nearness.

\* \* \*



Thursday, November 16, 2017  
(Lec. 494)

- 1) Wisdom 7:22b-8:1
- 2) Luke 17:20-25

THURSDAY OF  
32<sup>ND</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Margaret of Scotland;  
Saint Gertrude,  
Virgin)

Gospel related: **CCC** 2463

FOCUS: The kingdom of God is among us.

In today's Gospel from Luke, the Pharisees ask Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. It is rather a silly question, since Jesus' whole message has been, and is, that the kingdom of God has arrived. But Jesus is patient, and he answers them without bitterness, or scolding them for not paying attention. He points out that the kingdom of God is not something observed, nor pointed to – it simply *is*. And then he repeats the claim they have come to question, saying, *behold, the Kingdom of God is among you*.

It is interesting, and perhaps even amusing, to note that the Pharisees in Luke's Gospel never ask neutral questions. They always have an agenda; they often seem to have hostile intent; they sometimes come across as obtuse and ignorant of what they ought to know. One might consider that Luke is holding up a mirror for *all* of us to examine how we approach the Gospel message.

In this case, the mirror might show us ourselves a little too clearly. We humans – a glorious mixture of strengths and weaknesses, virtue and vices – have an amazing ability to sometimes “miss the point” when trying to understand something. This is not necessarily a moral failure. After all, who among us has not struggled with concepts in math, science, language, sports, the arts ... or even religion or theology?

When we examine ourselves as reflected in this story, however, we can more truly assess whether our failure to comprehend the information is because we lack the gift or the ability to do so, or because our hearts are not actually open to receive what is being presented. The Pharisees could comprehend the message; they were the religious leaders whose education meant they knew what Jesus was saying. But they refused to believe. They are representative of all those who were, or are, given the Gospel message, but whose stubbornness and pride keep them from truly hearing it and welcoming it into their hearts.

We can choose to be open to the Gospel, or to refuse to believe. But the kingdom of God *is* among us. Let us not miss the point.

\* \* \*

Friday, November 17, 2017  
(Lec. 495)

- 1) Wisdom 13:1-9
- 2) Luke 17:26-37

FRIDAY OF  
32<sup>ND</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Elizabeth of Hungary,  
Religious)

Gospel related: **CCC** 1889, 2463 **CSDC** 34, 583

FOCUS: May we see creation and love the Creator.

If we were to summarize the beautiful passage from the Book of Wisdom today, we might say it is telling us that we humans really ought to be able to see God at work in the world. In many ways, this is easy to do: in the face of a newborn as we marvel at the miracle of life; in the activity of a severe weather event, as we are amazed at the power of nature and the elements; in the gentle touch of one human ministering to another, as we witness the grace of love.

Wisdom points out that too often we do not recognize the Creator behind creation, as we see only the external and tangible, and not the source beneath them. Are we to blame when this happens? Is our failure to see because we are distracted, or not knowledgeable enough? Or have we in some way actively refused to see?

Jesus, who is himself the Wisdom of God, addresses these same concerns in the Gospel of Luke. In answering the numerous questions posed to him about the “when” and the “where” of the kingdom of God, Jesus uses stories familiar to the community to explain, with the emphasis on the ignorance of so many to what was happening around them.

In the days of Noah, the people *were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. And in the days of Lot: they were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building.* In other words, during times when God was revealing himself, the people were focused on earthly activities and personal possessions, rather than heavenly activities and eternal life. All recognized the things of creation, but did not seek out or see the Creator behind it.

So it was, and is, for those who question the coming of the kingdom of God. Many see Jesus, but do not see God (the Father). Many observe the healing miracles, but fail to realize they signal the coming of the Kingdom. Many understand that the kingdom of God is to come, but are not aware that it is already among them. Many think it is about when it will come and where it will be, as if it were a territory, and yet do not grasp that it is about conversion and a way of life.

We, today, really have no excuses. We have the Gospel message and two-thousand-plus years of Tradition. We have history and science and all other forms of knowledge and wisdom – how can we not recognize and honor the Creator who loved creation into being?

\* \* \*

Saturday, November 18, 2017

(Lec. 496)

1) Wisdom 18:14-16; 19:6-9

2) Luke 18:1-8 or

(Lec. 679)

1) Acts 28:11-16, 30-31

2) Matthew 14:22-33

SATURDAY OF  
32<sup>ND</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

(Opt. Mem.)

The Dedication  
of the Basilicas

of Saints Peter and Paul,  
Apostles;

Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne,  
Virgin;

Saturday in honor of BVM)

Gospel related: **CCC** 448, 675, 2098, 2573, 2613 **CSDC** 453

**FOCUS:** Pray always without becoming weary; God never tires of us.

The parable in today's Gospel can lend itself to a bit of an imagination exercise. Many of us have probably seen, or at least heard of, *Judge 'So-and-So's'* show on television. There are probably close to a dozen of these on different networks. Small-claims plaintiffs and defendants present their case in a courtroom – on camera – and inevitably some great drama unfolds as either the claimant, or the judge, has an over-the-top action or reaction.

We could imagine the judge and widow in today's story being an Internet sensation, based on how their interactions would appear on TV. First, the judge *neither feared God nor respected any human being*. More simply, this means that he was not the most wise of judges (*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom*, Cf., Prv 9:10), nor did he have much regard for people. The widow, on the other hand, was the ultimate claimant before a court because of her vulnerability, and the Mosaic law to take special care of her (Cf., Dt 24:17).

That the widow made request after request – over and over and over again – and that the judge was unwilling to help her, for the longest time, would be perfect theater for modern-day reality television. That he finally agrees to help her – not because it is the right and just thing to do, but so she will stop bothering him – would ensure that this courtroom drama would win an Emmy!

Well, perhaps not. But thinking about it in modern terms does show us how ridiculous the scenario is, and how poor the judge is at his duties – especially as compared to God who is *our* purveyor of justice. The widow never ceases in her petition to the court; she is consistent and perseverant. She is finally granted relief – which is a good thing – but for all the wrong reasons: the judge is bothered and afraid for his physical safety and reputation.

So Jesus tells us that if such a bad judge can still do a good thing, *Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? ... he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily.*

Our takeaway, it seems, is two-fold. The first is the glorious reminder that God is *God* ... and that he will act out of his perfect patience, love and mercy – something no judge on earth has. The second is the encouragement for us to pray always without becoming weary. That is, we are not called to perform a technique of perpetual and unending prayer, but to be consistent and persevering in our prayers, without becoming discouraged, so that God may hear us and answer us. God's word is *a fierce warrior*, as the Book of Wisdom tells us today – we need only to call upon it.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2017**

(Lec. 157)

- 1) Proverbs 31:10-13,  
19-20, 30-31
- 2) 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6
- 3) Matthew 25:14-30  
or 25:14-15, 19-21

Gospel related: **CCC** 546, 1029, 1720, 1936, 2683 **CSDC** 259, 326

**THIRTY-THIRD  
SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: If we risk all for Christ and the Gospel, we will be rewarded with the promise of eternal life.

The Victorians were noted for their interest in all things related to death. They built great tombs for their heroes and cherished their loved ones through the possession of *memento mori* – personal items that once belonged to loved ones, such as a lock of hair or a favorite photograph. For them death was a part of life – ubiquitous and very democratic. What was important was what was left behind. In addition to their ornate tombs, the Victorians also loved grandiose epitaphs that recalled for posterity the great achievements of deceased heroes and national figures.

As we come to the end of another liturgical year, our readings seem solemn and sober, challenging us to reflect on our own lives and to consider our own epitaphs – what we will leave behind or what others will say about us. Will they say that we used our God-given talents well? That we did our part to improve that little piece of the world we inhabited? Today's readings help us with this challenge.

The Gospel tells of three investors and invites us to identify with them – the two who risked and gained and the one who, stricken by fear, made sure he did not lose the little he had. Our initial reaction might be to side with the prudent guy and why not? In today's world where the market can be so unpredictable, it makes sense to be cautious, especially when dealing with another's money.

Yet is that what Jesus wants? If we equate the word *talent* with a huge amount of money, we run the risk of misunderstanding this parable. Instead, we should see it as referring to something of tremendous value – the Gospel message. Because Matthew has chosen to place this parable ahead of the Last Judgment, we know that it speaks to us of success, failure and judgment. Some scholars suggest the parable is really an accusation against the Pharisees for their spiritual timidity. They knew the promise of the Good News, and yet chose to bury it in a tomb of rules and regulations. On the other hand, Jesus exhorts his disciples to take risks – to invest their whole lives in the truth of the Gospel and, if necessary, to risk all for the glory of God.

By first leading us to favor the timid servant, Jesus then turns the story upside down. The irony is that he loses everything – even the little he has. For we need to take note of the fact that each is given *according to his ability* and that when risked, the reward is a share in the master's joy.

So what, then, is the moral of this parable? If we see it as an exhortation to work diligently and fearlessly for the return of Christ, then now is the time for all Christians to use and, if necessary, to risk all their gifts and talents, their resources and faith to share Christ with others and to bear the fruit of the dividends of that investment.

\* \* \*

Monday, November 20, 2017

(Lec. 497)

1) 1 Maccabees 1:10-15,  
41-43, 54-57, 62-63

2) Luke 18:35-43

MONDAY OF  
33<sup>RD</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Our faith in Jesus as Lord is a source of strength and new life.

In the second century, B.C., King Antiochus IV became ruler of the kingdom of the Greeks whose culture, civilization and religion extended to the lands they controlled, including Israel. Eventually, the Greeks required that all under their rule abandon their own customs and religion and adopt theirs.

All the Gentiles and many in the Jewish community complied, interested in being accepted by those in power, and hoping it would bring them an opportunity to share in the Greek ruler's power and wealth. When they looked at the choice between being faithful to the Lord, their God, or going along with the Greek mandates, many chose the latter. However, many in the Jewish community did not comply. They refused to turn their backs on God, and remained faithful at the cost of great hardship and distress, and even death.

In the Gospel reading today, we have another example of faithfulness to God. Jesus encounters a blind man insistent on asking him to help him to see. Despite the rebukes from bystanders, he persists, calling Jesus by name, and then, as *Son of David*, to have pity on him. When Jesus responds to him, ordering that the man be brought to him, he asks the man what he wants Jesus to do for him. The blind man then calls Jesus *Lord*, and asks him to let him see. Jesus grants him the sight he seeks and declares, *your faith has saved you*. The man, with eyes wide open, now begins a new life because of his faith in Jesus – a life he probably never imagined. He chooses to immediately follow Jesus, and gives glory to God.

In today's world, standing up for our values will most likely not cause our deaths, but it certainly might cause us ridicule or rejection. It is difficult to stand apart from the crowd and risk the chance of being left out, whatever our age or situation. It is also difficult to stand up and speak up for what we believe when it is different from popular opinion. And when we face difficulties and hardships, it can be very difficult to believe that our faith can bring us the happiness or relief we seek when we don't see our prayers answered.

May the story of the blind man, who publicly asks for what he needs and acknowledges Jesus as Lord, open our eyes to see that believing and following Jesus can bring us a kind of happiness that will cause us to praise God. May we grow to understand that our faith in him gives us new life – one we can't imagine – and inspires us to join the blind man in giving glory to God.

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Tuesday, November 21, 2017  
(Lec. 498)

- 1) 2 Maccabees 6:18-31
- 2) Luke 19:1-10

TUESDAY OF  
33<sup>RD</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
The Presentation  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary)

Gospel related: CCC 549, 1443, 2412, 2712

FOCUS: Let the disposition of our hearts be that of joyfully welcoming God.

Today, the Church celebrates the Memorial of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple. There is no canonical scriptural account of this event, but the second-century writings of James of Jerusalem contain a narrative that details the birth and upbringing of Mary. Included in that narrative is the presentation in the Temple of three-year-old Mary, by her parents Joachim and Anna. As part of our Tradition, the feast emphasizes Mary's holiness from her conception to her Assumption, and gives us an opportunity to reflect on what it means to welcome God joyfully into our lives.

The Scripture readings assigned for today provide us with two examples to enable our reflection. The first, from the Second Book of Maccabees, might seem a little odd as a source for reflecting on joy. After all, it is a rather graphic account of the torture and death of an old man – Eleazar. But it is not his earthly torment that concerns us, as barbaric as it was. It is the joy he proclaims in his devotion to God, and in the knowledge that God will remain faithful to him. It is joy that is within him because he has welcomed God into his life, and it is joy *because of God* that contributes to his steadfastness and loyalty in the face of torture and death.

The Gospel of Luke has a more upbeat example, found in the tax collector Zacchaeus who receives Jesus into his home *with joy*. Zacchaeus is somewhat powerful and wealthy, due to his position, and is vilified by the community for his role in collecting taxes. Many tax collectors were also extortionists, but we have no evidence that Zacchaeus ever was; in fact, Jesus recognizes him as righteous in deeds and therefore a child of Abraham – meaning that God's promise of salvation was extended to him.

In Eleazar, Zacchaeus and Mary we see a tangible, joyful welcoming of God into their lives, and its subsequent rewards. Mary's joyful acceptance leads to the birth of our Savior. Eleazar's joyful claim of his devotion to God leaves in his death, as the author of Maccabees tells us, *a model of courage and an unforgettable example of virtue*. Zacchaeus' joyful hospitality leads Jesus to declare: *Today salvation has come to this house ... For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost*.

What might our joyful welcome of God into our lives, and into our hearts, lead to?

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Wednesday, November 22, 2017  
(Lec. 499)

- 1) 2 Maccabees 7:1, 20-31
- 2) Luke 19:11-28

WEDNESDAY OF  
33<sup>RD</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Cecilia,  
Virgin and Martyr)

Gospel related: **CCC** 1880, 1936 **CSDC** 326

FOCUS: We are entrusted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

*To everyone who has, more will be given.*

Wow! On the face of it, this sounds like a pretty good deal, right? If we gather a lot of things, we'll be blessed with more. Sort of a "wealth begets wealth, possessions lead to more possessions," kind of thing. The parable in today's Gospel even seems to support this, as the servant who had invested his coin gained quite a large return and as a reward, was given charge of ten cities.

It all sounds too good to be true. That's because it is.

If we understand this parable as being about earthly things, then we are as misguided as Antiochus was in the first reading from the Book of Maccabees. After killing six of seven brothers, Antiochus promised the last one that he would make him rich and happy, with high office and many possessions, if he would just abandon his ancestral customs.

But the last brother, and his mother, knowing that not only had they been entrusted with God's law and promises, but with the fidelity and consequences of the previous brothers' witness, refused. He would not trade his faith in and relationship with God for anything Antiochus could offer him.

The seventh son (and his mother), much like the servants in today's Gospel, had been *entrusted* with something of immense value. They did not simply "have," nor were they merely "given," these things. Instead, what they grasped ahold of were gifts commended to them within the framework of a relationship. For to be entrusted means to be charged or invested *by another* with a trust or responsibility; it is to have *another* commit something to our cultivation and care, for a particular purpose.

As such, the son and servant's decisions about these gifts were not just about the gifts themselves, but also about the giver of the gifts. Their actions were motivated not only by what belonged to them, but how and why "what belonged to them" came to be.

We, too, are entrusted with something of immense value: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And this is far greater than anything this world has to offer. Like the seventh son, we are beholden to not only its value, but to the witness of all who have come before us and remained faithful. And like the servant in the Gospel, we are responsible not only for its initial investment within us, but for the reinvestment of it in those around us.

Through the generosity and grace of God we have been given – *we have been entrusted with* – the Good News of Jesus Christ. The more we cultivate and grow that message, the more we will be entrusted with its promises and the blessings it brings.

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Thursday, November 23, 2017  
(Lec. 500)

- 1) 1 Maccabees 2:15-29
- 2) Luke 19:41-44

THURSDAY OF  
33<sup>RD</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.)

Saint Clement I, Pope and Martyr;  
Saint Columban, Abbot;  
Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro, Priest and Martyr;  
USA: Thanksgiving Day

NOTE: For Thanksgiving Day, any readings from the *Lectionary for Ritual Masses* (vol. IV), the Mass "In Thanksgiving to God," nos. 943-947  
Gospel related: CCC 558

FOCUS: God's covenant with his people never wavers.

At the corner of NW 5th Street and Harvey, on the north side of Oklahoma City's downtown, stands a nine-foot, iconic statue of Jesus. The life-sized image reveals the Lord, shoulders hunched, holding his right hand up to his teary face. His head is bowed, showing his anguish, and turned away from the Oklahoma City National Memorial across the street. The memorial, of course, marks the site of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal building, the evil act that killed about one hundred and seventy people on April 19, 1995. Twenty-two of the victims were children, three of them unborn.

Appropriately named "And Jesus Wept," the image was commissioned by the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, and stands on the site of the former rectory of St. Joseph's Old Cathedral, the oldest parish in Oklahoma City, which was heavily damaged by the explosion.

For the millions of visitors who have visited the memorial district of Oklahoma City, the image of the mourning Jesus directly across the street from the bombing site is an undisputable proclamation of God's presence among his people — particularly in times of great suffering. This is the covenant that Mattathias trusted and was willing to die for in today's first reading when he declared, *God forbid that we should forsake the law and the commandments. We will not ... depart from our religion in the slightest degree.*

This is also the covenant Jesus embodies. We hear in the first sentence of today's Gospel: *As Jesus drew near Jerusalem, he saw the city and wept over it.* Not only does our Lord Jesus weep with us when we have been unjustly hurt by evil, he also weeps for us when we, for whatever reason, turn away from God's loving presence. Yet his covenant with his people never wavers. He has promised to be present — in our midst and within us.

What, if anything, is keeping us from recognizing and claiming God's presence with us today? What are we allowing to block our experience of God's grace, keeping it *hidden from [our] eyes*?

Brothers and sisters, the image of a grief-stricken, heartbroken Jesus who loves us so deeply that he cries with us and for us — this is the God we proclaim. This is our faith. That is, indeed, good news! And it gives us much to be grateful for today.

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Friday, November 24, 2017

(Lec. 501)

- 1) 1 Maccabees 4:36-37, 52-59
- 2) Luke 19:45-48

FRIDAY OF

33<sup>RD</sup> WEEK

IN ORDINARY TIME

(OBL MEM

Saint Andrew Dung-Lac, Priest,  
and Companions, Martyrs)

FOCUS: My house shall be a house of prayer.

Housecleaning is not a favorite chore for many people. This is exemplified in a funny quote that says, “My idea of housecleaning is to sweep the room with a glance.” For others, cleaning house is a way of relaxing and rejuvenating – taking care of old business before establishing new business.

Of course, the phrase “cleaning house” has a variety of meanings, from literal to figurative and metaphorical. One can actually scrub, sweep, dust and de-clutter a residence. This residence might be a house, an apartment or perhaps a room in a larger community residence. One can also clean house in the sense of eliminating and discarding what is undesirable – and sometimes that means ridding a location of activities, people and/or corruption.

Today’s Scriptures address a few different ways of “cleaning house.” In this case, the house of which we speak is the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. In the reading from Maccabees, we learn that Judas and his brothers returned to the Temple to purify and rededicate the Temple’s sanctuary, which held the altar. After many days of hard work, deconstruction and new construction, they *ornamented the facade of the temple with gold crowns and shields; they repaired the gates and the priests’ chambers and furnished them with doors.*

For eight days after, they celebrated the dedication of the altar and rejoiced that its defilement by the Gentiles had been erased. This celebration instituted the feast of Hanukkah and returned the Temple – the house of the Holy of Holies – back to a house of prayer.

Jesus took a bit less time in his Temple cleansing. In one uninterrupted sequence in the Gospel we hear: *Jesus entered the temple area and proceeded to drive out those who were selling things, saying ... “My house shall be a house of prayer.”* Jesus’ actions in the Temple had a deeper meaning and effect than just the removal of that which was undesirable. The Temple became the place where he would teach and preach the Gospel, and represented the clearing out of the old law and covenant to make room for the new: himself.

Where in our own lives – whether in our physical homes or in our hearts – can we clear out or drive out that which is old and undesirable, so that we, too, can become a house of prayer? Hopefully we will do more than sweep the room with a glance.

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Saturday, November 25, 2017  
(Lec. 502)

- 1) 1 Maccabees 6:1-13
- 2) Luke 20:27-40

SATURDAY OF  
33<sup>RD</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Catherine of Alexandria,  
Virgin and Martyr;  
Saturday in honor of BVM)

Gospel related: CCC 330, 575

FOCUS: Seeing the truth with the eyes of faith.

The question-and-answer session found in today's Gospel, between the Sadducees and Jesus, is a curious one. For one thing, Jesus' interrogators are not Pharisees – his usual opponents. For another, the topic of the conversation, despite initial outward appearances, is not about marriage, or descendants or even Mosaic Law. It is a debate about resurrection.

The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, and the occurrence of this encounter so close (two chapters) to the beginning of Jesus' own passion, death and resurrection, is noteworthy. How ironic that the Sadducees would question and ridicule the idea of the resurrection in the very presence of the one whose own Resurrection would be the source of new life for all! How blind to the truth can people be?

Fairly blind, we could agree. We can call the Sadducees naïve, misguided and perhaps even malevolent in their intentions when it comes to their interaction with Jesus. But we cannot argue that they are unique in their failure to see and understand the truth. Not for their time, and not for ours.

Every waking hour we have gives us an opportunity to seek the truth: whether in direct prayerful conversation with Jesus, or in finding God in all things throughout the day in our environment. We may bring our weaknesses and doubts to the encounters, and as such be temporarily blinded to, or refuse to see, the truth before us. But our God, who *is not God of the dead but of the living*, is always there to be found. His desire for us to be in relationship with him, to believe in him and to have eternal life with him, is stronger than any barrier of disbelief that we can erect. But we have to be open to removing those barriers and seeing with the eyes of faith.

We have one thing in our favor that the Sadducees (as yet) did not: we know the resurrected Christ. In the presence of the one whose own Resurrection gives us new life, let us profess our faith and trust that God will never leave us blind to the truth.

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**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2017**

(Lec. 160)

- 1) Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17
- 2) 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28
- 3) Matthew 25:31-46

Gospel related: **CCC** 331, 544, 598, 671, 678, 679, 1033, 1034, 1038, 1373, 1397, 1503, 1825, 1932, 2443, 2447, 2449, 2831, 2463 **CSDC** 57, 58, 183, 265, 403

**OUR LORD  
JESUS CHRIST,  
KING OF THE  
UNIVERSE  
- SOLEMNITY**

FOCUS: We serve our king by serving each other.

Today's Solemnity always takes place on the last Sunday in Ordinary Time before the beginning of Advent and the start of a new liturgical year. In Advent, we prepare for the two comings of Christ – as a baby in Bethlehem, and his return as a king in glory. This celebration of Jesus' kingship prepares us for both comings of the Christ.

Though this feast exalts the royal and divine attributes of the Christ, Ezekiel prophesies the coming of a Messiah who will live humbly as a shepherd, focusing his efforts on seeking out the lost, the straying, the injured and sick: *I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered when it was cloudy and dark.* This shepherd promises a safe ground for pasture, and rest for the weary of his flock. Above all, Ezekiel suggests the personal concern and care the Lord will show for each of his lambs: *I myself will look after and tend my sheep.* This reading is very much in Jesus' mind centuries later when he evokes the same image in the Gospel – that of the shepherd separating the sheep from the goats.

At this point in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is soon to be led out to the cross. Before he goes, he draws our attention to his return in glory and the final judgment. With so little time left in his life, Jesus calls upon his disciples to use whatever time has been left to them, and to us, wisely and well – not out of self-interest, but rather to look after the needs of the least among us, knowing that whatsoever we do for one of these little ones, we do for him. We serve our king by serving each other.

Jesus is a king like no other. The only crown our king ever wore was made of thorns and brambles. As we conclude the season of Ordinary Time and move into Advent, let each of us make an accounting of our stewardship before the coming of our king. Have we been loyal subjects? In our prayers and daily living, do we treat Christ as a sovereign over us or as a servant who exists only to do our will? We pray with the coming of Advent that Jesus will lead us and guide us in the ways of service, helping us to show our love for God by how we love and serve one another, especially the least among us.

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Monday, November 27, 2017  
(Lec. 503)

- 1) Daniel 1:1-6, 8-20,
- 2) Luke 21:1-4

Gospel related: CCC 2544

MONDAY OF  
34<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Faithfulness and loyalty to God are rewarded.

Loyalty and faithfulness are powerful motivators. These motivations themselves tend to arise from something even more foundational, for example: a belief system, a philosophy, a sense of duty, or love. Our Scriptures today give us two scenarios where loyalty and faithfulness to God were of utmost importance to the individuals in the stories. More than just an ideal, this loyalty – and the foundation upon which it was built – brought great risk to those who held it. Yet they trusted in its worth, and were rewarded.

In today's reading from the Book of Daniel, we hear a story involving four young men: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Brought from Judah to Babylon to serve in King Nebuchadnezzar's court, they faced many changes: to their names, their education and their diet, for starters. It was the change in diet which Daniel resisted, for he *was resolved not to defile himself with the king's food or wine*.

Daniel's faithfulness, exhibited in his resistance to impure food and drink, could have cost him his life. But we know from the story that Daniel and his friends were able to refuse the Babylonian food and drink, and still thrive on what they *could* eat. God rewarded their faithfulness and loyalty – their insistence on putting God first above all things in their lives – with ten times more knowledge than all other members of the king's court.

In Luke's Gospel today, we hear the short, but powerful, story of the widow's coins. The treasury was the Temple's mechanism for collection and distribution of alms. It would have been unusual to see the widow placing her coins in the treasury because, first of all, donations to the Temple's treasury were usually not done in view of the public, and, second, the poor were the ones *receiving* from the Temple treasury, not contributing to it. Her status as a poor widow, and the public and visible way she upended the norms by making a contribution, give this story an element of faithfulness we may not have considered before.

All that the widow had for her livelihood she gave for the purpose of helping others. She risked her ability to pay for food, and other necessities, by her gift. She had a faithfulness and a loyalty to God who commanded her to love God, and to love her neighbor. She also trusted in God's promises to those who keep his commands. She exemplifies for us, in Luke's writings, the righteous poor who receive the Good News.

We know that the righteous receive the reward of heaven, and so she, like Daniel and the three other young men, put God first before all other things, confident that God rewards loyalty and faithfulness. Loyalty and faithfulness are not without risk, but the reward outweighs anything we might ever lose.

Tuesday, November 28, 2017  
(Lec. 504)

- 1) Daniel 2:31-45
- 2) Luke 21:5-11

TUESDAY OF  
34<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Only God's kingdom lasts forever.

The readings today remind us to take the long view. Kingdoms and governments, like all earthly powers, come and go. If we put our trust in human-made institutions, our security can be shaken easily. The good news is that we, as Catholic Christians, know there's an ultimate Authority. In fact, we celebrated the Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe this past Sunday.

Today's first reading is taken from the Book of Daniel. Earlier in the chapter, Nebuchadnezzar, a powerful pagan king, had had a dream that frightened him. He demanded that his advisors not only interpret the dream, but also tell him what the dream itself had been. His advisors answered that no one on earth could do that. Nevertheless, Daniel, an Israelite prisoner taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, prayed to God, and God revealed the mystery to Daniel, who interpreted the dream for the king.

All Nebuchadnezzar's power and all the wise men at his disposal could not interpret the dream. God, however, through Daniel, revealed its meaning. A massive statue of gold, silver, bronze and iron had feet of clay. This statue represented a succession of powerful kingdoms, all of which would be destroyed eventually. None had lasting permanence. Only God's kingdom would last forever.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is speaking of the Temple, which was considered one of the most impressive structures in the Roman Empire. Jesus, however, saw past the splendor of the man-made building and predicted its destruction. He then warned his disciples against misinterpreting events such as wars or natural disasters as being signs of the end times.

Has there ever been a time when there wasn't war, famine or natural disasters occurring somewhere on our planet? Times of peace and comfort, as well as times of hardship and challenge, come in all generations — and they all pass. This is true in our personal lives, too. From births, weddings and graduations to illness, job loss and death, who hasn't had their share of joy and pain in life?

As people of faith, we can be reassured. There is an ultimate, unchanging reality — that of God and his infinite love and mercy, which knows no bounds or limits. So in the ups and downs of life this day and always, let us resolve to keep our sights set upon the One who is in charge — not only of the universe — but of every breath we take. For this is where we find grace, strength and the hope to remain steadfast in faith and keep our feet firmly planted on the path of life.

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Wednesday, November 29, 2017  
(Lec. 505)

1) Daniel 5:1-6, 13-14,  
16-17, 23-28

2) Luke 21:12-19

Gospel related: CCC 675

WEDNESDAY OF  
34<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: We are called to be courageous, dedicated followers of Jesus.

Our first reading today is a story about Daniel. King Belshazzar was giving a large sumptuous banquet for his court. He decided to show off the expensive gold and silver drinking vessels his father had seized from the Temple in Jerusalem. Belshazzar used this as an opportunity to praise his false gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone. But then to his shock, amazement and terror, writing became apparent from human fingers on the plaster wall of his palace.

Daniel was summoned immediately, because Belshazzar had heard that Daniel possessed brilliant knowledge and extraordinary wisdom. He asked Daniel to read the writing on the wall, promising him the gifts of wealth and status in his kingdom. Daniel did not want the gifts, but he told the king exactly what the writing meant and from whom it appeared.

Daniel explained that the gods of this king were false, and that the true God sent the message — the God who held the king's life in his hands. He explained further that God wrote that the days of the kingdom were numbered, the wealth of the kingdom was fleeting, and that the kingdom would soon be divided.

In the Gospel today, Jesus predicts and speaks of the persecutions his followers would one day face after he had died on the cross, risen from the dead and ascended into heaven. He warns that his followers will be asked to give testimony, and promises wisdom to those who speak in his name. Jesus proclaims that persevering in faith and sharing the Gospel will secure their lives.

So, there we have it. Yes, the writing is on the wall. As followers of Jesus, we are invited to give witness and testimony to the truth. Daniel, because of his allegiance to God, was courageous in speaking God's word, decrying the theft of God's vessels from the holy Temple and denouncing the false gods. Jesus teaches that, we, too, are commanded and encouraged to speak in his name. We are called to live lives of faithful service in God's ways, by our gentle voice of humbly praising, acknowledging and thanking God in all that we do and say. Let's ask the Lord for help in that mission to be faithful witnesses in the name of Jesus.

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Thursday, November 30, 2017  
(Lec. 684)

1) Romans 10:9-18

2) Matthew 4:18-22

Gospel related: **CCC** 878

**SAINT ANDREW,  
APOSTLE  
- FEAST**

FOCUS: God has called you by name to be his disciple.

Simon and his brother Andrew were fishermen. Yet at Jesus' call, they immediately leave their nets and boat and follow him. Their nets and boat were their livelihood, their security. They were burning their bridges behind them. Why? If we could have asked them, I think they might have said something like this: "You would have to have known this man, Jesus. There was something about him that made it impossible to say no."

God still calls today. He called each one of us when we were still in our mothers' wombs. He calls us to walk with him, to be so full of his love that others will see the joy on our faces and want what we have. Christianity, it has been said, cannot be taught. It must be caught.

Perhaps you're thinking: "I could never do that." You're wrong. Here is a list that came in an e-mail, years ago, of some of the great people in the Bible. Every one of them had a reason for thinking God could not use them. So the next time you feel like God can't use you, remember:

"Noah was a drunk. Abraham was too old. Isaac was a daydreamer. Jacob was a liar. Leah was ugly. Joseph was abused by his brothers. Moses had a stuttering problem. Gideon was afraid. Sampson had long hair and was a womanizer. Rahab was a prostitute. Jeremiah and Timothy thought they were too young. David had an extra-marital affair and was a murderer. Elijah was suicidal. Isaiah thought himself unworthy. Jonah ran away from God's call. Naomi was a widow. Job went bankrupt. Martha was a perpetual worrier. The Samaritan woman who spoke with Jesus at the well was five-times divorced. Zacchaeus was too small. Peter denied Christ. The disciples fell asleep while praying. At Jesus' arrest, they all forsook him and fled. Paul was too religious. Timothy had an ulcer. And Lazarus was dead!"

So what's your excuse? Whatever it may be, God can still use you to your full potential. Besides, you aren't the message. You're only the messenger.

When you were born, you were crying, and everyone around you was smiling. Start today (if you haven't started already) living your life so that when you die, you're the only one smiling, and everyone around you is crying.

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