

NOVEMBER

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**YEAR B
WEEKDAYS II**

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2018

**ALL SAINTS
- SOLEMNITY**

(Lec. 667)

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

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

FOCUS: The Feast of All Saints reminds us of the connection that all believers share as part of the Body of Christ.

Today we celebrate the Feast of All Saints, a celebration that offers a glimpse of what awaits all who remain faithful to Christ. It is a chance to see *what love the Father has bestowed on us* because we are *called the children of God*.

On this day, we have the hope of unity, of wholeness. We find hope in the witness and example of those who have gone before us and are now in heaven – those who faced division in their communities, division in their families, even division in their own lives, but who persevered and who now stand as witnesses. They now stand with us in our own efforts.

We can find comfort in our union with these great saints – a union, not of geography (*my church* or *my city*) – but a union that transcends place. A union, not of time – *my lifetime* or *my generation* – but one that transcends time itself, for it reminds us that we are in union with the entire body of Christian believers, those who live here now, those who have gone before us and those who will come after us.

Each of the readings today tell us a little bit about this body of Christ, this union of Christian believers. They are *children of God*. They are, then, not separate members from different families, but brothers and sisters of one family.

They are the *multitude* – not from one place or time, but from every nation, every race, every people and every tongue.

They are the *blessed* – not blessed as the world bestows blessings. They are not the strong, the proud, the owner of great fortune or the powerful. No, they are the poor in spirit, the meek, the peacemakers, those who show mercy, the clean of heart. They are the *children of God*, united in their humility, their mercy, their pureness of heart.

Let our celebration today of these holy men and women remind us of our union in Christ, of our one baptism shared across multitudes of people. Let it remind us of our call to live and care for one another as brothers and sisters – as children of one God.

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Friday, November 2, 2018
(Lec. 668)

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

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

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

FOCUS: We are all one in the body of Christ.

Today the Church prays for all the faithful who, at death and though destined for heaven, are not yet prepared to enter into that joy. Yet they are also not deserving of total separation from God. These are the Holy Souls – those who are being purified/prepared for eternal life. They are being purged – hence the term purgatory – of all remaining imperfections. Today is a sobering reminder that heaven should never be taken for granted and that we need Christ, for he alone is the way to eternal life.

This knowledge should fill us with hope as it is another expression of divine mercy. In understanding God's will –that all share in his eternal life – we are compelled to pray ever more fervently that the Lord would hear our prayer and strengthen our hope. For Jesus tells us in today's Gospel, *Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me.* Jesus came to draw us to himself and to the Father, and he reminds us, *this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him [on] the last day.*

As hands are washed before eating, and feet are cleansed before entering sacred ground, so are souls purged of all remaining tint of the effects of sin – so as to enter heaven purified and completely holy.

Purgatory is really an encounter with the Lord, as Pope Benedict once described it: "This encounter with him, as it burns us, transforms us and frees us, allowing us to become fully ourselves ... the holy power of his love sears through us like a flame ... the way we live our lives is not immaterial, but our defilement does not stain us forever if we have at least continued to reach out towards Christ" (*Spes Salvi*, #47, 2007).

Let us then pray for all our beloved dead. We know that our prayers are beneficial because we are all one in the Body of Christ. And may these blessed souls in turn pray for us and our salvation, when they have taken their place in the fullness of God's presence.

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Saturday, November 3, 2018
(Lec. 484)

- 1) Philippians 1:18b-26
- 2) Luke 14:1, 7-11

SATURDAY OF
30TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.)

Saint Martin de Porres, Religious;
Saturday in honor of BVM)

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

FOCUS: Humility is required to gain a seat at the Lord's banquet.

The banquet scene in today's Gospel is something we can relate to in our society. There are proper places to sit for guests of honor. Etiquette dictates our seats at functions such as wedding receptions. If we are an invited guest and try to sit next to the bride or groom, we will be asked to find a seat at another table. Jesus uses places at the table in the Gospel not to teach etiquette to the Pharisees, but to present a bigger message about sharing in the banquet of the kingdom of heaven.

The Gospels tell us often about the Pharisees looking for ways to trap Jesus and discredit him. We see in the first verse today that people at the banquet were watching Jesus. In Saint Luke's words, they *were observing him carefully*. The parable about seating at a banquet is about humility, something the Pharisees are rarely accused of in the Gospels. The Lord's message is in the last line: *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted*. Jesus is telling us, through the Pharisees, that our seats at the eternal banquet will be earned through humility.

Saint Paul, throughout his writings, always speaks of his place in relationship to God. In today's first reading, we find him in a quandary, wondering whether his imprisonment would end in his death. He expresses an initial desire to die to be with Christ, but by the end of the reading shows a humility Jesus was hoping to see in the Pharisees. He concludes that he is likely to continue his evangelizing work for the Lord.

The most obvious message for us today is to substitute humility for pride in our lives. But how? By praying for it. Praying to recognize it, praying for the gift of it as virtue, and praying to be open to its challenges. Prayer, along with humility, will leave no room for pride, and allow us to have our rightful seat at the Lord's banquet. This is the banquet whose foretaste we share here.

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2018

(Lec. 152)

- 1) Deuteronomy 6:2-6
- 2) Hebrews 7:23-28
- 3) Mark 12:28b-34

Gospel related: **CCC** 575 **CSDC** 40, 112

**THIRTY-FIRST
SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: We are commanded first to love God with all that we are and then to love our neighbor as ourselves.

There is a lot of love in today's readings. In the first reading, Moses tells God's people to *love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength*. The second reading reminds us that Jesus gave himself as the perfect sacrifice for all of us – the ultimate sign of love. The responsorial psalm repeats, *I love you, Lord, my strength*. And in the Gospel, Jesus adds a new commandment, *Love your neighbor as yourself*.

God's love is unconditional. God does not expect us to be perfect in order to earn his love. He freely gives it in spite of our faults, our imperfections, weaknesses and sinfulness. But God commands that we do the same. He calls us to put him first in our lives, before our worldly goods, our ambitions and all that consumes our daily lives.

But for today, let's spend a few minutes giving some extra attention to that other commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves.

On the surface, this seems an easy message to understand and to practice in our daily lives, but deeper reflection challenges us to rethink this. *Love your neighbor as yourself* is not a *suggestion*; it is a *command*. To be true followers of Christ requires that we live out this command. The challenge comes when we answer the question, "Who is our neighbor?"

This is not a geographical question, but a theological one. Every human being is our neighbor, by virtue of being made in God's image. Because in the end, it comes down to this: "love the 'unlovable.'" Love those who are hard to love, those who have hurt us and those we just don't like very much. Clearly, loving is not always easy. It requires forgiveness. It demands putting aside judgments, and it forces us to reach beyond our own wants and needs to put others first. Sometimes, it is so hard that it requires grace and prayer, and God's guidance and intervention. But God's abundant strength empowers us, and he will give us all we need to love others, even when it is challenging and difficult.

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Monday, November 5, 2018
(Lec. 485)

- 1) Philippians 2:1-4
- 2) Luke 14:12-14

MONDAY OF
31ST WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Inviting others to the banquet of Christ is the mission of the Church.

In both our passages today – the first reading from Paul to the Philippians and the Gospel of Luke – we cannot miss the call to unity and caring for our brothers and sisters. It is love in its purest form, when we put others before ourselves and put our energy into caring for them. When we invite the most vulnerable into the life of the Church, we reflect what it means to be disciples of Christ, living and moving in the kingdom of God. Or as Paul says, we participate in the Spirit and become *united in heart*.

What does it look like to *do nothing out of selfishness*, as Paul tells us to do? How do we *regard others as more important than [ourselves]*? In our everyday life, what would it look like to look out for the interests of others? The answer will be different for each of us. This passage almost serves as an examination of conscience for us as we reflect on our own attitudes and behaviors. It is participating in the Spirit, having compassion and mercy, having the *same mind*, that will bring ultimate joy, according to Paul.

Paul's Letter to the Philippians fits perfectly with today's Gospel passage where Jesus offers an essential example of how caring for the interests of others looks. The metaphor of the invitation to the banquet challenges our thinking. Who invites strangers to their table, rather than just their friends? Who invites people who might require a little more from us than simply pulling up a chair and engaging in some dynamic conversation over dinner? Who seeks out those in the community and invites them to their table?

God does, that's who. And when we consider that the Eucharist is the greatest banquet of all, and that all are called to it, we cannot miss that we have been given immense grace; an immense gift. And it is one we are called to share. Status does not matter. Jesus is telling us that everyone is welcome. This is the heart of evangelization, the mission of the Church that continues today.

To act on the invitational message of Jesus requires a willingness to go outside our comfort zone and invite others to *his* banquet, to his Church, to his flock, and as Paul says, to look out for our brothers and sisters. May the sacrament we share today empower us to do just that.

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Tuesday, November 6, 2018
(Lec. 486)

- 1) Philippians 2:5-11
- 2) Luke 14:15-24

TUESDAY OF
31ST WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Our emptiness before God prepares us to receive the gift of God's abundant love.

Who wouldn't want to go to a party? Yet the invited guests in Jesus' parable all had something better to do. One bought a field, one wanted to check out his new oxen. They preferred to spend time with their possessions – which may or may not have been work-related. It's a bit more understandable that a newlywed wanted to be with his bride. Even so, couldn't they both have enjoyed the feast together? Surely the host would have made room for one more.

A banquet is an apt metaphor for God's heavenly kingdom. God not only nourishes us with what we need, but fills our hearts abundantly with his love. But to enjoy this love feast, we need to do more than say yes to the invitation. We need to show up and participate. We need to respond in love to God and to one another.

Christ freely offers to nourish us with his very self – body and blood, soul and divinity – at every Eucharist. Allowing that nourishment to transform us into disciples for the world is how we help build the kingdom into which we have been invited, and baptized.

Taking time to nourish ourselves in God's loving presence becomes a strong foundation for all of our relationships, and builds the virtue of humility. This is the same humility the ones who ended up participating in God's banquet had: the poor, the blind, the lame and strangers on the road – presumably including the homeless, vagrants and outsiders. They knew a good thing when they heard it. They were in need and had the humility to accept and appreciate a freely given gift.

Jesus emptied himself in surrender to his Father's loving care. Let's embrace our own emptiness. We may not be financially needy or physically disabled, but maybe we're in need of emotional comfort, crippled by fear or blinded by tunnel vision. We may not be drifters, but maybe we feel adrift without a sense of purpose. Maybe we feel like strangers in our own homes. If so, God is waiting to welcome us with open arms and offer us all the love our hearts can hold.

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Wednesday, November 7, 2018
(Lec. 487)

- 1) Philippians 2:12-18
- 2) Luke 14:25-33

Gospel related: **CCC** 1618, 2544

WEDNESDAY OF
31ST WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: The task the true disciple must bring to completion is to build the kingdom of God.

Strange words from Jesus that hating one's parents, siblings, spouse and children is a prerequisite for being a true disciple. Could our Lord Jesus Christ really be telling us to turn our backs on those we love the most in the world? On top of that, he appears to be demanding that his followers give up everything they own.

For the people of Jesus' time as well as ours, that seems an insurmountable burden. No family. No possessions. That is just a cross too heavy to bear. But is that the cross Jesus is talking about when he admonishes that every one of his followers must carry his or her own cross?

The parables in this passage from Luke's Gospel do not involve possession-less people. Just the opposite, in fact, since one is a builder calculating the expense of completing a tower, and one is a king determining the sufficiency of his troops for battle. It appears not to be the lack of material goods, then, that is important, but the necessity of reflection before action, the requirement to weigh the costs before undertaking a project so as to be able to see the task through to the very end.

The task of a disciple of Jesus is to build the kingdom, to help make visible the bounty of the Lord in the land of the living. Physical possessions are often very necessary to carry out that endeavor. If the physical possessions become an impediment to completing this task, however, the true disciple must be prepared to renounce them rather than fail to finish the Lord's work.

So, too, our loved ones – those to whom we are closest. If we begin using them as an excuse to not desire the good and to not work toward it, then we have to recalibrate our priorities. We must shift our focus to become full-hearted followers of Jesus. And if our concern for our own needs, our selfishness and our pride get in the way, those attitudes in ourselves must die as well.

Saint Paul reminds the Philippians to do the work, and to do it without grumbling or questioning, so as to shine in a world that puts possessions and personal desires above all else. A world that puts anything and everything above the most important task of being children of God: without blemish, able to complete the work of obtaining salvation and of dwelling forever in the house of the Lord.

Whatever exists in our lives that blocks us from doing that is indeed a burden too heavy to bear.

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Thursday, November 8, 2018
(Lec. 488)

- 1) Philippians 3:3-8a
- 2) Luke 15:1-10

Gospel related: **CCC** 545, 589, 1443, 1846

THURSDAY OF
31ST WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: All of heaven rejoices when sinners repent.

Today's Gospel is straightforward: heaven rejoices when a sinner repents. The lesson is clear: repent and remain in God.

If this is so straightforward and obvious a lesson, why did Jesus feel he needed to explain it by using a parable? And why does he use such outlandish examples? Would a shepherd really leave all his sheep to search for one? Would a woman really throw a party if she recovered one coin when she still had nine others?

The prophet Isaiah told us that God's ways are not our ways (Is 55:8-9). This Gospel illustrates that. Sin is a break in the relationship between God and the individual. His plan for us is to be with him forever. When we sin, we threaten that possibility. When we repent, we make it whole again. So when we value our relationship with God and choose what he would want over some temporary feeling of power, success or revenge, we can appreciate how that would be cause for all of heaven rejoicing.

The outsized examples and the use of a parable may be ways to help us stop and take special note of what this teaching is really about. It is about how the little things matter when it comes to our relationship with God. As we walk up to receive the Eucharist today, let us do a short examination of conscience and focus on the little things of our everyday lives. Let's repent for those times we have put our relationship with God in the background and put our own desires first. God understands and forgives us, leading the celebration in heaven over another sinner who has repented.

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Friday, November 9, 2018
(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 is present in both our sacred places of worship and in the assembly, the People of God.

The Church has set aside today as the Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica, the home church of the Bishop of Rome, the pope. This feast gives us the opportunity to reflect on the theological connection between the “temple of stones” and the living Church.

Paul refers to the Christians in Corinth as *God's building*, set aside and holy as a temple or church is holy. They are, in fact, *God's building* because the Holy Spirit dwells in each of them, just as the Spirit dwells in all of the baptized members of the Church. No wonder, then, that Paul calls the people *holy*, even with all of their faults and mistakes.

Jesus literally risks his life to defend the sanctity of the Temple in Jerusalem against those who have made God's house a *marketplace*. Even in his anger against the merchants and money-changers in the Temple, Jesus recalls the strong connection between house of worship and the worshipers, referring to himself as the *temple* that will be torn down and yet rise again in three days.

Jesus' death and resurrection, foretold that day in Jerusalem, is what makes us Church – the mystical body of Christ, bound by one baptism and nourished by his body and blood. Our bodies are temples, which literally house our Savior upon reception; we are holy houses for the Spirit of God in the world. And we come together in these holy and sanctified houses of worship, with the knowledge that this building, and each one of us, is a dwelling place of God.

So let us reverence our sacred spaces, constructed and furnished for the sole purpose of offering a place to worship God. And let us have respect for ourselves and one another who image the very God we worship.

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Saturday, November 10, 2018
(Lec. 490)

- 1) Philippians 4:10-19
- 2) Luke 16:9-15

SATURDAY OF
31ST WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Leo the Great,
Pope and Doctor
of the Church)

Gospel related: **CCC** 2424; **CSDC** 181, 453

FOCUS: To serve God with our whole heart requires giving and trust in the Lord.

The New Testament is littered with warnings against idolizing the false god of riches.

“Mammon” isn’t a word we use in everyday life, so it’s worth looking up. According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, mammon is “material wealth or possessions especially as having a debasing influence.” Mammon is referring to valuing wealth so much that it devalues us. It is replacing God with the idol of possessions. The Church does not teach that *being* rich is sinful, but that the love of money is the root of all evil.

In the first reading, Saint Paul gives us a concrete example of how to worship God over mammon. He thanks the Philippians for their gift – one that, presumably, Saint Paul did not ask for, since he talks about being self-sufficient. We learn that the Church in Philippi has sent him aid multiple times, even when no other church was doing so. Saint Paul’s response to their generosity is telling: *I am eager for the profit that accrues to your account ... My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

He uses the language of a business transaction, but we know it is more than that, as evidenced by his use of the word *sacrifice*. And that is the key to making sure we do not idolize wealth: by being willing to give it away.

Saint Paul also tells us that he has experience living in different circumstances, both abundant and humble. His strength, he says, comes from Christ. His trust in the Lord to give him what he needs allows him to be content no matter his circumstances. That is the message he shares with the Philippians, and that is the message he shares with us.

Today, let us ask God to show us where we are clinging to serving mammon, and pray he help set us free to more fully serve him. The Lord is the only master we want to serve. We pray also that we, like Saint Paul, can practice contentment in whatever state of life we are in, and that we may live generously trusting in God, like the Philippians.

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2018

(Lec. 155)

- 1) 1 Kings 17:10-16
- 2) Hebrews 9:24-28
- 3) Mark 12:38-44 or
12:41-44

Gospel related: **CCC** 678, 2444

**THIRTY-SECOND
SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: In Thanksgiving we respond to the Lord, who sacrificed his Son so that sin may be taken away.

When we gather together around the table of the Lord, we come to say “Thank you” to the One who cares for us. “Thank you” for the many blessings that we are blessed to receive. “Thank you” for the gift of our lives. Perhaps even “Thank you” for the sufferings that may stand before us. The word “Eucharist” itself means “Thank you.” It is right and just to give thanks to the One who has created us, has redeemed us and makes us holy. The One who sacrificed himself completely so that sin and death would be overcome.

In the first part of today’s Gospel, Jesus warns the crowd to beware of the religious leaders who liked to be held in great esteem, at the expense of the widows. They demonstrated piety and accepted honors not accorded to others. But they did not really do anything for the community. They did not care for those who were entrusted to them.

Contrast this with the widow whom Jesus points out: she contributed to the synagogue treasury from her want; she gave her whole livelihood in order to ensure that others within her community might have something. And while Jesus does not ask this question, we might: which of these two examples tells us something essential about who God is? Clearly the widow.

God is like that widow in his care for us: he holds absolutely nothing back. He gives us everything he has, and is. Including himself. As the widow sacrificed, so Jesus sacrificed his very life for the sake of the world. And the Eucharist we share is our participation in this salvation, and our thanksgiving for it.

It is not a passive thanksgiving, however. And perhaps this is a message we can take from the Gospel today. Formed and transformed by the Eucharist, it is a person of faith who sees that God’s justice is sorely needed in this world. In the psalms, the Lord gives sight to the blind, cares for the oppressed, protects strangers and sustains widows. As *Domus Dei*, that is, the House of God, the Church’s mission is to see that God’s house is in order by seeing to it that justice is made manifest in this world.

This is us. We, the Church, give thanks to God for his generous gifts by sharing the good news of salvation and by giving our time, talents and treasure so that no one is left uncared for – that no one is left without.

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Monday, November 12, 2018
(Lec. 491)

- 1) Titus 1:1-9
- 2) Luke 17:1-6

MONDAY OF
32ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM)

Saint Josaphat, Bishop and Martyr)

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

FOCUS: Lord, increase our faith.

Our readings today exhort believers to be consciously aware of our behavior. Our actions and reactions have an enormous effect, negatively or positively, upon people around us and upon those we encounter. The first reading from Titus focuses on the call of presbyters. Paul's exhortation is that those who are ordained must be people of good character and temperance. But that admonition isn't only for priests. It is for all of us. Our priestly role as conformed to Christ by our baptism means we are called to sanctify the world from within. So our good character and virtue are important as well.

Each one of us has influence upon others, and it should be for good, not ill. To cause someone to sin is unconscionable. In the Gospel today, we hear Jesus tell his disciples, *It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea than to cause one of these little ones to sin.*

But there is hope. Jesus isn't going to command us to do something without giving us the tools and strength to do it. Through grace and sacrament, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we can have the virtues of which Paul speaks: being believers; *not accused of licentiousness or [of being] rebellious ... blameless, not arrogant, not irritable, not a drunkard, not aggressive, not greedy for sordid gain, but hospitable, a lover of goodness, temperate, just, holy, and self-controlled.*

With these virtues, not only can we refrain from sin and causing others to sin, we can forgive those who sin against us. Jesus tells us if our brother or sister sins and asks for forgiveness, we are to forgive him or her. And we are to do so over and over and over again many times. When this is difficult, we can ask, as did the disciples, *Increase our faith*, and he will. For God will always give us the strength to follow his path.

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Tuesday, November 13, 2018
(Lec. 492)

- 1) Titus 2:1-8, 11-14
- 2) Luke 17:7-10

TUESDAY OF
32ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM)

USA: Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini,
Virgin)

FOCUS: We fulfill an obligation of discipleship when we engender a servant's heart.

Our Gospel reminds us that nothing is owed to us. We need to work hard and serve others not for recognition or reward, but because it is what we are called to do. God's generosity to us is unmerited on our part: he gives because he loves us, not because we "earn" it. Our response to that generosity, is a loving attitude of service to the One who has given us everything.

Jesus delivers the words of today's Gospel after the Apostles ask him to increase their faith. He tells them to adopt the attitude of an unprofitable servant, whose duty is to labor for the master. In a similar manner, disciples serve the Lord by doing what is commanded.

To live as servants involves humility. It's a transformation of our hearts to find ways to serve others and a renouncing of selfish desires. It's authentic conversion that leads us to salvation.

Our first reading tells us to be *eager to do what is good*: to reject godless ways and live temperately, justly and devoutly. Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, whose memorial we celebrate today, was eager to do good despite obstacles she encountered. She is quoted as saying, "I will go anywhere and do anything in order to communicate the love of Jesus to those who do not know Him or have forgotten Him." This saint served immigrants, the poor, abandoned, uneducated and sick by founding orphanages, schools and hospitals around the world. In 1917, she died at one of her hospitals in Chicago.

While Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini was an extraordinary servant of God, we find the ultimate model in Christ – the Servant King, obedient to God through his sacrifice for all mankind. As we prepare to unite ourselves to Christ through the Eucharist, let us contemplate the ways we have been called to serve "the poor and the suffering, in whom the Church recognizes the image of her poor and suffering founder" (CCC 786). This is discipleship with a servant's heart.

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Wednesday, November 14, 2018
(Lec. 493)

- 1) Titus 3:1-7
- 2) Luke 17:11-19

Gospel related: **CCC** 586, 2463

WEDNESDAY OF
32ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Let us approach the table of our Lord with gratitude.

Gratitude is an extremely important element to our relationship with God. While it is important to be grateful for the gifts God has given us in life, the most important gift of all is the salvation we have received from Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The grace and mercy given to us by God through Christ is so profound that it must compel a complete transformation of our conduct and attitude.

Paul clearly is making this point in his epistle to Titus. The saving grace from Christ realized by us in baptism allows for the complete remission of our sins and the restoration of our relationship with God. This is something we cannot achieve by our merits. No deed of any person could ever be so meritorious as to equal the effect of the sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, knowing the depth of forgiveness that we have received, we must in turn show this mercy to others. Refusing to forgive others can no longer be abided because the trespass committed against us is a small matter compared to the sins we have been forgiven in Christ. In this way, our gratitude to God acts in a transformative way in how we treat one another.

This transformative aspect can be seen in today's Gospel, where Jesus cleanses the ten lepers. The one who returned was *glorifying God in a loud voice*, and fell at the feet of Jesus to thank him. Jesus could see that the miracle he performed had not only healed him physically, but had changed him internally. That man likely continued his life living in a spirit of gratitude for the mercy God had shown him. Whatever his character might have been before, it was entirely transformed in that moment.

We are like the lepers who were cured. Before we were baptized, we were spiritual lepers. We had a disease for which there is no apparent cure, and had been condemned to an eternity apart from God. The sacrifice of Christ was the miracle that cleansed us of our sickness and restored the relationship with God which was lost through original sin. Today we have a choice in how we respond: let us be like the one who returned to Christ with a heart fully permeated with gratitude – with a spirit of thankfulness so strong that we allow it to transform us in how we relate to God and to one another. Let us approach the table of our Lord with gratitude, and leave here with it in our hearts.

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Thursday, November 15, 2018
(Lec. 494)

- 1) Philemon 7-20
- 2) Luke 17:20-25

THURSDAY OF
32ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Albert the Great,
Bishop and Doctor of the Church)

Gospel related: **CCC** 2463

FOCUS: Bringing about the kingdom of God on earth is hard work, but it is worth it.

Saint Paul's Letter to Philemon is the third shortest book in the Bible with 335 words. The largest portion of those words makes up our first reading today. Paul, now an old man writing from prison, implores Philemon to treat Onesimus as his brother. He tells Philemon that this is something he should want to do, not have to do. This is good advice for us, too. True Christian freedom is following Jesus' way because we want to, not because it is something we think we have to do.

For example, can we remember when the light bulb went on inside our heads – the day we realized in our youthfulness that pitching in with things around our home made sense? When we all worked together, life at home was pretty good; when we didn't, not so much. When we, our siblings and parents did things because we wanted to, not because we had to, we were living Saint Paul's advice to good old Philemon.

It was on those special days we experienced harmony. It was elusive, but it was there and we had to work to make it happen. But we were glad to do it. It felt good.

Jesus speaks of the elusiveness of the kingdom of God. Just when we think we grasp and understand it, it eludes us. It takes work, but it, too, is worth the effort. Seeking out the kingdom of God here on earth; working toward the kingdom of God here on earth is work, hard work, but isn't it worth it?

Issues such as poverty, homelessness, hunger and disease exist. We cannot pray them away. Rather, our prayer is where we gain insight into how to make changes that will in turn reduce and eventually eliminate such harshness. It is hard work. It can be quite elusive at times. Yet, God has given us all the talents – all the blessings – we need to bring about the kingdom of God here on earth. There is immense freedom in that – knowing that God has provided the way, we need only to follow.

God freely chose us because he loves us. When we freely choose God in return, out of want, love and desire – and not because “we have to” – we experience harmony, and the peace that Christ desires for us. It makes the hard work of bringing about the kingdom that much sweeter, because God's desire and our desire are one. Let us pray that for each one of us, it may always be so.

* * *

Friday, November 16, 2018
(Lec. 495)

- 1) 2 John 4-9
- 2) Luke 17:26-37

FRIDAY OF
32ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Margaret of Scotland;
Saint Gertrude, Virgin)

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

FOCUS: *Remain in the teaching of the Christ.*

At the heart of the Gospel reading today, Jesus offers a strong message to his disciples. They will not know when the Son of Man will be revealed, but they need to be ready. Just as their ancestors were surprised by devastation and destruction, so will the coming of the Son of Man be the same for them. Like Noah and Lot, they will be eating and drinking, working and living their normal lives, when it will arrive unexpectedly. They cannot know the day or the hour.

But how can we be ready for the coming of the Son of Man, or anything, when we don't know when it will happen? The reading we heard today from the letter from Saint John to his community provides the guidance we need. Wasting our time trying to guess or worrying about it won't help. But we can be ready. We need only to *walk according to his commandments*; we need to *love one another*.

In the daily demands of living, it is easy to become so involved in completing and achieving and succeeding that we forget to look around to see how we can serve one another. But it is in the ordinary, everyday events of life that we can help make the kingdom of God present by adhering to John's words: *remain in the teaching of the Christ*. These things Christ taught: care for each other, the poor and the sick; reach out to forgive one another; share the Good News of Jesus with others in our words and deeds. This is how we make the kingdom present.

When the kingdom is present, we do not need to know or worry about when our end will come. By walking in the law of the Lord, we will be ready – we can leave everything behind – and, as the Gospel acclamation proclaims today, *stand erect and raise [our] heads because [our] redemption is at hand*.

* * *

Saturday, November 17, 2018
(Lec. 496)

- 1) 3 John 5-8
- 2) Luke 18:1-8

SATURDAY OF
32ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Religious)

Gospel related: **CCC** 675, 2098, 2573, 2613

FOCUS: Persistent prayer is a hallmark of faith.

Prayer is one of the most valuable gifts God gives us. Today's Gospel reminds us that prayer isn't reserved for saints and prophets. We all need to pray without becoming weary.

Jesus uses the parable of a persistent widow to help the disciples realize the power of unceasing prayer. The widow's constant urging convinces the judge to render the just decision she requests. Jesus contrasts the dishonest judge to God. He asks, *Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night?* Then, he assures us that the Lord will see to it *that justice is done for them speedily.*

Taking a second look at this parable, we discover even deeper truths about prayer. We realize prayer isn't initiated by us. Rather, it's our response to "the living and true God tirelessly call[ing] each person" (CCC 2567), much like the persistent widow calling to the judge.

We also realize that prayer doesn't change God. His constant urging changes us, like the dishonest judge who was moved by the widow's persistence. Jesus says *whatever you did for these least brothers of mine, you did for me* (Mt 25:40). The widow would have ranked low in society, and in the end, the judge shows her charity just as the Lord opens our hearts to doing his will.

Prayer can be a battle. It's easy to get distracted. Even worse, our faith can be shaken when prayer seems ineffective. During these times, we need to trust that God will answer our prayers, although perhaps not at the time or in the way we expect.

For it is through prayer that we find one way in which we can be *co-workers in the truth*, as the letter from John exhorts us. Today is the memorial of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. As a princess, she performed acts of mercy and used her riches to help her people. A co-worker in the truth, Saint Elizabeth was praised by Pope Benedict XVI as a "model for those in authority."

Feel the Lord calling you to prayer – urging you to become a co-worker in the truth. It's through prayer that we grow in faith, hope and love. It's through prayer the Lord finds faith on earth.

* * *

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2018

(Lec. 158)

- 1) Daniel 12:1-3
- 2) Hebrews 10:11-14, 18
- 3) Mark 13:24-32

Gospel related: **CCC** 474, 673

**THIRTY-THIRD
SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: By his cross, Jesus has redeemed the world.

As we draw near the end of the liturgical year, we notice that the readings at Mass seem to focus on events that will occur at the end of time.

In our first reading today, written at the time of the Babylonian Exile, more than five hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Daniel speaks of salvation and damnation. In a time of war and enslavement, Daniel's vision spoke of the ultimate triumph of good over evil, and light over darkness – a feat we know to be accomplished in and by Jesus Christ, both on earth and in heaven.

Similarly, Jesus in Mark's Gospel refers to the end of time when the Son of Man comes *in the clouds with great power and glory*. *Of that day or hour, no one knows*, Jesus said. However, with Jesus' image of the sprouting leaves on the fig tree, his very presence in the world was a powerful sign that the Day of the Lord is always at hand, summoning us to live in right relationship with God and each other. Perhaps if we knew the day of our death or the moment of Christ's return, we might procrastinate and delay living the life of faith and throwing off the old ways of sin. Jesus has left us instead in a healthy state of suspense, where the anticipation of his return suggests that we should be living the corporal and spiritual works of mercy every day, so that we might be found prepared upon his return.

The Letter to the Hebrews captures these mysteries perfectly, reminding us how in the Mass, we see memorialized the one offering by which Christ *has made perfect those who are being consecrated*. As we prepare to celebrate the end of the liturgical year next Sunday, and the beginning of a new one with the coming Advent Season, let us be mindful that *heaven and earth will pass away* but the saving words of the Lord will endure forever.

* * *

Monday, November 19, 2018
(Lec. 497)

- 1) Revelation 1:1-4; 2:1-5
- 2) Luke 18:35-43

MONDAY OF
33RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: All who call upon the Lord are blessed with sufficient grace.

Today's first reading continues a theme from yesterday's Gospel, pondering visions and proverbs relating to the coming – and also the return – of the Son of Man. Even more important, the readings today and for the next few days feature story after story portraying God's ability to act through those who are willing to receive his grace in preparation for his return.

We begin today with the opening passages of the Book of Revelation, one of the most difficult books in the Bible to understand because of its unfamiliar writing style and its symbolic imagery. Yet what an appropriate reading for these final days of the liturgical year, when we are reminded that *the appointed time is near*.

The writer of Revelation first proposes a beatitude, or blessing, upon *those who listen* to God and heed what is written. It is a very personal, even intimate, passage. *I know your works, your labor, and your endurance*, says the voice of God, noting and acknowledging all that we have suffered in God's name – and commending us for not growing weary, not giving up.

And yet, the message challenges us, it is not enough to simply go through the motions, no matter what we have endured or accomplished, if, ultimately, we *have lost the love* – that passionate falling-in-love with the Lord that marked the beginning of our walk with him. The passion required of us must be nothing less than genuine love. The blind man, confidently yelling for Jesus, symbolically portrays this in today's Gospel. Later this week, we will hear the same passion in Zacchaeus, a grown man climbing a sycamore tree just to reach Jesus. All who call upon the Lord are blessed with sufficient grace – and all things work together in preparation for the coming of the King and his kingdom.

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Tuesday, November 20, 2018
(Lec. 498)

- 1) Revelation 3:1-6, 14-22
- 2) Luke 19:1-10

Gospel related: **CCC** 549, 1443, 2412, 2712

TUESDAY OF
33RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Jesus calls each of us by name, and waits for us to respond to him with a sincere heart.

In the first reading, we hear the words that John is to use in letters to two of the early Churches. They are words of praise, but also words that point out areas in which they need to improve: the Church members have lost their fervor and are no longer on fire for the Lord. The people are urged to remember how they once were, and to strive to renew their commitment to Jesus and his mission of salvation.

The Gospel also contains a message of commitment and passion. Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector in Jericho, had a reputation as a harsh man, lining his own pockets with the collections he made. He also was seen as a traitor, working for the Roman rulers and against his own people.

But Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus changes him. There is a total change of heart. The fire has been lit in Zacchaeus and the sinful part of his heart has been burned away, leaving the good part to flourish.

The same thing can happen to each one of us. Just as Jesus did with Zacchaeus, he calls each of us by name. He invites himself into our lives and our homes. If we open ourselves to him, if we choose to respond to him with a sincere heart, we can catch that fire, too.

* * *

Wednesday, November 21, 2018
(Lec. 499)

- 1) Revelation 4:1-11
- 2) Luke 19:11-28

WEDNESDAY OF
33RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
The Presentation of the
Blessed Virgin Mary)

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

FOCUS: Whether in heaven or on earth, we are called to be faithful citizens and servants.

Today's readings give us a glimpse of citizenship in heaven and a challenge to live out our call as Christians – as citizens of earth – diligently and humbly during our journey to heaven.

The Book of Revelation gives us a glorious vision of angels and saints gathered around God's throne in humble adoration. While giving constant glory to God, the elders cast their own crowns to God, their Creator. Clearly, these citizens of heaven owe their very existence and any authority they may have to God, and humbly acknowledge their complete dependence and God's goodness.

Perhaps this vision can inspire us Christians as we follow our own call to serve Jesus, our King. In Jesus' parable, the servants of the would-be king are given gold coins to trade. The servants are rewarded whether they return five or ten gold coins. Only the one who hides his gifts, who is too afraid to invest what he was given, is punished.

Jesus, our King, is demanding in that he expects us to be faithful to our call to use whatever gifts or opportunities we have for the sake of advancing his Gospel, his kingdom. At the same time, we are to be mindful of the needs of all around us and to respond in any way we can that befits our state in life. We are called to do our part, whether we have special gifts that earn the proverbial ten coins of the parable, or a smaller number. Knowing these were gifts given to us for the sake of others, we can be bold in using them, with the knowledge that we have the strength and support of Jesus to back us in these efforts. Jesus does not want false humility from his followers and servants – he expects the true humility of knowing that we have certain gifts that can benefit others around us, and that he will give us the strength and wisdom to use them.

As we strive to be diligent citizens on earth – on the way to citizenship in heaven – we can look to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth, as our guide and inspiration. Today we celebrate Mary's presentation, when her parents dedicated her to God. We were also dedicated to God at our baptism. Let us ask Mary, our Queen and Mother, to give us generous and courageous hearts, and to use the talents and opportunities given to us by God to build up the kingdom of God here on earth, on our way to heaven.

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NOTE: Or for Thanksgiving Day in the United States of America, any readings from the *Lectionary for Ritual Masses* (vol. IV), the Mass: "In Thanksgiving to God," nos. 943-947).

Thursday, November 22, 2018

(Lec. 500)

1) Revelation 5:1-10

2) Luke 19:41-44

THURSDAY OF
33RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Cecilia,
Virgin and Martyr)

Gospel related: **CCC** 558

FOCUS: Jesus comes to bring peace and lead the people forward.

With such a short text for our Gospel reading today, it can be helpful to look at the whole chapter from the Gospel of Luke, or at least the sections which bracket today's reading. Right before we hear of Jesus' lament for the city of Jerusalem, we hear of his entry into Jerusalem, the traditional Palm Sunday reading. Luke's account is sandwiched between a parable and Jesus' cleansing of the Temple. Even as Jesus prepares to enter into the final stage of his ministry, he is still very much at work teaching and preaching.

This lament for Jerusalem is found only in Luke. *As Jesus drew near Jerusalem, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If this day you only knew what makes for peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes."* The evangelist calls our attention to these words of Jesus, and we'd do well to heed them. Jesus comes to bring peace and lead the people forward. By not accepting Jesus – he who mediates peace for the world – Jerusalem lacks peace and becomes the victim of destruction. The footnote in the Bible tells us, "Luke may be describing the actual disaster that befell Jerusalem in A.D. 70 when it was destroyed by the Romans during the First Revolt."

Luke's inclusion of this historical event highlights something unique about this Gospel account. The Gospel of Luke explores the events of Jesus' life and puts them into their larger historical context. The events of Jesus' life, even the major ones such as his entry into Jerusalem, took place at a set time and place. Luke shares the broader context of what's happening in the world around Jesus. The events of Jesus' life affect the rest of the world, not just those immediately around Jesus.

The evangelist seeks to expand the daily concerns of the Christian community. Although Luke still believes the Second Coming to be a reality, he is more concerned with presenting the words and deeds of Jesus as guidelines for disciples now. In Jesus, we find the ideal model of Christian life and piety. Jesus is the example for all of us to follow and model our lives upon. All of this fits with Luke's Gospel as being the Gospel for the Gentiles: that is, sharing the Good News with all people, not just the Jewish communities. God's salvation is meant for all – and this is the message we are commanded to share. So let the Word we hear today, and the sacrament we encounter, give us the tenacity and courage of Luke – that the world may find peace.

* * *

Friday, November 23, 2018
(Lec. 501)

- 1) Revelation 10:8-11
- 2) Luke 19:45-48

FRIDAY OF
33RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.)

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

FOCUS: Making time for the Lord in prayer will help us persevere through the trial of the cross.

The Book of Revelation can seem somewhat strange to us, as it is a style of writing we are not all used to hearing. In fact, we may stay away from it because of all the end-of-the-world predictions that have been made in its name. But when we stay away, we miss its powerful message of Christ's final victory, a message that offers great hope in our times of trial and suffering when all seems lost.

In the passage we heard today, John swallows a small scroll. Strange thing to do. Adding to the strangeness, the scroll is said to taste sweet but was also sour. The scroll, of course, contains words. What words in this case? The promise of victory made to all Christ's followers – sweet words to live by, wonderful promise to hold on to. But what must we all experience before that glory? The cross – including its trials and sufferings.

And that is our challenge: to live through the cross. If only we could jump right into the Resurrection and skip the hard part. But the cross comes to all of us. What sustains us through it? What helps us persevere in faith with the hope of the glory ahead?

The Gospel gives us insight into this question. The Temple area had become a place of commerce, a place for business. Jesus enters and clears out all these temporal activities and restores the space as a place of prayer and teaching, and all the people *were hanging on his words*. Like that Temple area, our hearts can get crowded with daily worries and responsibilities: bills, work, chores, caring for loved ones. And important as they are, these daily concerns can seem more important than prayer, and leave little time for encountering the Lord and listening to his words.

As we gather at the table where we celebrate the Lord's paschal mystery – his passing through the cross into the glory of the Resurrection – let us humbly ask the Lord to “drive out” all those things that keep us from truly *hanging on his words* – that we might experience his peace now and persevere through the trials that will come.

* * *

Saturday, November 24, 2018
(Lec. 502)

- 1) Revelation 11:4-12
- 2) Luke 20:27-40

SATURDAY OF
33RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM

Saint Andrew Dũng-Lạc, Priest,
and Companions, Martyrs)

Gospel related: **CCC** 330, 575, **CSDC** 193, 379, 491

FOCUS: Jesus teaches about resurrection by proclaiming that the Lord is God of the Living, not of the dead.

After the three and a half days, a breath of life from God entered them. When they stood on their feet, great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven say to them, "Come up here." Our first reading from Revelation, describing the suffering and then ultimate glory of martyrs, is in line with November's theme of the end times and in reflecting on what happens to us after death.

So it is in the Gospel. The Sadducees, who did not believe in resurrection, were trying to trap Jesus with their little quiz. Jesus deftly handles their questions and tiptoes past their trap. While they no longer challenged him publicly, Jesus would, as we know, ultimately lay down his life due to the political forces among both Roman and Jewish leadership, such as these teachers who did not approve of Jesus' message.

Today the Church memorializes Saint Andrew Dũng-Lạc and companions, who were martyrs. It is estimated that more than 300,000 Christians have been martyred in Vietnam since Christianity's arrival in the 1600s. For these hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese martyrs, there was much more at stake in their persecution than their own livelihood. Their families, their histories and their futures were threatened. And yet these witnesses of devotion to God laid down their very lives to proclaim Jesus as Lord.

In 1988, Pope Saint John Paul II canonized 117 of these Vietnamese martyrs, whom we celebrate today. During the canonization Mass, he called upon them saying, "Vietnamese martyrs! Witnesses of Christ's victory over death! Witnesses to man's vocation to immortality ... As you have participated in his suffering and his cross, so you have a part in the salvation of the world. Your harvest endures in joy!"

There will be end times for us, too – for our earthly life here, and at the final judgment. As we remember these courageous witnesses of faith, may we draw inspiration and courage of our own so we, too, may hear a voice from heaven calling us to come up. That we, too, may have a harvest enduring in joy. Saint Andrew Dũng-Lạc and Companions, pray for us!

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2018

(Lec. 161)

- 1) Daniel 7:13-14
- 2) Revelation 1:5-8
- 3) John 18:33b-37

Gospel related: **CCC** 217, 549, 559, 600, 2471

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

FOCUS: Jesus Christ is a King unlike any other. In his kingship, Jesus offers us an example of how to live.

When we think of royalty, what may come to mind most quickly is the British royal family. There has been much coverage of that family through the years. Often we may have thoughts of a glamorous life of ease and luxury. Over time, though, we have come to see them as a sometimes dysfunctional family that can be painfully, woefully human. This does not seem to be the kind of King we celebrate in Jesus.

As a nation that fought a revolution to throw off the reign of an unjust tyrant, our own kind of “royalty” can disappoint, too. Presidents, politicians, great athletes and stars of stage and screen can too easily let us down. We hope for them to show us an image of a better way to be as people, yet they often let us down because we see their all-too-human side.

As we celebrate this Solemnity of Christ the King, it is apparent that we need a different image of kingship. We should look to the ancient image of a king to better understand what this solemnity says about Jesus, and what it entails for us as members of the kingdom of God.

The ancient ideal of kingship meant that a king was one who was faced with making difficult decisions with wisdom, mercy and justice. Ancient kings were meant to live lives in service to their people, being willing to set a faith-filled and servant-like example. Kings were meant to serve as peacemakers, and were to be willing to give their lives in service to their people. They were called to live holy lives, and to lay down their lives for their people if necessary.

This ancient image of the king helps us to better understand Jesus Christ, the King. He is the one who offers us an example of living to emulate in our daily lives. He is the one who seeks to bring peace into the midst of conflict. His wisdom, mercy and justice are a pattern for our own deliberations and actions. He is willing to offer us life by laying down his life for us on the cross.

As the best of Kings, Jesus teaches us by his example that true kingship is not about glamour, power or wealth. It is about service. As our King, and as the example and model for our daily living, Jesus shows us by his life that we are called to humble, loving service. Our King shows us that we are to be merciful, just and truthful, willing to bring God’s peace to challenging situations. Like Christ, our King, we are called to lay down our lives so that others may live.

This is the kind of kingship into which each of us has been baptized. This sort of kingship offers a vision of a new heaven and new earth. It also demonstrates that we, like Jesus, must be willing to stand in tatters before the powers of the world, ready to offer our lives in pursuit of the kingdom of God.

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Monday, November 26, 2018
(Lec. 503)

- 1) Revelation 14:1-3, 4b-5
- 2) Luke 21:1-4

Gospel related: **CCC** 2544

MONDAY OF
34TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: In the poor widow, Jesus finds true faith.

Care for the poor is a basic Christian responsibility. We believe that all people are created in the image and likeness of God, and all life is sacred and deserving of dignity. This belief shapes our moral actions. It calls us out of ourselves to a commitment to all around us.

In today's Gospel, Jesus holds up an example of the poor woman as a model of how to care for others. She sacrifices what she has, so that others may have *something*. The rich in this story give from their excess, likely having little impact on their own lives. Jesus says, *I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood*. She offers her whole livelihood. In this woman very few noticed, he finds true faith and a model to uphold.

What can we learn from her? Why does the evangelist include this little scene? The widow shows us what it means to have faith in God. She understands that all she has is a gift from God, and meant to be shared as gift for others. Nothing comes before her faith and commitment to God. In her sacrifice, she comes to appreciate even more what she does have, and develops greater empathy for those who have none. She offers all she has, her livelihood, to make her offering and honor God. She trusts that God will provide.

Let us pray for the grace to follow this widow's example. To place God, the source and reason we even have a life and a livelihood, at the center of our being. To honor God through a livelihood directed toward holiness, rather than one with a temporal focus. And may the Lord find in us, too, a true faith and model to uphold.

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Tuesday, November 27, 2018
(Lec. 504)

- 1) Revelation 14:14-19
- 2) Luke 21:5-11

TUESDAY OF
34TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: *Remain faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

For all of the early Christian communities, there was a sense that the “end times” – the Second Coming of the Son of Man and the final judgment of the world – was to happen soon. Therefore, it would be especially important to hear the Gospel and follow Jesus, and to share the message far and wide with all people. This certainly comes through in our readings today.

Luke’s audience, and his community, was mostly Gentile (those not originally claimed by God under the covenant with Abraham). This is a people under persecution and facing great challenges in living a life of discipleship under secular rule. Writing after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD had taken place, Luke is demonstrating in today’s Gospel passage not just the saving mission of Jesus Christ, but his prophetic power. Jesus says, *See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, “I am he,” and “The time has come.” Do not follow them!* In presenting this encounter with Jesus, Luke is ensuring that those who hear this message understand that it is only Jesus who is the Way. They need not fear or be swayed from the message, no matter what events befall them.

John’s vision in Revelation is of parallel consequence: he sees a harvest whereby those who have followed Jesus are gathered unto God himself, while the ungodly are cast into doom. John’s audience would also have been struggling under Roman rule, and suffering post-destruction of the Temple. And despite the somewhat graphic nature of the vision, the message is still one of hope: in the end, those who have remained with Jesus will flourish with him in eternity.

Two thousand years later, the Second Coming has not taken place. Bad things continue to happen. Wars continue to break out, epidemics occur, earthquakes shake the earth, apartments catch fire, churches and temples crumble. Preachers still come along in every generation to tell us the end is near.

Yet, also two thousand years later, the promise of salvation has *not* changed; the commandments have not changed; the way to eternal life has not changed. They may not always be easy, but they are simple: love one another, and remain in the Lord. As our Gospel acclamation says today, *Remain faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

So let us pray for perseverance and for one another – to be ever open to God’s invitation to us. And when the Son of Man comes, may we be in his harvest.

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Wednesday, November 28, 2018
(Lec. 505)

- 1) Revelation 15:1-4
- 2) Luke 21:12-19

Gospel related: **CCC 675**

WEDNESDAY OF
34TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: By your perseverance you will secure your lives.

Today's Gospel is about persecution, but it isn't a message of fear. It's one of hope. Trials and persecution are inevitable, yet we mustn't worry. When our time comes, we can trust that we will be blessed with the wisdom to deliver testimony that cannot be resisted or refuted. We must remain strong and not let fear or anger toward those who persecute us get in the way of bearing witness to the truth. Perseverance will secure our lives.

Even if we are not formally persecuted for our faith, each of us will be tried during our pilgrimage here on earth (CCC 675). It could be a colleague challenging our faith, or a relative questioning why we follow Christ. Jesus wants us to use these encounters to give our testimony.

Knowledge of the Bible and religion can equip us for these times, but a personal story about how the Gospel has touched our life can be even more powerful. Like the disciples, we must use our testimony to bring others closer to Christ. We may not know the words we'll say, but Jesus wants us to be ready.

Perhaps it seems contradictory for Jesus to tell the disciples that some of them may die, then promise not a hair on their head will be destroyed. But he is speaking of their ultimate end, not their earthly one. Jesus promises divine protection. In Revelation, we see a vision of the martyrs' fate. Those who are victorious over the beast play harps and sing over a sea of glass. Their perseverance secures them eternal life in heaven.

In the midst of hardship and persecution, we must trust the Gospel. We must bear witness to the truth. God is present with us just as he was present when his Son faced persecution.

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Thursday, November 29, 2018
(Lec. 506)

1) Revelation 18:1-2, 21-23;
19:1-3, 9a

2) Luke 21:20-28

Gospel related: CCC 58, 671, 674, 697

THURSDAY OF
34TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: As followers of Christ, we are reminded that in the end, Jesus will return victorious in glory.

Today's readings feature frightening imagery: armies, destruction, fallen cities. But they include something else as well – joyful hope.

The first reading, from the Book of Revelation, uses harsh Old Testament language and symbolism to prophesy the destruction of Babylon, which followed false gods and persecuted Christians (for John, Babylon means Rome). It ends, however, with the people of God celebrating, singing *Alleluia!* and praising God's justice.

In the Gospel, Jesus predicts the fall of Jerusalem, which occurred in 70 AD. He describes the terrible destruction of the city and temple by Rome, which the Jewish historian Josephus later tells us resulted in 1.1 million Jewish casualties and 97,000 people enslaved.

Then, however, Jesus reminds us that he will come again in glory, and that our *redemption is at hand*.

So what is a modern-day Christian to make of all this? We are millennia removed from the demise of Jerusalem and Rome. But time marches on: every day we draw nearer to the end of time as well as the end of our individual lives. As the liturgical year draws to a close, the readings remind us that someday, all this will be over and Jesus will return. We say each Sunday in the creed: "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end." The end of the liturgical year also reminds us to examine our own lives: to see if we are living each day in a way that, were we to die today, we would be welcomed into the kingdom.

Each of us who shares in the Eucharistic banquet is called to the wedding feast of the Lamb. Blessed are we! We know that just as our Lord predicted the fall of Jerusalem, so, too, can we rely on his promise that he will return in power and glory.

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Friday, November 30, 2018
(Lec. 684)

1) Romans 10:9-18

2) Matthew 4:18-22

Gospel related: **CCC** 878

**SAINT ANDREW,
APOSTLE
- FEAST**

FOCUS: Following Jesus is the greatest good in life.

Brothers and sisters: If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

These words today from Saint Paul to the Romans are simple and straightforward. And yet each one of us, in our own way, knows how easy and difficult it can be to do both. The Church, in her wisdom, knows this, and gives us models of faith to encourage and inspire us in our journey. So today we celebrate the feast day of Saint Andrew, who – per Christian tradition – preached the Gospel in the Black Sea region after Christ's death and resurrection.

In today's Gospel from Matthew, Jesus calls Peter and his brother Andrew – a Greek name which means “manly” – to leave behind their lives as fishermen. *Come after me, Jesus says, and I will make you fishers of men.* And with no further discussion, or questioning, or thinking about what people would think of them, Matthew tells us: *At once they left their nets and followed him.*

Regardless of what the rest of his life looked like – and there are some variances within the history – the key aspect to the life of discipleship is found right here: Saint Andrew did not hesitate when Jesus called, and he lived a life of witness to the Gospel.

For each one of us, our call and response will differ in degree, but not in kind, from that of Saint Andrew. Jesus invites us to share the message of hope, to bring salvation to all, *for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* And it is Paul who reminds us of the importance of our mission: *But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent?*

Perhaps Saint Andrew would add, “And how can people be sent, unless they respond?” Our presence here today says we have already responded to that initial invitation. So let us pray for the grace to “be sent” as we are needed, like Saint Andrew was. And, as Saint Andrew did, to confess Jesus' name and resurrection in such a way that others will do the same.

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