

NOVEMBER

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**YEAR C
WEEKDAYS I**

Friday, November 1, 2019

(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

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

FOCUS: Live each day with heaven as our goal.

Today's solemnity of All Saints invites us to incorporate a broader vision into our lives and to have faith in a happier future. The readings remind us to keep the end in mind – to live each day of our lives with heaven as our goal.

In the first reading, John saw a great multitude of people, who had been *marked with the seal* [chosen by God]. They were joined by people of every nation, race and tongue. All were dressed in white robes and carried palm branches – symbols of joy and victory. They had been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb and were singing of God's salvation. No one in this multitude had been perfect, no one had been free from hardships; indeed, some had died for their faith. They had *survived the time of great distress*.

In our darkest moments, then, perhaps it is vital to remember that we, too, will survive any time of great distress. First and foremost, as we heard in the first reading, God loves us so much that he calls us his children. The psalmist reminds us that we "long to see God's face," and John assures us that we will.

How can we reach this happy end? Christ, himself, offers us a model of holiness – he was submissive to the will of the Father, humble of heart, steadfast in prayer and impoverished of possessions (CCC 520). In the Beatitudes, Christ gave the poor of his time a glimpse of eternal life and offers us, too, that same path to happiness. Those who wish to enter the reign of God are to be poor in spirit, pure of heart and lowly; they will hunger and thirst for holiness, they will show mercy and they will seek peace. Even in their mourning, they will be consoled; and even when they are insulted and persecuted, they will rejoice because their reward will be great in heaven.

Too often, we can become so focused on our own troubles that we miss the bigger picture. We forget the "second act" of our life with God – eternal life with him in heaven. All the saints we honor today – known to us or yet to be known – have endured to the end. They have joined the heavenly multitude. The saints remind us that following the Gospel message is possible. Pray to them that God may give us the grace to endure to the end, for our reward will be great in heaven.

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Saturday, November 2, 2019
(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, 2835

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

FOCUS: *Everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life.*

Today the Church commemorates all the faithful departed; all who have died “marked with the sign of faith.” More commonly known as “All Souls’ Day,” it is a time set aside for honoring the dead and continuing to pray for their souls, while simultaneously hoping they have already been accepted joyfully into heaven.

We pray and we hope, and this hope we have *does not disappoint*, as Saint Paul said to the Romans. *We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son*, opening the gates of heaven and eternal life for all of us. We believe that our faithful loved ones have begun that eternal life, consistent with their faith and state of grace. Wisdom reminds us of God’s love for those who died, of their being tried like *gold in a furnace* through their sufferings, and then taken up to God. Jesus himself reassures us in the Gospel: *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*, that all who come to him will die to live with him for eternity.

It is also a way to remember how they lived faithful lives here on earth: they who trusted in the Lord, who faithfully abided with him in love and who shared God’s grace and mercy with others. We are edified by their steadfast example, and consoled by God’s promise of redemption. We offer our intercessions for them, our prayers combining to assist them in any final cleansing of sin; someday, God willing, others will do the same for us.

We honor and glorify the One who made this possible, Jesus Christ, who comes to us, fully present in the Eucharist. And we give thanks that he is present among us, for he tells us: *For 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.*

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2019

(Lec. 153)

- 1) Wisdom 11:22–12:2
 - 2) 2 Thessalonians 1:11–2:2
 - 3) Luke 19:1-10
- Gospel related: CCC 549, 1443, 2412, 2712

31ST SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: *Today salvation has come to this house.*

God is a God who *love[s] all things that are*; he is a *lover of souls*. God is merciful and overlooks our sins to give us the opportunity to repent. God's love sustains and holds us into being at every moment. Breathes into us the breath of life, every moment like Adam's first breath. This love of God empties itself into our humanity in Jesus. God takes the initiative and comes to meet us – not just halfway, but all the way, in Jesus.

Today we heard the story of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus; let's focus for a moment on the details of this passage. This story takes place in the town of Jericho, which is perhaps most famous for the opening battle of the Israelite occupation of the Promised Land. During that battle, the Hebrew army issued battle trumpets, normally restricted to squad leaders, to every soldier. At night they marched around the city, blowing their trumpets. The inhabitants of Jericho were so frightened that they surrendered without a fight. The walls came tumbling down.

Perhaps Luke, in his Gospel, wants us to see how other walls can come tumbling down. He writes, *Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector and a wealthy man, wants to see Jesus. By this time in Jesus' ministry, who wouldn't, right? But Zacchaeus couldn't see Jesus, because he was too short to see over the crowds. So we hear that he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see him.*

Jesus sees Zacchaeus in the tree, orders him down from it, and then says, *today I must stay at your house*. Hmm ... it appears he is no longer "passing through," as he initially intended! *Zacchaeus came down quickly and received [Jesus] with joy*. He repents, offers to give half his possessions to the poor, and *repay ... four times over*, anyone he has defrauded.

And while the crowd grumbles at what they see, complaining of Jesus' association with sinners, they miss history repeating itself in front of their eyes: for here in Jericho, Jesus has broken the walls of sin and greed that have surrounded Zacchaeus, and Zacchaeus has surrendered to Jesus' trumpet call to become a disciple. Jesus tells him, *Today salvation has come to this house*.

Whatever tree we need to climb to see Jesus, whatever tree we need to descend in order to embrace him, salvation awaits us. Jesus seeks us out, and with the gift of faith we respond. For into the heart and house of one who repents and welcomes the Son of Man, salvation has come. Salvation has come to *this house*, and will soon be present on *that altar*. In grace we are called to it, with grace may we receive it and announce it to the world.

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Monday, November 4, 2019
(Lec. 485)
1) Romans 11:29-36
2) Luke 14:12-14

MONDAY OF
31ST WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Charles Borromeo,
Bishop)

FOCUS: Demonstrate God's love and mercy to others.

We've all experienced a moment when someone gave us something we didn't deserve. Maybe it was a particularly extravagant gift, help despite great inconvenience or a small kindness from someone we had mistreated. That is like what God's mercy is to us: We have done nothing to deserve it, and we can never repay God for his goodness, yet he lavishes his love, mercy and forgiveness out upon us.

Humankind is disobedient, from Adam and Eve to you and me. Today's first reading calls to mind a line in the *Exsultet* sung or chanted at the Easter Vigil: "O happy fault that earned for us so great, so glorious a Redeemer." This teaching extends back to Saints Ambrose and Augustine, and is the paradoxical assurance that the Fall brought about something greater. God allowed sin to happen, and in doing so prepared the way for Jesus to come to us in the incarnation and redeem us through his death and resurrection.

Saint Paul acknowledges this mystery – *For who has known the mind of the Lord?* – but states that this allows us to receive mercy. This gift of mercy is irrevocable. We have done nothing to earn it or deserve it; God offers us his mercy if we only accept it.

As Christians, we are called to be the hands and feet of Christ, extending his mercy to all. Jesus gives us an example of this in today's Gospel when he tells the Pharisees to invite social outcasts to their homes, saying they will be *blessed ... because of their inability to repay you*. These are the people who were not expected to be invited; they did not have high social status, wealth or the benefit of being family. Some might even say they didn't "deserve" to be invited. This is precisely why they should be invited to dine: there could not be any ulterior motive in the Pharisee's heart. He could not expect repayment of any sort. An invitation would be a gift, freely given, purely for the sake of the other person.

This week, let us ask the Holy Spirit to show us a way to demonstrate God's love and mercy to someone who can never repay that debt of kindness. Perhaps it is helping a stranger or loving a particularly unpleasant acquaintance. Whatever the case, may we remember that we are simply allowing the mercy God first showed us to continue flowing out into the world. Just as we did nothing to earn God's merciful love, we should not expect others to earn or repay us for kindness. May the Eucharist we receive at this holy Mass strengthen us.

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Tuesday, November 5, 2019
(Lec. 486)
1) Romans 12:5-16b
2) Luke 14:15-24

TUESDAY OF
31ST WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: All have been invited to dine in the kingdom, but only those who answer the call will enjoy the feast.

Imagine having concert tickets with backstage passes, finishing with an after-show dinner for just you and your musical icon. Or imagine being given an all-expenses-paid trip with tickets to the Super Bowl or World Series or other hot-ticket event. Could anything come between you and that dream experience?

We would like to think that if we were handed a golden ticket to eternal bliss, that we would let nothing stand in the way of our participation. And yet, the choice for heaven is set before us every moment of every day. Are we even conscious of the opportunities before us? Or are we like many of the religious leaders of Jesus' day who dismissed him and his message, thereby essentially tossing out their invitation to *dine in the Kingdom of God*? It is not enough to hold an invitation. It is not enough to be Christian in name only. We must ask ourselves, "How do we live into our baptismal identity as priest, prophet, and king?" Are we preparing for the banquet?

We do so by placing the kingdom of God at the top of our list of priorities. Loving God and loving our neighbor are daily tasks that help us prepare for the big event.

Our unique personality and gifts will then dictate how our lives of holiness will unfold. Saint Paul writes to the Romans about this very thing, assuring them, and us, that *we [each] have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, and we are to exercise them*. However we are gifted, and wherever we share that gift, Paul says, *Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection*. This is who Christ was, and this is who we are to be in the body of Christ.

As we contemplate our personal invitation to God's eternal banquet, let us evaluate how our actions are in line with Jesus' way as we now prepare our hearts for a foretaste at the eucharistic table.

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Wednesday, November 6, 2019
(Lec. 487)
1) Romans 13:8-10
2) Luke 14:25-33
Gospel related: CCC 1618, 2544

WEDNESDAY OF
31ST WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: As Christians, our primary obligation is to love.

Both of today's readings are about love. The first reading is about the love we owe our neighbor. At a glance, the Gospel reading appears to be about hate. However, while Jesus is teaching the crowds about the conditions of discipleship, he is really teaching them, and us, about the love we owe God.

When Jesus tells his followers to hate their families and their lives, he certainly does not mean that they should despise their family members or hope to die young. Instead, what he reveals in dramatic fashion is the absolute commitment required to be his disciple, and the corresponding detachment to be maintained toward everything and everyone else. Loving our families and possessing the goods necessary to sustain them are not bad in and of themselves, but they must not take the place of God in our lives. Any healthy attachment can become a sinful one, if it is wrongly ordered – that is, if we prioritize it over God.

Using the examples of building a tower and entering battle, Jesus encourages his followers to assess their readiness to make following him their first priority. The first step in construction is calculating the cost of materials. The first step in battle is comparing your strengths to your opponent. Jesus hints at the suffering that is to come for him and any who follow him when he tells them that no one can be his disciple who is unwilling to carry his or her own cross. Before embarking on the journey of discipleship, then, we must ask ourselves whether we are ready to leave behind our families, our livelihoods, our very lives.

While Jesus' instructions primarily address our relationship with God, Paul speaks of how we treat our neighbors. As Christians, our primary obligation is to love. If we follow the positive commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves, then we will inevitably follow the commandments not to harm our neighbors as well. When making decisions, then, we must aim to be only loving.

Love requires sacrifice. Jesus knows that his life on earth ends at the cross. To be his disciples, we must be prepared to lay down our own lives on a daily basis. This is the way of love – to sacrifice our own wills and desires for the good of the other. Where are we holding on too tightly? What can we let go of to make more space for God in our hearts? We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves, and to love God above all else. Nourished by our encounter with Christ in the Eucharist, may we pick up our crosses once more and follow him.

Thursday, November 7, 2019
(Lec. 488)

1) Romans 14:7-12

2) Luke 15:1-10

Gospel related: CCC 545, 589, 1443, 1846

THURSDAY OF
31st WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God is the Good Shepherd who will find us when we are lost.

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, searches for us when we are lost. Sometimes we get lost slowly, with distractions and life circumstances pulling us away from prayer. Sometimes we get lost abruptly, when a life change disrupts our normal way of life. These times of being “lost” are marked by loneliness and fear. Sometimes, we turn away from God intentionally for one reason or another. Yet the Good Shepherd will search for us.

This commonality is what brings Christians together. In his Letter to the Romans, Paul emphasizes how Christians are all connected through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Jesus died to save anyone who believes in him. We are all the “sheep” of Jesus, and he knows us all. This mystery of the Christian community can give us strength when we feel alone. Jesus calls us to be united in our journey of faith. He especially calls us to celebrate when the lost are brought back into the fold.

In the Gospel, Jesus makes it clear that a person’s sins do not define him or her in the sight of God. In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd does not give up on the sheep that is lost. Likewise, God does not give up on those of us who have made mistakes. Even if we feel we do not deserve forgiveness, our Good Shepherd is ready to forgive us as soon as we are “found.”

Jesus is the shepherd, willing to enter into our isolation and bring us home. Imagine how the shepherd feels when finding that one who is lost. He celebrates; he is triumphant and joyful. Now imagine God celebrating us in that same way. That celebration shows how much God loves us. That rejoicing proves how much God wants to find us and bring us back to the community of believers. We can allow God to find us because he will not punish us for being lost. Instead, our Good Shepherd will rejoice when we are together.

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Friday, November 8, 2019
(Lec. 489)

1) Romans 15:14-21

2) Luke 16:1-8

Gospel related: CCC 952

FRIDAY OF
31ST WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God calls and equips us to do our best work for the sake of his glorious kingdom.

When it comes to some things in life, we know how to get what we want. We know how to find the best deals on Groupon to save a few dollars on eating out for dinner. We know how to arrange our schedule so we can watch the big game in real time. We know how to get the most out of free shipping offers. When it comes to certain things, we make no qualms about doing what it takes to get what we want.

We can go to great lengths to meet our material needs. In today's admittedly confusing parable, Jesus exhorts his followers to put the same premium on serving our heavenly master. The confusing part of the Gospel, of course, centers around the dishonest steward who was praised for his prudence (even if for purely self-preservation purposes). The steward rewrote the debts to reflect the actual principal owed the master, with his own overcharges removed. Jesus chooses this questionable character to spur his disciples on. If a *dishonest* steward will go to such lengths, that is, agree to give up his own profit, how much further could the disciples go in serving their master?

The disciples, and all of us, are stewards in God's abundant household. The work God shares with us is that of helping to bring about his own kingdom of justice love and peace. There is no greater work for the *children of light*, so with the help of God, we can give it our best energy. With grace, we can work as though all our livelihood depended on it. When the master calls us to give account of our stewardship, then we will have something to show.

We may indeed have impressive coupon-clipping or shipping-saving strategies, yet our best efforts – those that coincide with the deepest part of us – do not come from ourselves, but from God. We will be called to give an account of our stewardship, yet the one who will call us also labors with us in the work he has given us to do.

As Saint Paul writes in the Letter to the Romans, we can labor because of the grace given to us by God, with work that is blessed by the Holy Spirit. When we offer all our work to God and cooperate with his good spirit, we can marvel at how good that work can be and, like Saint Paul, *boast in what pertains to God*. When our best efforts are given to God, directed and fortified by the Holy Spirit, we can truly work as the children of light, advancing the kingdom of our gracious master.

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Saturday, November 9, 2019

(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: The Lateran Basilica is a symbol of the living Church, the Christian community.

Each November we celebrate the feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica. Why is that? It is understandable why we commemorate saints and mystics, but why a building? It could be argued that it is the pope's church, the official seat of the Bishop of Rome. While this papal connection provides status, it does not earn the right to have a full day dedicated to it. If that was the case, then Saint Peter's Basilica should be honored as well.

It has earned this right because this was the first public building granted to the Christians by Rome when Constantine made Christianity legal – bringing decades of persecution to an end. While this was a significant event, certainly worth commemorating, the early Church saw this pronouncement by the emperor as confirmation of their belief in the risen Christ, who is the cornerstone of their faith. For them, this first cathedral church symbolized the Christian community.

They understood, as Saint Paul suggested to the community in Corinth, *no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ.*

The Lateran Basilica is not intended to be a mecca. There is no obligation to attend this cathedral. It is intended to serve as a symbol of how faith in Christ will triumph over evil. The history of this basilica testifies to this truth. Despite being sacked and destroyed numerous times, it was always rebuilt, signifying how the Church, with Christ as its foundation, can never be held down.

It is good to remember this as the Church is currently wrestling with scandal and divisions threatening to tear it apart. The Church will survive. The body of Christ will survive. No matter how it may be attacked from outside or within, the Lateran reminds us that our faith built on the foundation of Christ can never be contained. This indestructible foundation gives us hope. As Saint Paul taught the Corinthians, we are *the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells* within us. Even though we may face challenges in our faith, if Christ is our foundation, we will never be defeated.

Saints and mystics are examples of how we should live the Gospel. The Lateran reminds us that whenever we gather as a community, we do so with the knowledge that our church building, and each one of us, is a dwelling place of God. Both remind us of the need to reverence our sacred spaces, and respect ourselves and one another who image the very God we worship.

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2019

(Lec, 156)

- 1) 2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14
 - 2) 2 Thessalonians 2:16–3:5
 - 3) Luke 20:27-38 or 20:27, 34-38
- Gospel related: CCC 330

**32ND SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: May the Lord direct our hearts to his love.

In our life of faith, we are often confronted by beliefs and views that contradict and challenge our Christian faith. In today's Gospel, Jesus is confronted by the views of the Sadducees on the thorny issue of resurrection – what can we expect after death?

A priestly group within Judaism, the Sadducees were wealthy families who valued social and economic status over the piety and learning that was important to the Pharisees. Most relevant to this encounter with Jesus, they did not believe in or follow any scriptural precepts beyond the Torah – and thus did not believe in the concepts of immortality of the soul or resurrection after death.

But rather than engage them in their rather exaggerated and silly scenario about the seven brothers and the one wife, Jesus instead compares the ways of this world to the ways of the kingdom of God. The God we worship is the God of the living, not of the dead. Those who belong to God and who serve him in life are rightly described as children of God – heirs of the kingdom – who will rise to new life in the resurrection. The rest, those whom Jesus describes as the *children of this age*, have no hope within them. They are lost for they have nothing to trust in.

As we focus today on our ultimate destiny, let us use the words of Saint Paul and pray that the Lord will direct and encourage our hearts to his love and endurance. May he keep us faithful and strengthen us to be on guard against the Evil One and all that would separate us from the very love and life of God.

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Monday, November 11, 2019
(Lec. 491)

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

MONDAY OF
32ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Martin of Tours,
Bishop)

Gospel related: CCC 162, 2227, 2287, 2845

FOCUS: We cannot run or hide from the Spirit of God, and there is no need to do so.

Today, the Church celebrates the memorial of Saint Martin of Tours. He was a fourth-century Christian who hailed from Hungary. Having followed his father into military service at the age of 15, Martin eventually found his military duties to be discordant with his life of faith. Following his conscience, Martin refused to continue fighting, left the army and studied to become a priest. He is known for his passionate fight against Arianism, a heresy that denied the divinity of Jesus.

Today's readings speak of the God who knows us intimately, from the inside out. According to the introduction of the Book of Wisdom, the Spirit of God is everywhere, and thus God is the witness of *[our] inmost self*, the sure observer of our hearts. Today's responsorial psalm reminds us of this as well, namely that God knows all there is to know about us, from every hair on the outside of our heads to every thought within.

This is a comforting thought, for who else can know us so well, and grant us the same mercy, grace and love as does God? This omniscience may seem disconcerting, but that is because we know only human ways, and not divine. Human ways fail: today's Gospel speaks about the millstone around the neck of someone who leads others to sin. God's ways never fail. He never leads us to sin – only to love and goodness. We may sin, but that is due to our own free will. So yes, while there is nowhere to run or hide from this judge or his millstone, our God is a God of love, who runs after those who flee in order to embrace them, not to judge them.

Who better to have on our side, than one who knows us so intimately, and forever loves us?

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Tuesday, November 12, 2019
(Lec. 492)
1) Wisdom 2:23–3:9
2) Luke 17:7-10

TUESDAY OF
32ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Josaphat,
Bishop and Martyr)

FOCUS: We give thanks for the gift of faith.

Wisdom says that, in *the image of his own nature he made [us] ... the souls of the just are in the hand of God; and Those who trust in him shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with him in love: Because grace and mercy are with his holy ones, and his care is with his elect.*

In other words, the Book of Wisdom reminds us of our place in God's created world. We are created out of love, to *be* love. We are, as the catechism says, established by God *in his friendship* (CCC 355) and *able to know and love [him]* (CCC 356). God gives us so much – our very lives in fact. All is gift from God.

This is a fundamental cue for our lives and our actions. Jesus is addressing this when he speaks to his Apostles in today's Gospel. They have previously just said to the Lord, *Increase our faith*, and so as part of his response, he instructs them to have an attitude of a servant. Servants, not slaves. We are in friendship with God, and friends who love one another serve one another. So Jesus' words are not referring to a master/slave dynamic – that has never been part of the Jewish or Christian covenant with God – but one of relationship. As Jesus came not to be served but to serve, so are we, in a life of faith, commanded to serve one another. To love one another. To honor God's graciousness to us by sharing it with one another, and fulfilling our role in faith as disciples.

Jesus tells his Apostles, *When you have done all you have been commanded, say, "We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do."* Jesus himself was the perfect, obedient servant, who sought no praise or honor. Instead he shared with us his intimacy and union with the Father. Through him and the grace of the Holy Spirit, we, too, are united to the Father: the one who created us in his image, able to know and love him; and to live with him in eternity. We give thanks for the gift of faith that makes our response possible. And may it always increase.

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Wednesday, November 13, 2019
(Lec. 493)
1) Wisdom 6:1-11
2) Luke 17:11-19

WEDNESDAY OF
32ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
USA: Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini,
Virgin)

Gospel related: CCC 586, 2463

FOCUS: Lead lives of gratitude and faith.

By law, lepers were to keep their distance from everyone. Separated from family and friends, they were ostracized, abandoned and very much alone.

Today's encounter between Jesus and the 10 lepers is a powerful example of compassion and thankfulness. These men, gravely ill through no fault of their own, were physically healed and socially redeemed. They could participate in society again. Yet only one, a foreigner we are told, comes back to praise and give thanks to God.

This is a powerful scene because we witness Jesus' compassion in hearing, and listening to, those who cried out to him. We also see the immense gratitude and faith of the Samaritan who returns to him. The Samaritan, who was not even obliged to pay attention to Jesus as a man of any importance, glorified God because of this encounter – the word of God transformed him – and he was moved to thankfulness. His response was one of pure faith, and it saved him, as Jesus said.

Saint Frances Cabrini, whose memorial we commemorate today, was a woman of compassion and grit who tended to the flood of Italian immigrants coming to the United States beginning in 1889. She led a life of gratitude and faith, and as a result we have a religious community, hospitals, schools and agencies for the poor in our midst to this day.

May her vibrant spirit be our guide in our own faith journey, and may we be transformed as much by Word and sacrament as the Samaritan was.

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Thursday, November 14, 2019
(Lec. 494)
1) Wisdom 7:22b–8:1
2) Luke 17:20-25
Gospel related: CCC 2463

THURSDAY OF
32ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: The kingdom of God is among us as we receive Jesus' body and blood in the Eucharist.

In the first reading we heard that Wisdom, with a capital "w," is *an aura of the might of God and a pure effusion of the glory of the Almighty*. Wisdom is a gift from God: the Creator and source of all knowledge and faith. He gives us understanding and discernment to know and to follow him during our lives, and his Wisdom is manifested in Christ.

During the time of Jesus the descendants of Abraham, the Jewish people, the people of the Covenant, were desperately waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue them. In today's Gospel, the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. Jesus replied by telling them that the kingdom of God cannot be observed because *the kingdom of God is among you*. Had the Pharisees been thinking with clarity blended with spiritual insight, they would have recognized Jesus as the Messiah. He shouldn't have had to tell them about the time for the kingdom to come, since he was there, right in front of them. God had already brought the kingdom to the world. They just couldn't see it. They did not have wisdom, so therefore they also did not *perceive* it.

As Catholics, we are blessed to be able to receive Jesus every time we go to Mass. We both hear Wisdom, and taste it. As we enter into Liturgy of the Eucharist, we are actually brought into the presence of Jesus. When we cry "Holy, holy, holy," we are literally worshiping God in his throne room, with all the angels and saints in heaven. He wants us to experience the joy of our salvation with him now, giving us a foretaste of heaven. Faith, along with wisdom, allows us to perceive this truth and to see Christ present, the kingdom present, among us. With the grace of God, may our vision never falter, and our wisdom always grow.

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Friday, November 15, 2019
(Lec. 495)

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

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

Gospel related: CCC 1889, 2463 CSDC 34, 583

FOCUS: By grace we grow in wisdom.

All men were by nature foolish who were in ignorance of God. If ever a Scripture verse could be said to be eternally relevant, this, from today's first reading, fits the bill. The author of Wisdom – note, the opposite of foolishness – writes of the many ways that “the foolish” were ignorant of God: for example, not understanding him as Creator, or recognizing his power, or even that he was supremely knowable and able to be found.

This is not far removed from Jesus' message today in the Gospel, though it is framed somewhat differently. Instead of just being foolish, Jesus points out that those who do not recognize the Son of Man will be as those destroyed in the flood of Noah's time, or caught in the destruction of Sodom. He speaks of the two-fold presence of the Son of Man: there, among them now, in the divine person of Jesus who entered into humanity to establish the kingdom of God; and at his second coming, when the end of time comes and the fullness of the kingdom will be revealed and come to fruition.

Foolishness or wisdom – in many ways, these are the operative parameters of every decision and action we make, with a spectrum of gravity between them. Some matters are less grave or more easily remedied: foolishly forgetting to take swim goggles to a swimming workout is an annoyance, an inconvenience, and can lead to discomfort. Foolishly forgetting to secure a latch on an aircraft is negligence, a serious hazard, and can result in loss of life.

In other words, we should seek to be wise. Wise in our recognition of who God is, and what he has done for us. Wise in accepting the gift of faith, and being in communion with the Triune God who is present among us. Wise in our participation in the sacraments, and our seeking of grace to enable us to continue to grow in wisdom. We seek this wisdom so that in our nature we are no longer *foolish ... in ignorance of God*, but ready to embrace all that God has prepared for us, at the coming of the Son of Man.

* * *

Saturday, November 16, 2019
(Lec. 496)
1) Wisdom 18:14-16; 19:6-9
2) Luke 18:1-8

SATURDAY OF
32ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Margaret of Scotland;
Saint Gertrude,
Virgin;
Saturday in honor
of BVM)

Gospel related: CCC 675, 2098, 2573, 2613

FOCUS: Persevere in prayer.

We do not know when Jesus will return – tomorrow or lifetimes from now – but we do know how to ensure that Christ will find faith on earth. We do know how we can preserve our own faith and that of future generations. The answer is provided by our readings, and that answer is: to pray. We must pray as if our lives depend upon it, because they do. And we must pray with the confidence of God's children, who know that our prayers are answered, because they are.

Many of us have repeated the same prayers for weeks, months or years without seeing the results we hoped for. We have stormed the heavens for a loved one who is ill, only to watch that person continue to suffer. We have asked fervently for a child, only to remain infertile. We have prayed for healing and reconciliation in our families or for any number of injustices in our world, only for them to remain broken. These situations can make us so weary. Why keep praying at all?

Our first reading today speaks about the faithfulness of God. In poetic language, the author of Wisdom recounts how God saved the Israelites, and how he parted the Red Sea for them to cross out of Egypt. We know all that the Israelites went through in their enslavement, and how they prayed mightily for relief. The author of Wisdom reminds the Israelites, and us, that God was their deliverer.

In telling the parable of the dishonest judge, Jesus points out that the judge was unwilling, for the longest time, to deal with the widow's petition. And when he finally does decide to *deliver a just decision for her*, it is out of fear that she may come and strike him otherwise. This judge does not deliver justice or mercy – and whatever he does deliver is not based on compassion or love. This parable is told by Jesus to show that the judge is the antithesis of who God is. For every failure that the judge portrayed, God is abounding in the fullness of its opposite.

God never tires of hearing our petitions. He is never unwilling to answer them. And at the end of time, he will truly deliver a just decision for us – not out of fear, but out of his constant, outpouring love and mercy.

Perseverance in prayer is how we stay connected to God. Our relationship grows through prayer: in blessing and adoration (praise), petition, intercession and thanksgiving. Persevere in prayer – for God is indeed our deliverer.

Saint Margaret of Scotland (1045-1093) - As Queen of Scotland, Margaret built schools and churches, and hostels for the poor and sick; she also established abbeys and held feasts at the castle for commoners. She invited the Benedictine monks to open monasteries in Scotland, and encouraged the clergy to bring the practices of the Scottish Church in line with Rome. Depictions of Saint Margaret often show her with coins in her outstretched hand, ready to give to the poor.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2019

(Lec. 159)

- 1) Malachi 3:19-20a
 - 2) 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12
 - 3) Luke 21:5-19
- Gospel related: CCC 675

**33RD SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: Things of this world are transitory; our only security is in God.

The Gospel passage today hints at a lack of security found in all of our lives. It begins with disciples commenting on the costly adornments of the Temple, the center of Jewish worship. Yet Jesus explains that in the future, even the magnificent Temple will come down: *the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone.*

In what can we be secure? Not the riches or the material possessions of this world.

Jesus continues: *Many will come in my name, saying "I am he," and "the time has come." Do not follow them!* In whom can we be secure? Not the preachers who claim to have all the answers.

What about our family? According to Jesus, some will be betrayed and hurt even by their own family members.

Jesus seems to imply that as much as we would like to put our faith into what we can see, what we can touch, what we can experience in this life, we simply cannot. Our security cannot lie with anything that is transitory; it cannot rest with anything that is of this world.

Perhaps one reason – perhaps the main reason – we feel so distressed when we lose something or someone of value is because we had anchored our sense of self to that thing or to that person. How many of us, for example, have felt adrift after the loss of a job, the loss of a valuable item, the damage to a reputation or the end of a relationship? It was part of us, part of our identity, a part of our security.

The writer of the Gospel, Luke, certainly understands this. He is writing to a community of believers who have seen the Temple destroyed, who have suffered persecution because of their faith in Christ. Yet there is hope. Jesus tells his followers: *Do not be terrified.* Although they will be surrounded by wars, by persecution, by adversities, they can persevere. Somehow God will sustain them. How? We don't know. But like the bird who migrates long distances or the fish who is carried by the river to the sea, we trust that God will get us where we need to be. Our security is God, not the events of our life or the passing things of this world.

* * *

Monday, November 18, 2019
(Lec. 497)
1) 1 Maccabees 1:10-15,
41-43, 54-57, 62-63
2) Luke 18:35-43

MONDAY OF
33RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
The Dedication of the
Basilicas of
Saints Peter and Paul,
Apostles;
USA: Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne,
Virgin)

FOCUS: Faith is what saves us.

Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!

This outcry by the blind beggar can be easily drowned out by the crescendo of his healing and the ensuing song of praise by the people. After all, what does it mean, *Son of David*? We know, here today, what it meant, and to whom it referred, but what did the blind beggar mean? What did he know?

The Jewish people – God’s covenantal people – knew that God had promised David, who had been anointed by God to replace Saul as king of Israel, that his throne would be established forever (cf., 2 Sam 7:16). Therefore, in awaiting the Messiah and their deliverance, the people longed to see David’s heir, his descendant son – the one who would rule forever.

Jesus is called the “Son of David” a number of times in the Gospels. Matthew calls him this in his very first sentence! But he is never addressed as such by anyone in authority, most notably the Pharisees. He does not fit their current expectations of the Son of David. Yet a beggar, lowest of the low, blind to the human world around him, sees the divine truth of Jesus and yells it out.

The blind beggar was told by the crowd that *Jesus of Nazareth is passing by*, and he knows immediately who Jesus is. Now, we don’t know if he had heard about Jesus before; we don’t know if he was aware that Jesus had been going around the towns and cities preaching and healing; Luke does not tell us any of this. What we *do* know is that upon hearing that Jesus is present in his midst, the blind man acts without hesitation: *Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!*

Even when he is rebuked by *the people walking in front*, he persists: *Son of David, have pity on me!* The man will not allow his divine sight to be thwarted by his, or others’, blindness. And Jesus responds, asking him what he wants, healing him and acknowledging that his faith has saved him.

This is the faith that saves *us*, too. Faith that sees the divine presence even when everything else is dark. Faith that is honest about our needs, and unafraid to ask the Lord for them. Faith that understands that we must ask, for the Lord will never demand we accept anything. Faith that glorifies God, and witnesses to others. Faith that brings us to this liturgy, in which Jesus of Nazareth, is present. *Jesus, Son of David, have pity on [us].*

Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne (1769-1852) - Rose Philippine, a French sister of the Society of the Sacred Heart, journeyed to the United States and helped to establish the first free school west of the Mississippi in what is now St. Charles, Missouri, outside St. Louis. Rose also helped the Jesuits establish a new mission in eastern Kansas, which included a school for Potawatomi girls. At the end of her life, her health prevented her from teaching and so she devoted her final years to prayer. The Potawatomi children came to call Rose *Quahkahkanumad*, meaning “woman who prays always.”

Tuesday, November 19, 2019

(Lec. 498)

1) 2 Maccabees 6:18-31

2) Luke 19:1-10

Gospel related: CCC 549, 1443, 2412, 2712

TUESDAY OF
33RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: May models of faithfulness inspire us to be courageous in our own faith.

We all have a story of faith: how we came to be people of faith and how we live our faith. Though the details may differ, common to us all are the blessings and hardships we face along the way.

Consider the two models of faith in today's readings. First, we heard the story of Eleazar, an elderly scribe of great distinction. He has been loyal to God's laws since childhood, and seeks a noble, dignified death. Some of us can relate to Eleazar. Perhaps we were baptized as infants and raised in the faith. For many years we have been faithful to God's word, and we hope to die in dignity and peace.

In the Gospel we heard the story of Zacchaeus, a man neither advanced in age nor in dignity. He holds the dishonorable position of chief tax collector. He may be wealthy, but he is lost, a sinner. He is alienated from his community and faith. But up in the sycamore tree he is noticed in his need by Jesus, who calls him down for conversion on the spot. Some of us can relate to Zacchaeus. Perhaps we came to faith as adults, through life-changing conversion experiences.

These two faith stories are quite different, but commonalities lie within. Both Eleazar and Zacchaeus experience blessings and hardships as people of faith. Eleazar is blessed with a noble death, though it is a tortuous one. The Lord upholds Eleazar in his final suffering, and his pain is accompanied by joy, knowing he has remained faithful to God. Eleazar is a model of courage in the face of persecution.

Zacchaeus' blessing is the offer of salvation, a gift he receives with eager joy. This blessing does not cost him his life, but rather his wealth. After he gives half of his possessions plus four times over any extorted amounts, not much will remain. But to Zacchaeus, just as to Eleazar, faith is more precious than anything, even one's wealth, even one's remaining years. Zacchaeus will no longer be upheld by wealth, but by faith. Zacchaeus is a model of courageous conversion.

We all experience hardships. When we do, these models of faith – Eleazar and Zacchaeus – inspire us to be courageous in faith, trusting that God will remain faithful to us. The Lord will uphold us, as he did Eleazar when he surrendered his life and Zacchaeus when he surrendered his wealth. No matter what hardships we face, we will be sought after and saved, upheld in faith by our saving Lord. Indeed this is why Christ came: to seek and to save, even to surrender his own life, as we now will recall in this Eucharist.

* * *

Wednesday, November 20, 2019
(Lec. 499)

1) 2 Maccabees 7:1, 20-31

2) Luke 19:11-28

Gospel related: CCC 1880, 1936 CSDC 326

WEDNESDAY OF
33RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: As the baptized, we have been called to invest in our salvation.

As the liturgical year comes to an end, we hear several Gospel passages giving us insight into the kingdom of God. Today it is Luke's parable of the 10 gold coins. Here, as Jesus prepares to fulfill his destiny and mission as the Good Servant, entrusted with the treasure of the world's redemption, we get an insight as to what is expected of his disciples.

We should remember in this Gospel that we are not really in the world of high finance – share prices, hedge funds or exchange rates – for the parable is solely concerned with investment in Gospel living and sharing in the fruits of the kingdom.

For the first-century believer, the image of the powerful wealthy ruler was a familiar one. We are told that he has gone on a journey with no return date. But before he leaves, he entrusts his wealth to his servants in different amounts. Clearly the ruler is taking a great risk: other than the instruction to engage in trade, he sets no guidelines on how the coins are to be used – responsibility will lie with the servant to do their best.

The first two servants rise to this challenge by wisely investing, and making a profit for their master; they are rewarded with greater responsibility. The third servant is more cautious – he could even be called unimaginative and fearful. Instead of investing, he stores it away, and with it goes any risk-taking. The tragedy is not that he did not make a profit, but that he allowed his fear to rule his response.

As the baptized, we have been called to invest in our salvation. What is important is not the quantity of our coins but the quality of the way we use them. The fearful servant tries to justify his inaction by arguing that he did so because he knew his master to be a demanding man – quite an insult to one who had chosen him and entrusted him with his wealth. In playing it safe, he missed out on a share of the rewards.

As God's good servants, our response must not be seen simply in the extraordinary dealings of life, but in the ordinary trading events of daily living. It is here we are to trade in forgiveness and peace-making – to invest in our families and relationships, standing by those in need, to issue dividends of justice, mercy and hope for those who suffer – laying down our lives for others. These are our coins to be used with great imagination and risk, never to be buried or hidden away.

Thursday, November 21, 2019
(Lec. 500)
1) 1 Maccabees 2:15-29
2) Luke 19:41-44

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

Gospel related: CCC 558

FOCUS: May God's grace give us the strength always to remain faithful.

Of all job titles throughout time, what must it have been like to have this one: *The officers of the king in charge of enforcing the apostasy?* Not, "teacher of the faith," or even "helpful guide to living your best life." No, their job was to *enforce apostasy*; that is, *enforce* a total desertion of, and formal disaffiliation and renunciation of, the Jewish people's particular religious customs. In practical terms, this meant organizing sacrifices, as the first reading indicates, but also burning religious scrolls, desecrating sanctuaries, murdering those who followed observances, and killing women who had their sons circumcised. No wonder Mattathias and his kin fled into the mountains. No wonder Jesus wept.

Granted, the time between what was happening under King Antiochus and when Jesus drew near to Jerusalem in Luke's Gospel account was approximately 200 years. But Jesus would have known what had happened under the king, and what was still to happen under the Romans. There had been so little peace in and around Jerusalem for generation on generation. These were the people God had chosen as his own – the ones who would be family for his divine Son, incarnate among them. They, of all people, should have known him and followed him, but they *did not recognize the time of [their] visitation*.

As in earlier times of difficulty for the Jews, this was not direct punishment from God, but the natural consequence of closing oneself off from God's loving guidance, love, power and – now – physical presence. And yet, literally in the midst of this scene, is God's promise of salvation fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is a promise celebrated in a particular way today with the Church's memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In setting aside this day, we emphasize the importance of Mary's holiness from the beginning. In absolute contrast to the ones who enforced apostasy, she embodied faithfulness – literally bearing the fruit of salvation. She was the first Tabernacle of Christ, and the presentation in the Temple emphasizes her sanctification through God dwelling in her in a special way.

God's promises never go unfulfilled, for he cannot be surpassed in generosity or mercy. Where there is offering of self to God, and where there is faith and repentance, we find our salvation. Despite whatever obstacles our enemies may raise against us, we are not forsaken. May God's grace give us the strength always to remain faithful, like Mattathias and his kin, and to return to him when we stray.

* * *

Friday, November 22, 2019

(Lec. 501)

1) 1 Maccabees 4:36-37, 52-59

2) Luke 19:45-48

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

FOCUS: We are sanctified through grace and lifelong participation in the life of God.

The account of the purification and rededication of the Temple in today's first reading is somewhat *understated*, but its significance cannot be *overstated*. At the time of this story, 164 years before Jesus' birth, the Jews had just wrested control of Jerusalem back from the Greeks, after three years of fighting. In conquering Jerusalem, the Greeks had defiled the Temple and caused all kinds of sacrilege. For the Israelites, the holy Temple was the locus of their faith; it was the social and religious center of their culture, and its sanctuary was literally the dwelling place of God. They needed to reclaim what had been taken from them, and make holy again a place suitable for God.

So the celebration and rededication of different parts of the structure over the span of eight days – with all the rebuilding, ornamentation, joyful song and burnt offerings – was not just a practical matter. It was a matter of re-establishing themselves as steadfast proof of God's covenant and promises, and the Temple as visible sign of God's presence among them.

This rededication is the foundation for the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. Hanukkah celebrates both the military victory of the Jews over the Greeks, and the spiritual victory of Jewish values over Greek/pagan ones. Many non-Jews are familiar with Hanukkah because of the miracle of the oil that lasted for eight days and provided light for the Temple – demonstrated by the lighting of a nine-branched menorah throughout the festival. Interestingly, the miracle of the oil is not actually mentioned in Maccabees, but in the Talmud. Yet the importance of this event and its annual celebration highlights the sacredness of the Temple in both its physical existence and its spiritual meaning.

It is no wonder, then, that Jesus drives out the merchants in today's Gospel passage. He saw the Temple being used as a marketplace and reclaims it for what is holy, saying, *It is written, "My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves."* Jesus is proclaiming to all who can see and hear that the Temple is meant to be the dwelling place of God, and yet they had let it become cluttered with distractions. Jesus' presence in the Temple, and his clearing away of that which defiled it, is reminiscent of the story in our first reading. In this account, however, Jesus himself is the new covenant, and his light is light for the world that needs no oil, and can never be extinguished. In this account, God has reclaimed a dwelling place for himself by becoming human and making each one of us a temple of the Holy Spirit.

As the Jewish Temple was to be holy and undefiled, so are we. As beings in whom God dwells, we are sanctified through grace and lifelong participation in the life of God. Today, the Church celebrates the memorial of Saint Cecilia who, like the Maccabees, remained faithful to God despite difficulties and persecution. May we, through her intercession, have the grace to do the same.

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Saturday, November 23, 2019
(Lec. 502)

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

SATURDAY OF
33RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Clement I,
Pope and Martyr;
Saint Columban,
Abbot;
USA: Blessed Miguel Agustin Pro,
Priest and Martyr;
Saturday in honor
of BVM)

Gospel related: CCC 330, 575

FOCUS: God is the God of each one of us; *for to him all are alive.*

The Sadducees, not the usual Pharisees, are the questioners in today's Gospel. They do not believe in bodily resurrection, and they adhere to only the five books of the Torah, rather than all of the Hebrew Scriptures. So while their question about the law could seem absurd to us, it does arise from an actual context and is not *just* a way of putting Jesus on the spot.

Jesus' answer is very straightforward: he compares important, but temporal/earthly human actions with the even *more* important necessity of a *relationship* with God. He reframes their question, alerting them in the process, that the answer they seek is already part of the written law that they *do* accept. Jesus says, *That the dead will rise even Moses made known in the passage about the bush, when he called "Lord" the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* Implicit in Jesus' statement is the question: how could God be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, if they were not still alive? For *he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.*

This response does not fit into the worldview of the Sadducees, for whom relationship to the law was the guiding principle. We are not told whether this made any difference to those Sadducees, only that they were afraid to ask him any more questions. Sometimes the Truth is hard to digest, no?

It is not always the mighty that will win the battle, and it is not the letter of the law that will find salvation. It is by being in relationship with God that we find the way to salvation and, unsurprisingly, that path may not be what we expect it to be.

So we give thanks for the gift of faith, and the opportunity to be in relationship with God. For he has loved us into being and continually calls us to himself. God is the God of each one of us; *for to him all are alive.*

* * *

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2019

(Lec. 162)

1) 2 Samuel 5:1-3

2) Colossians 1:12-20

3) Luke 23:35-43

Gospel related: CCC 440, 1021, 2266, 2616

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

FOCUS: Unmatched in power and majesty, Jesus shows mercy and love to those most in need.

Even in our time, when democracy and equality are held in high regard, kings connote the idea of majesty, power and absolute authority. Fairy tales, cartoons and modern television specials about aristocrats of old seem to draw out our fascination with earlier times, when kings ruled their nations and received unquestioned loyalty.

We see some of that splendor in today's second reading as we celebrate the Feast of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. Indeed, the majesty of kings and queens of old is magnified several degrees as we contemplate Jesus, *the image of the invisible God*, who was present at creation, through whom all things were created, and who is filled with divinity. When we think of how vast our universe is – and we're learning more and more of its unbelievable size – we can only begin to fathom the majesty of Jesus, King of that Universe.

Yet the other readings move us to reflect on another aspect of kingship – service to the people and mercy to those in need. In the first reading, as the Israelites anoint David as King of Israel, they recognize not only his success in battle but his call by God to shepherd his people. The Israelites welcome David as king because of his care for them – the same care he gave to the sheep in his father's flock before God called him to kingship.

Jesus shows an even greater depth of care for his people. Enthroned on the cross – his only earthly throne to date – Jesus dies for love of God's people, to bring salvation and everlasting life to them. Even more, a short time before his agonizing death, he turns to the dying thief crucified next to him with merciful words of assurance: *Today you will be with me in Paradise*. Jesus shows us his identity as a serene, humble and loving King and God in his last moments on earth – the kind of King that we as Christians can joyfully give our own lives to. Jesus' majesty as the eternal God and King is matched by his love – a love that drove him to a horrible death for our salvation.

What does this incredible King call us to? How can we serve Jesus, whose power and glory as God are matched only by the depth of his love? As Christians, we are baptized into his service – each called to serve Jesus and his kingdom in a unique way, according to our particular gifts, temperament and life circumstances. As King and as shepherd of our souls, Jesus calls us step by step into his service. He reveals our call, our role in his kingdom, from one moment to the next – if we take the time to pray and listen to his voice.

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Monday, November 25, 2019
(Lec. 503)
1) Daniel 1:1-6, 8-20
2) Luke 21:1-4

MONDAY OF
34TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Catherine of Alexandria,
Virgin and Martyr)

Gospel related: CCC 2544

FOCUS: There are different types of sacrifices, and God values them all.

What does Daniel have in common with the poor widow? Daniel was a great Old Testament prophet, and the widow was an unnamed woman who appears briefly in the Gospels. In today's readings, both demonstrate sacrifice.

In the first reading, a young Daniel and companions were selected to enter King Nebuchadnezzar's service. The king allowed trainees to eat and drink from the royal table, which was surely filled with delicious, rich foods and choice wine. But Daniel knew the Mosaic law, which prohibited the bread, meat and wine of non-Jews. At the risk of upsetting the king, Daniel convinces the chamberlain to allow the four men to eat only vegetables and drink only water, both of which would have been considered clean and licit. They are rewarded for their fidelity with health, wisdom, prudence, knowledge and, for Daniel, the gift of visions and understanding dreams. Their sacrifice of food and drink, and the risk to their lives and their roles in the king's service demonstrated obedience to God.

The poor widow, Jesus said, *offered her whole livelihood*. Her sacrifice was not just money; it was all she had. Her actions showed that she trusted the Lord completely to provide for her temporal needs.

Sacrifice comes in many forms, and it may look different for each one of us. God sees them all. He values them all.

It's worth asking ourselves, when we sacrifice something, what our motivation is. Is it obedience, like Daniel? Is it as a gift for the Church or for others, demonstrating that we trust the Lord to provide? Is it a sacrifice born of love, or are we seeking self-interest? We can ask the Holy Spirit to guide our hearts, especially as we near the penitential season of Advent.

As we prepare to receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, let us thank him for his sacrifice and ask him to open our hearts to be open to the sacrifices God is asking us to make, whatever they may be. May the Lord purify our desires so that we may offer sacrifices pleasing to him in our daily lives, trusting that our loving Father sees and values them all.

Saint Catherine of Alexandria (c. 287 - c. 305) - According to tradition, Catherine was an educated young woman who zealously preached Christianity in Alexandria after her conversion as a teenager. She rebuked the emperor at the time for his persecution of Christians, and was sentenced to death by the wheel of torture. According to legend, she did not suffer from the wheel but was eventually beheaded. She was one of the most popular saints in the Middle Ages for the power of her intercession, and was often depicted in portraits of the day.

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Tuesday, November 26, 2019
(Lec. 504)
1) Daniel 2:31-45
2) Luke 21:5-11

TUESDAY OF
34TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Jesus calls his followers to build the kingdom of God on earth, to prepare for its fullness in heaven.

When we hear Jesus talking about the destruction of the Temple, or listen to Daniel's explanation of the fall of kingdoms, we understand that they fall so as to make room for the only kingdom that matters – God's kingdom. Yet even in the midst of speaking about destruction, both Daniel and Jesus give assurance to those who are listening. Daniel tells the king, *the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed or delivered up to another people ... and it shall stand forever*. Jesus says to his audience: *When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end*.

This is why the coming of Christ, and his establishment of God's kingdom here on earth, is always good news: No matter what else happens, and even though all things of this age will pass away, we are not forsaken. This is the heart of the Gospel message. It is *the* Gospel message. Throughout all of Old Testament history, the chosen people awaited the Messiah. When the Messiah came, he opened the gates of heaven to all who repent and believe in the Good News – that is, believe in him. In Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, in communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Nothing in this world can separate us from God's love, and nothing that happens in this world is outside of God's providence and capacity to bring about good. As he raised Jesus from the dead, so he raises all of creation to eternal union with him in the fullness of time.

Granted, we – like many individuals and groups throughout history whose stories have been recorded in Scripture – can choose to separate ourselves from God through sin. We can refuse to listen to what we have heard and refuse to recognize the signs we have seen. We can allow ourselves to be deceived by false teaching or led astray by temptation. And still – God does not leave or forsake us. As long as we are faithful to God, obedient to his commands, avoid sin and have a heart of repentance when necessary, there is no need to fear. For the kingdom that Christ makes present to us is imperfect now, but with God's grace we shed our imperfections and grow in *his* perfection, bringing about its fullness. And this kingdom will indeed last forever.

* * *

Wednesday, November 27, 2019
(Lec. 505)

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

2) Luke 21:12-19
Gospel related: CCC 675

WEDNESDAY OF
34TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: By Word and sacrament, we are nourished and strengthened.

On a daily basis, we are faced with opportunities to speak up for others, to act with kindness, to call attention to injustices. In other words, we are faced with opportunities to give witness to the Gospel, to show by our words and actions that we truly do believe in this Jesus Christ – who he is, what he did for us, what he taught us about being human.

There are times when, like Daniel, we pick up the mantle and speak the Lord's message, regardless of whether or not we are praised for it. But there are probably many other times when we just stay quietly in our corner, surrendering to those common reasons we are familiar with: "don't get involved", "it's none of our business." Or maybe, we don't step in because we are too engrossed in our own business, too focused on what we are doing and what we need to get done. Or, let's be honest, sometimes, it's just because we can't be bothered, it seems like too much effort.

And yet, at the heart of our faith is the paschal mystery, our belief that through his passion, death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has redeemed and saved us, and that through our baptism we participate in this mystery. That through our baptism we are called to share in his death that we might share in his newness of life. And for us, this death is not death on a cross, but it *is* the daily little deaths to self, the ways in which we let go of our inclination to put first our own desires, our own tasks and destinations, in order to lift up someone else as Jesus did for us.

Witnessing to our faith is usually not an easy task. We may not always know the words to say, or the action to take. But that is OK. What Jesus asks of us isn't to come in with our defense arguments all prepared. What he asks is that we come with a heart willing and ready to submit to the Holy Spirit's lead.

So when we next find ourselves in that position when we are called to testify to our faith, we can let the Word and sacrament that have nourished us here today strengthen our resolve to respond with the guidance of the Spirit.

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

Thursday, November 28, 2019
(Lec. 506)

1) Daniel 6:12-28

2) Luke 21:20-28

Gospel related: CCC 58, 671, 674, 697

THURSDAY OF
34TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(USA: Thanksgiving Day)

FOCUS: Those who trust in the Lord will be redeemed.

Wow! Today's readings are not for the squeamish are they? In our first reading, we have our hero Daniel being thrown into a den of lions. Then Luke's Gospel tells us early on of the fall of Jerusalem with such phrases as *time of punishment*, *terrible calamity* and *fall by the edge of the sword*. Later, in a look at Jesus' second coming, Luke uses phrases such as *nations will be in dismay*, *people will die of fright* and *the powers of the heavens will be shaken*. One could easily wonder, "Did I come to Mass or have I wandered into an action-adventure double feature at the movie theater?"

Good news for us. We are indeed at Mass. Even better news is that Daniel survived a night with the lions and Luke told us at the end of today's Gospel selection to *raise your heads because your redemption is at hand*. So for all the doom and gloom in today's readings, what we find in the end is good news for those who trust in the Lord.

It was because of prayer that Daniel was even in the lions' den. Ministers and local governors were jealous of Daniel's high standing with the king. They convinced the monarch to issue a decree that all who offered a petition to anyone, divine or human, other than the king were to be thrown to the lions. Daniel continued his prayer despite the decree, and his trust in the Lord was rewarded when God sent an angel to rescue him. His prayer may have had as a consequence Daniel being put into harm's way, but it also got him out.

In our society, we face lions every day in the form of temptations toward power, wealth, pleasure and honor. We will be safe, like Daniel, if we continue to pray and show our trust in God. Even the king at the end of today's first reading acknowledged that Daniel's God was a *deliverer and savior*.

We will be rewarded in the end if we keep our heads high. We will be able to live in the lions' den without being devoured because the Lord will shut the mouths of twenty-first-century lions.

As we head into the Advent season this Sunday, let's be thankful that we have a lion-tamer on our side – a God who loves us and will reward us for being true to him.

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Friday, November 29, 2019
(Lec. 507)

- 1) Daniel 7:2-14
- 2) Luke 21:29-33

FRIDAY OF
34TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God's kingdom, more powerful than any earthly kingdom, is eternal and we are invited to belong.

Today is the Friday after Thanksgiving in the United States. For many, yesterday was a time to stop and reflect on our blessings; to give thanks to God for all we have and the life we live; to eat more than we should, and to relax in the comfort of faith and family. Then, today, "Black Friday" arrives and a kind of frenzy ensues. Gratitude sometimes turns to greed, relaxation turns to rushing, and peacefulness becomes pressure as we shop, and spend, and decorate our way toward a secular Christmas.

So today, perhaps we can back away from the "Black Friday" mentality and instead take pleasure in God's promise of his everlasting kingdom for those who follow him. After all, what greater gift can there be than salvation? So, in place of embracing the frenzy, maybe we can bask in the comfort of God's love.

To some of us, today's readings may be somewhat unfamiliar. In the Book of Daniel, we hear a lengthy passage about his vision of four powerful beasts. Historical study of this reading tells us that the beasts represent four mighty, earthly kingdoms. Daniel's last vision is of *one like a son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven*. While the beasts represented kingdoms which were temporary, the *son of man* promises eternity. He pledges deliverance and glory to the Jews. This is the kingdom of God. It *shall not be destroyed*. It is everlasting, and we have been invited to live in its splendor.

Luke's Gospel reaffirms this promise. Jesus uses the parable of the fig tree to teach his disciples. Just as the buds on the tree signal what is to come, so, too, do the words of Jesus give assurance that his kingdom will prevail. He tells them, *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away*. This life in Jesus continues beyond our life on earth, beyond our world, beyond time. It is forever.

God's invitation to his kingdom is open to all of us. We are called to live as members of that community. As we look forward to the season of Advent, which begins on Sunday, perhaps we can refocus ourselves away from secularism, and toward spirituality. Rather than spending all our time preparing for Christmas celebrations, let us, instead, prepare for eternity.

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Saturday, November 30, 2019
(Lec. 684)
1) Romans 10:9-18
2) Matthew 4:18-22
Gospel related: CCC 878

**SAINT ANDREW,
APOSTLE
- FEAST**

FOCUS: Like Andrew the Apostle, we, too, are called to catch some fish.

Very little is known about Saint Andrew the Apostle, whose feast we celebrate today. We do know he was the brother of Peter. We know he told Jesus about a boy who had a couple of fish and a loaf of bread when it came time to feed the 5,000. We know he was called by Jesus to be an Apostle.

The Gospels give us three versions of how Andrew was selected. In the Gospel of John, Andrew is called, and then he brings his brother, Peter, to Jesus (1:40-42). In Luke, Jesus names the Twelve, and Andrew is included (6:14-16). The third version is the one we have today from Matthew, which parallels Mark's version. Here Peter and Andrew are called together.

While the "how" is not what is most important, it is worth noting that he is the first to be called by Jesus in John's Gospel. What is important is that Jesus had the confidence to choose Andrew as a key leader in the foundation of the Church. It appears the majority of the Apostles were fishermen. Jesus tells Andrew that he has a different kind of fish for him to start catching. Andrew drops what he is doing without hesitation and goes off with his brother, Peter, and follows Jesus.

The various texts that describe the call of the Apostles have often been chosen for the ordination of bishops and priests. They speak to the powerful and humble responsibility Jesus places on his shepherds. That is why it is so very tragic when that responsibility is at times misused or betrayed. It is here that God's people suffer greatly.

Thankfully, and by God's grace, this is the exception and not the norm. The overwhelming majority of the clergy of our Church take very seriously the call to be good and faithful shepherds to God's people, modeled on so much of Scripture. In fact, today's first reading from Paul's Letter to the Romans emphasizes the powerful and overwhelming task of an evangelist and preacher. Someone has to be sent to preach so that people may come to believe Jesus is the way to salvation. We, all of us, by our baptism, are called to be *those who bring the good news*.

As Andrew in John's Gospel brings Peter to Jesus, so are we to bring others to Jesus. May the grace of this Word and sacrament enable us to be a voice that goes *forth to all the earth*, with words reaching *to the ends of the world*.

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