

# NOVEMBER

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**YEAR A  
WEEKDAYS II**

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2020**

(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

**ALL SAINTS  
- SOLEMINTY**

**FOCUS:** Today's feast draws our attention to our final, transcendent goal – eternal life with God.

The Solemnity of All Saints commemorates all the saints of the Church – known and unknown to us – who have preceded us in death and attained respite in the kingdom of heaven. It also celebrates the bond between them and us, who seek that same union with God in heaven one day.

We are part of the communion of saints by our baptism. *We are God's children now*, John says in today's second reading. *What we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him – [Christ] – for we shall see him as he is.*

Therefore, as brothers and sisters in the Lord, we should treat each other as such, making ourselves pure as Christ is pure. For it is precisely this hope of heaven that has strengthened countless Christians throughout the centuries to overcome heroic struggles, and many martyrs to hold fast to the faith.

The vision that John has in today's reading from the Book of Revelation is of that hope, realized in the light of faith. A great multitude, *from every nation, race, people, and tongue*, arrayed themselves at the throne of the Lamb, and sang praises to God, worshiping him and giving thanks. These are the saints who have gone before us *who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.*

This multitude comprises our heavenly counterparts: People who were once here on earth, sinners just like us, whom God has chosen for himself and for heavenly happiness. They were able to achieve this exalted state not because they were great, but because God is greater. Through their repentance of sin, and God's just judgment and mercy, they have been purified and brought into the Kingdom.

Jesus promises this happiness that is, quite literally, out of this world. It can be found only in the next life, and the first to receive this joy were those who suffered so much sorrow and loss here on earth. This is the reward of faith and righteousness for the meek, the sorrowing, the hungry, and the persecuted.

We do not worship saints. God alone be praised. We do, however, ask the saints to pray for us, that we might overcome our fears, faults, and failings, just as they did, by the grace of God. It has been said, there is no saint without a past, and no sinner without a future. Revelation assures us that the saints come from every walk of life, from the far and dark corners of this world; they emerge victorious in battle because Jesus has already won the war.

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Monday, November 2, 2020  
(Lec. 668)

- 1) Wisdom 3:1-9
- 2) Romans 5:5-11
- 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:** Dying he destroyed our death, rising he restored our life.

This feast of All Souls is an opportunity to continue our tradition, from the days of the earliest Church, of remembering, and praying for, the souls of all who have died in Christ: for their eternal rest in peace. Believing that Christ died and was raised from the dead, opening the gates of heaven to us, we also recognize that even those who die in the light of faith may still be in need of purification. Our prayers, and the prayers of all people throughout time, assist them in this final step of the journey toward heaven.

All of today's readings speak of this sure and certain hope: that all of God's children, living or dead, are in communion with Christ and with one another. It is no accident that this feast follows directly after yesterday's Solemnity of All Saints.

From Wisdom: *The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them ... The faithful shall abide with him in love.*

From Romans: *We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life.*

From John's Gospel: *And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day.*

In every liturgy we celebrate, the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection permeates every word we utter. On every day of our liturgical year, we attempt to plumb the depth of such a wondrous, salvific act – that "dying he destroyed *our* death and rising he restored *our* life" (Preface I of Easter).

So today's solemnity – The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed – is very aptly named. We gather to recall our own departed loved ones, but also to commemorate all those who have died in Christ: Countless souls from countless generations, from near and far, old and young, friends and strangers, who have been reconciled by the love of God.

From the day of our baptism, we, too, were baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ. Therefore, we, the living, need to give endless thanks to God, for Christ has saved us, too. This should inspire certain hope in us that the Father will *raise [us] on the last day*. By Christ's obedience to the will of the Father, "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (CCC 2824). Thanks be to God, indeed!

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Tuesday, November 3, 2020  
(Lec. 486)

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

TUESDAY OF  
31<sup>ST</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Martin de Porres,  
Religious)

FOCUS: Saint Paul invites us to have same attitude as Jesus.

Following Jesus is not a part-time job, not something we do when it's convenient. When we are baptized, we are meant to follow Jesus as our Master, our Teacher, and our Lord. It can be so easy, though, to divide our lives into compartments and set aside Sunday morning for God – preserving the rest for our own pursuits.

Jesus' parable in today's Gospel gives the example of people who chose to follow their own pursuits rather than attend a dinner party they had presumably already agreed to attend. The excuses they give for not attending the dinner – examining a field, evaluating five yoke of oxen, and attending to a new spouse – might seem legitimate at first, yet these are all activities that could be pursued at any time. The dinner is at a very specific time and involves a community of diners, but the invited guests choose to follow their own schedule instead.

Throughout our lives, Jesus offers us these kinds of invitations, to dine with him, as it were: he invites us to service, and to be his heart and his hands in daily circumstances of our lives. Do we find other things preferable to answering these invitations? If so, we have God's word as a grace to help us.

Saint Paul invites us to have the same attitude as Jesus, who *though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped*, but rather answered God's call to love and obedience – to the point of death. Jesus was a young man and could have continued his preaching and healing ministry for decades more – but he responded to the urgent call of obedience, and by his obedience and his death brought salvation to all of us.

Being obedient as Jesus was requires a listening, open heart. Perhaps even a brief prayer for guidance when we come upon a situation could help us be open to God's call, so that we can respond immediately with grace to the invitations to serve that come before us every day.

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Wednesday, November 4, 2020  
(Lec. 487)  
1) Philippians 2:12-18  
2) Luke 14:25-33

WEDNESDAY OF  
31<sup>ST</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Charles Borromeo,  
Bishop)

Gospel related: CCC 1618, 2544

FOCUS: *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*

In today's first reading, Paul tells the Philippians, *God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work.* They share this good news, this joy, with Paul, and are therefore capable of bringing that same joy to others and witnessing to the love of the Father. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus says that the cost of discipleship is high, from hating things we normally love, to carrying our own crosses and following after him.

On the face of it, these seem like contradictory visions of discipleship: share in the joy, hate your own life. But viewed through the eyes of faith, and the meaning behind the words, they make perfect sense.

As with the examples Jesus gives of one who wishes to construct a tower, or a king marching into battle, we who wish to enter the Kingdom – that is, to be his disciples – must absolutely have that end goal first and foremost in mind. Our families and our lives are to be loved, and our possessions deemed important insofar as they are subsumed under the love of Christ and direct us toward him in all things. They are to be hated and renounced – that is, we feel aversion toward them – when they themselves become our end goal or focus apart from life in Christ.

This world is our home, and we are certainly allowed and encouraged to appreciate and enjoy the wonders of Creation and the gifts and blessings we are given! But it is not our *final* home. Dedicating our lives to Christ as his disciples, therefore, enables us, with God's grace, to properly order the love and attachment we have to the things around us. And as God works in us, there is joy to be found in the things of this world, helping us *work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling*, rather than providing obstacles to it.

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Thursday, November 5, 2020  
(Lec. 488)

1) Philippians 3:3-8a

2) Luke 15:1-10

Gospel related: CCC 545, 589, 1443, 1846

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

FOCUS: Jesus cares for each and every one of us.

Today the Pharisees and scribes apply their own judgment to Jesus and to those who follow him. The ones who listen to him are *sinners*. Jesus himself isn't even referred to by his own name, but is rather, *this man*, who eats with *them*.

Yet it is precisely "these" people – the sinners, the tax collectors – who are drawn to Jesus. They are attracted to his words. They want to hear him. They have a hunger for his message. The Pharisees and the scribes, however, do not want to listen. They do not want to learn. Instead, they want to judge: *This man welcomes sinners and eats with them*.

Interestingly, Luke makes a point to note that Jesus addresses the parable, not to tax collectors and sinners, but to the ones who need to hear his message: the Pharisees and scribes. The parables suggest that the Lord is like the good shepherd who goes out to find the lost sheep. The Lord is like the woman who searches her house for a lost coin. Who are the lost in this Gospel? It appears that the true lost are not the ones listening and learning; rather, the lost are those who consider themselves righteous. They are the ones who have wandered from God. They are the ones, so sure of themselves, who think they have no need for God.

Perhaps we all have a little bit of this Pharisee or scribe behavior within us. Perhaps we ourselves use labels as we judge, implying that we are superior to others. We might say "those" people, "this" man, or "that" person. It is often easier to dismiss a person than to see him or her as a unique person, loved and cared for by our gracious Lord.

Perhaps Jesus addresses this parable to us, reminding us that he cares for each and every one of our brothers and sisters and for every one of us – regardless of our race or status or education. He sees *all* of us, not in categories or labels, but as unique and cherished individuals. Shouldn't we strive to do the same?

May the Eucharist, which we now prepare to celebrate, bring us all together as brothers and sisters, and nourish us to see each other with the eyes of our searching and loving Lord.

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Friday, November 6, 2020

(Lec. 489)

1) Philippians 3:17–4:1

2) Luke 16:1-8

Gospel related: CCC 952

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

**FOCUS:** *Our citizenship is in heaven*, and our lives should communicate that reality to the world.

In our first reading today, Saint Paul reminds us that *our citizenship is in heaven*. We live on earth as pilgrims, sojourners, aliens. We are in the world, but not of the world (Cf., John 17:14).

This truth changes who we are, as citizens also of this created world. We are changed in our very being by baptism, and our life of faith and the way we conduct ourselves ought to reflect this. Those who *stand firm in the Lord* do things that worldly people might consider very strange. Things such as spending time in Eucharistic adoration, extending genuine forgiveness to those who hurt us, or telling others about Jesus.

The Christian life truly is not of this world. And we want people to see this reality in the way that we live. This is certainly the story of every canonized saint, whose lives inspire us to seek the things of heaven rather than the things of earth.

We belong to Jesus Christ, who has seated us in heavenly places with him. We live as members of the kingdom of God.

When we live for heaven, we are set free from earthly anxieties. We become people who are concerned with the things that truly matter – loving God, serving others, and gaining eternal life. This is how we become witnesses to people who try in vain to find heaven in this temporary world. We are called to demonstrate to others that they are made for eternity in God. May our earthly pilgrimage remind others of their eternal purpose, and inspire more people to become citizens of heaven.

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Saturday, November 7, 2020  
(Lec. 490)

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

Gospel related: CCC 2424 CSDC 181, 453

SATURDAY OF  
31<sup>ST</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Saturday in honor  
of BVM)

**FOCUS:** In all things, let us give ourselves fully to God.

Today's Gospel is delightfully challenging. And we have to be clear, from the very beginning, that this passage is not teaching that wealth itself is evil, or even that having or spending money is evil. Rather, we might understand two lessons emerging from Jesus' words today: the proper possession and use of wealth/resources, and the word *serve*. Whom, or what, do we serve?

A church can use money to feed the hungry or house the homeless. A family can use money to pay medical costs or send children for a good education. Wealth can and should be used in ways that lead to good. As we support charities, parishes, and individuals we know, our money can be a source of blessing and peace. Where we get into trouble is in serving wealth for the sake of growing in our own possessions, neglecting God as the source of our needs, or in living for money and its attendant benefits to the detriment of others. Money, possessions, and wealth – these are all things, like any other “thing,” that can become idols in place of God. And the simple fact is, we cannot serve both.

At the end of our Gospel passage, Jesus speaks to *the Pharisees, who loved money*, using very grave words: *What is of human esteem is an abomination in the sight of God*. One of the great challenges of following Jesus is to try to align our values more with his. If we are able to give ourselves to God, fully surrender to him, then our values will end up much more in unity with the values of Jesus. God may give us riches. God may give us struggles. The key is that in all things, we give ourselves to God.

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**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2020**

(Lec. 154)

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

Gospel related: CCC 672, 796, 1618

**32<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME**

**FOCUS:** Seeking wisdom because we believe in Christ transforms us and prepares us for eternal life with him.

Our readings today provide some guidance for living in these uncertain times, but the message is not about being prepared for safeguarding our physical well-being. It is an encouraging message about preparing ourselves for that wondrous time when the Lord shall return and we will live forever with him in heaven.

In the Book of Wisdom, we hear three things that are comforting, especially as they relate to the Gospel. First, *She [Wisdom] is readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her*. Simply put, wisdom is not difficult to obtain. In sincerely seeking wisdom, we will recognize it and gain it.

Next, *Taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence*. Just thinking about wisdom will change us. It will not only enlighten us, but perfect us in our ability to make good choices and take right action.

Finally, *Whoever for her sake keeps vigil shall quickly be free from care*. The Book of Wisdom tells us that if we consistently seek God's wisdom, we will find hope in what we learn. This hope allows us to be *free from care* because we learn to trust that our loving God is with us no matter what the future holds, and he waits to welcome us into his Kingdom at the end of our lives.

What we learn from Wisdom has pertinent application to Jesus' words in today's Gospel. The parable of the wise and foolish maidens provides a lesson about the importance of making wise choices each and every day. The oil represents these choices – if we live our lives consistently seeking wisdom because we believe in Christ and seek to grow in love for him, it transforms us. We become more like Christ. As we imitate his care and compassion for others, especially the most vulnerable, our lamps will overflow with the oil of our loving deeds and choices. Our oil will not run out. We will be prepared. We will have enough to keep our lamps lit and be ready to greet the Lord when he arrives.

In this uncertain and ever-changing world in which we live, and in the midst of so much that we cannot control, one thing is certain and ought to fill us with relief, peace, and consolation: Christ will come again! With God's help and the grace of the Holy Spirit, we pray: for wisdom; to make wise choices; and to keep our lamps full for the time when the cry will arise, *Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!*

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Monday, November 9, 2020  
(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:** As we celebrate the Dedication of Saint John Lateran, let us celebrate our rededication to what it really means to be Church.

Today, we celebrate the feast of the Dedication of Saint John Lateran, the Cathedral Church of the Diocese of Rome and therefore the Church of the Bishop of Rome, who is Pope Francis. It is an incredibly beautiful church, well worth a day's visit when in Rome.

As beautiful as any basilica, temple, or church might be, the metaphor for it is equally as profound. In our readings today, we have three different images or metaphors presented to us.

In Ezekiel's vision, the ideal temple has life-giving water flowing forth from it. Saltwater is made fresh, creatures living in the waters are in abundance, and the fruits of the trees along its banks bring nourishment and healing to all.

Saint Paul tells us that we are God's temple. He warns that we must take care how we build our temples. For our foundation must have Jesus Christ as our cornerstone.

In the Gospel, Jesus confuses the people by telling them he will first destroy, then rebuild, their temple. They take him literally. We know he is referring to his death and then to the Resurrection three days later.

We know the Church continues to suffer from the pain inflicted upon the innocent by those who betrayed their vows, and betrayed the trust of the members of the Body of Christ, whom they served. They used their authority and influence to harm rather than to heal, to hurt rather than help. They forgot they were temples of the Holy Spirit. The living waters dried up and the temple crumbled.

Out of the ashes of this pain can come new hope and a new determination to rebuild the Church, for we are the Church and we are still here. The battered and lifeless body of Jesus lay in the tomb for three days. But then his glorious body rose up and faith was restored.

From the pope's church in Rome to the humblest of chapels somewhere in the hinterlands, the message of faith, the message of hope, the message of charity still rings out loud for all to hear.

Let Ezekiel's vision be our vision for our parish church. Let life-giving waters flow out from here. May the bitter waters of life be made fresh. May the fish and fruits of our labors be plentiful. May all be nourished and healed. May our faith community be an oasis of love, tolerance, and compassion. May the weary find sanctuary among us and be renewed.

As we celebrate the Dedication of Saint John Lateran, let us celebrate our rededication to what it really means to be Church.

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Tuesday, November 10, 2020  
(Lec. 492)  
1) Titus 2:1-8, 11-14  
2) Luke 17:7-10

TUESDAY OF  
32<sup>ND</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Leo the Great,  
Pope and Doctor  
of the Church)

FOCUS: Christian discipleship is one of service in humility.

What is “an attitude of a servant?” Given modern entertainment examples, we may be tempted to get it wrong. We are not menial, lower class, enslaved creatures – we are the adopted sons and daughters of a King! We are children of a loving Father whom we inherently desire to serve out of love and reverence. Just as the nature of a mirror compels it to reflect the light that is directed toward it – physics “obliges” this, as it were – so we, made in the image and likeness of God, are obliged to reflect his image of sacrificial service.

We serve God in the way we love one another. God desires to use our service for good in the world, and for building up the Kingdom. Saint Paul’s Letter to Titus addresses this, as he urges the community to adhere to specific virtues and behavior. But just as importantly, Paul’s words today help us understand what “unprofitable” means in the context of the parable in today’s Gospel.

To refer to oneself as unprofitable is to speak with humility about our actions and service, not our worth as human beings. We have gifts, skills, virtues, and charisms that are valuable in a life of discipleship. But in speaking this way, we are proclaiming that we know we have no right to boast, that it is only through God’s gracious generosity that we have been given these gifts. Paul says, *For the grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age.*

Christian discipleship means having an attitude of a servant in all we do, while framing it in humility. Thus, one day, may we say, upon being welcomed into the heavenly kingdom: *We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.*

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Wednesday, November 11, 2020  
(Lec. 493)

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

WEDNESDAY OF  
32<sup>ND</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Martin of Tours,  
Bishop)

Gospel related: CCC 586, 2463

**FOCUS:** *The kindness and generous love of God saves us and blesses us.*

When we are grateful, we acknowledge the truth of things: the truth that it is *the kindness and generous love of God* which saves us and blesses us. It is not about any righteous deeds we may have done. But how easy it can be to lose this vision!

When things are going well – when we feel like we have power and authority to do as we wish – it is tempting to believe that our success is of our own making, and we fail to give thanks. We fail to see the truth. Thinking this way leads to the *malice and envy* Saint Paul warns against in his Letter to Titus. We think, “I have worked so hard, why does he have more than me?” or “I deserve this, it is owed to me.” Yet the truth is that all things come from the hand of God – our successes are really his, and even the smallest blessing is a gift.

When we are in need, this is easier to see. When we fail and when we struggle, then we know that we are not enough. Then we cry out, like the lepers in today’s Gospel, *Have pity on us!* God, please help! You take care of it, I cannot. These 10 were afflicted by a disease that meant not only physical suffering, but also loneliness and isolation from the life of the community. Surely, they felt their deep need. Nonetheless, only one returns. How easy it is to lose the virtue of gratitude! Although nothing more is said of the other nine, Luke highlights the humility of the one who does return. He was a Samaritan. He was a religious minority, looked down upon by the Jews: a foreigner. *And he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him.*

The humble leper sees rightly. He knows that it is Jesus who has saved him, and he is grateful. *The kindness and generous love of God saves us and blesses us, and we should always be grateful for it.*

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Thursday, November 12, 2020  
(Lec. 494)  
1) Philemon 7-20  
2) Luke 17:20-25

THURSDAY OF  
32<sup>ND</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Josaphat,  
Bishop and Martyr)

Gospel related: CCC 2463

FOCUS: We are invited to take the next step on the path of discipleship.

Who among us doesn't appreciate clarity and certainty? It's nice to know where we stand, nice to know what's coming, so that we can be prepared and plan accordingly. In today's Gospel, it seems that both the Pharisees and the disciples were looking for some clarity – some certainty – in relation to the Kingdom of God. But although Jesus answers their questions and gives them the direction they need (and that we still need today), it's probably not the answer they (or we) were hoping for.

*The coming of the Kingdom of God cannot be observed*, Jesus said, because it is *among you*. The Kingdom of God is already present – not just out there somewhere, but within us, in our hearts. Jesus Christ has established the Kingdom, and we live in it on earth until we reach its fullness in eternal life. It is present when we discern and obey God's will in our lives – whether we think it is convenient or inconvenient, when it leads us on the path down which we are happy to go, as well as when it leads us down a path we might fear to go.

And this is hard, because the Lord is always inviting us to go deeper, challenging us to give a little more of ourselves. And the temptation is to plateau somewhere, to find that comfortable place where we're doing well, we're living good, moral lives, and to go no further. And that's where Jesus' further statement to the disciples reminds us not to get too comfortable, and that plateauing can be dangerous for our souls. Because before the Son of Man has his day, *he must suffer greatly and be rejected by this generation*. As followers of Christ, we are subject to the same.

Fortunately for us, the Lord has given us the strength of the Holy Spirit to help and guide us, and continues to sustain us with his own body and blood, to encourage us on our path of self-sacrifice. As we come to the table, let us do so with hearts hungry to be led out of a place of complacency, and a step further down the road of discipleship.

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Friday, November 13, 2020  
(Lec. 495)

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

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

Gospel related: CCC 1889, 2463 CSDC 34, 583

FOCUS: We are called to sacrifice out of love for Christ.

There is a quote attributed to Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, whom we commemorate today, that says, "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." These words exemplify a message found in today's readings.

In the Second Letter of John, John reminds his community of the centrality of Jesus' love in discipleship: *For this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, as you heard from the beginning, in which you should walk.* The connection of love with the manner in which we walk is striking. It brings a sense of action and journey to the call of discipleship. Jesus' new commandment of love is a commandment that we practice every step of the way, emulating the perfect model of Jesus in his time on earth.

In Luke's Gospel passage, Jesus describes the coming *days of the Son of Man*, comparing it to previous occurrences of rapid change and destruction in Israelite history. His words evoke a sense of urgency in our faith, lived as practice. This urgency is not to panic for the sake of one's own life, but to remember that, as disciples, we are called to a life of sacrifice. Indeed, Christ himself taught us that sacrifice is the way of discipleship.

Self-sacrifice is the way in which we can show the love of God to others. It is a willingness to go anywhere and do anything in order to communicate the love of Jesus to those who do not know him or have forgotten him. Jesus' new commandment to love one another certainly has its challenges, but we are strengthened in the Eucharist. The sacrament we are about to celebrate together perfectly embodies Christ's sacrifice for us, so that we may make sacrifices for others. May the grace we encounter at this table bring us renewed energy to sacrifice out of love for another, as Christ has sacrificed for us.

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Saturday, November 14, 2020  
(Lec. 496)

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

SATURDAY OF  
32<sup>ND</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Saturday in honor  
of BVM)

Gospel related: CCC 675, 2098, 2573, 2613

**FOCUS:** *Pray always without becoming weary.*

God knows us better than we know ourselves, and loves us better than we love ourselves. That's why our greatest happiness lies in trusting in his providence and embracing his will. Whatever we might want to ask of him, we don't know better than God, and even if we did, he is by definition eternal and unchangeable.

So, thanks be to God, we've all received blessings for which it would never have occurred to us to ask for. And our Father could absolutely bestow all his gifts that way if he wanted to, with no regard for our input. But in fact, one of his greatest gifts is that he's made us to be his co-workers, not just passive recipients. He gives us free will so we can be active participants in our own salvation and, as Saint John points out, in the salvation of others. Saint Augustine may have put it best: "God who created you without you, will not save you without you" (*Sermon 169, 13*). So in his eternal plan, there are some gifts and graces that he chooses to give only when we ask for them.

Our prayers don't change God, they change us. So by all means, we should offer simple prayers such as, "Jesus, I trust in you" and "Your will be done" as often as possible. But when we ask him for what we need explicitly, concretely, and as Jesus exhorts us, repeatedly, it changes us into the kind of people who rely more on God than ourselves in all things. We grow in humility and trust to the point where we can sincerely say yes to his will even when he doesn't give us the answer we expect.

And beyond changing us, our Lord assures us that our prayers do change the world. That might be the most shocking part of the whole story: God, who could do it all himself, wants to change the world through our poor prayers. He wants us to be real with him about our needs, no matter how big, small, or shameful. So at every Eucharist and throughout every day, let us pray confidently for ourselves, for those we love, and for the whole world. We have no idea what blessings he's waiting to unleash if we only ask *without becoming weary*.

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**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2020**

(Lec. 157)

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

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

**33<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME**

**FOCUS:** We are called to participate in God's work to multiply goodness in our world.

Many people struggle with projects when there is no deadline. Because there is no particular time it must be done, there is often the temptation to leave it, to do other things.

Today's readings seemingly give us a task that falls into such a category.

Jesus gives us the image of a Master who entrusts his possessions to his servants. I think we often skip over to the actions of the servants at this point, and miss this central element of the story: The master *entrusts his possessions* to them! Jesus is calling us to recognize that God has entrusted us with *his* gifts, and we must use these gifts to multiply what he has entrusted to us. This is a serious task, and many of us have likely struggled to act with the urgency such a task demands.

These readings offer us two other images to help us to see this work more clearly. Proverbs beautifully describes the *how* of this work – with diligence and care, the worthy wife takes the gifts entrusted to her and works with loving hands to multiply good; and Saint Paul points out that, as Christians, we *know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night*.

And yet, we think to ourselves, "Sounds great, maybe, but right now I need to focus on other things." So often, there is the temptation to turn our attention to God's work ... later. Maybe when the children are older, we can follow up on that idea the Holy Spirit keeps prompting us with. Maybe when we've gotten to a certain place in our career, we can start volunteering for that ministry we've always felt drawn to. Maybe when ... maybe when ....

We have been entrusted with the possessions of our Lord – with time, with skills and personal gifts, with experiences and perspective. We're blessed with relationships, with material goods and, most importantly, with the love and grace of God poured out to us in the sacraments and through the Church. We have been given everything. And we know Christ will come again. There is no "maybe when," there is only "now!"

Where are we being called to participate in God's work to multiply goodness in our world? What is the call from God that we have been hesitating to answer? God wants to give us *all we need* to shine the glory of his light into our corner of the world. Let us open our hearts in this Eucharist to receive God's grace and strength so that we, too, may be faithful in *small matters* and *great responsibilities*.

\* \* \*



Monday, November 16, 2020  
(Lec. 497)

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

MONDAY OF  
33<sup>RD</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Margaret of Scotland;  
Saint Gertrude,  
Virgin)

FOCUS: May our faith open our eyes to the Lord.

In the Gospel today Jesus, on the way to Jerusalem, encounters a blind man outside Jericho. He calls out to Jesus for pity, but *the people walking in front rebuked him*. Instead of being silent, however, he cries out even louder, so Jesus has him brought to him.

Addressing Jesus as *Son of David*, the blind man expresses faith in Jesus as the longed-for messiah who was expected to work miracles. So when Jesus asks him, *What do you want me to do for you?* he replies that he wants to see. And while the psalms and the prophet Isaiah speak of the Lord "opening the eyes of the blind" (e.g., Psalms 146:8, Isaiah 35:5), there are no instances in the Old Testament of the actual healing of a blind person. This was reserved for, and proof of, the Messiah.

Jesus' reply to the blind man's request is simple, *Have sight; your faith has saved you*. As is often the case in Gospel miracle stories, we see that Jesus' miracles usually happen in the context of faith.

But they also inspire or strengthen faith. And so Luke tells us that the man who was blind *followed him, giving glory to God*. And, at the same time, *all the people gave praise to God*.

May our faith allow the Lord to open *our* eyes this day, and see what he wants us to see.

**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.

\* \* \*

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

(Lec. 498)

1) Revelation 3:1-6, 14-22

2) Luke 19:1-10

TUESDAY OF

33<sup>RD</sup> WEEK

IN ORDINARY TIME

(OBL MEM

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary,

Religious)

Gospel related: CCC 549, 1443, 2412, 2712

FOCUS: Jesus invites us to dine with him, and we leave the table transformed.

We heard in the first reading: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, then I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me.* How fitting that the Scriptures repeatedly refer to God dining with us. Food is a source of union; it not only sustains our bodies, it also brings us together in joyful sharing.

There are many passages in the Gospels where Jesus dines with sinners. In today's Gospel, we hear the story of Zacchaeus, who is described as *a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man.* From the ancient Jewish perspective, "tax collector" was code for "public sinner," and even more so for a "wealthy" tax collector, who likely acquired his additional earnings by extorting his fellow citizens.

Nevertheless, Jesus encounters Zacchaeus in a tree and tells him: *Today I must stay at your house.* One can picture the ensuing scene: two very different men sharing a meal in Zacchaeus' luxurious home, at a table full of rich food and even richer conversation. Luckily for Zacchaeus, as well as for us, Jesus does not discriminate when it comes to those with whom he dines.

As Catholics, we have the privilege of truly dining with Jesus at each Liturgy of the Eucharist. What does this mean for us? What transformation results from our encounter with Jesus each week? Zacchaeus, upon welcoming Jesus into his home, vows to sell half of his possessions and to repay four times over anyone from whom he has extorted money. Sharing with the Lord in the Eucharist must similarly set our hearts on fire for the God who has given *everything*, most notably his very life, to dine with us.

The miracle of the Eucharist is not simply that bread and wine become the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ, but that we similarly are transformed into the Body of Christ. God invites us to come to the table as we are, sinners and saints alike, but to leave better than we arrived.

\* \* \*

Wednesday, November 18, 2020  
(Lec. 499)

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

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

The Dedication of the Basilicas  
of Saint Peter and Paul,  
Apostles;

USA: Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne,  
Virgin)

Gospel related: CCC 1880, 1936

**FOCUS:** Let us consider how to best use the gifts we have been given to serve God.

If heaven is our goal, today's Gospel makes it clear that we are not to sit idle while we wait for Christ's return. As with all parables, we must keep in mind that they are stories told in symbolic language to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. It would be a mistake to see the harsh and demanding king as a perfect parallel for God the Father. Instead, we can learn from this parable how we, as faithful servants, are called to act.

In its immediate context, this parable was meant to correct the belief of some Jews that the messiah would be a king on earth, bestowing glory and power to the earthly Jerusalem. Instead, like the nobleman in the story, Jesus must depart to a distant country (heaven) before making his return in glory. When he returns, we will not be judged on what we have received, but on how we have used it.

The king condemns the servant – note, using the servant's own words – who has hidden his coins away. The other two are praised. Each servant made a choice that led to the results we hear about. Our gifts and talents are not to be squandered, nor are they to be used for our own glory. God creates each of us with unique gifts and talents for the purpose of building up his Kingdom. These talents are not distributed equally, so that we may learn to rely on one another and to share what we have with those in need (cf., CCC 1936-37). We do not build this Kingdom alone, or for ourselves. We build it together for everyone.

As we wait in hope for Christ's coming, let us consider the gifts we have received, and how we can best use them to know, love, and serve God.

**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."

\* \* \*

Thursday, November 19, 2020  
(Lec. 500)

1) Revelation 5:1-10

2) Luke 19:41-44

Gospel related: CCC 558

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

FOCUS: The enduring message of the Gospel is one of hope and consolation.

Today's first reading from the Book of Revelation begins with John's vision of the mysterious seven-sealed *scroll in the right hand of the one who sat on the throne*, and the admission by John that he *shed many tears because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to examine it*.

Later in John's vision, he sees a Lamb who appears to be slain; it is the Lamb who takes the scroll while others sing, proclaiming him worthy *to receive the scroll and break open its seals*.

This is an allegory for explaining God's salvific plan, and who could accomplish it – his Son. The seven churches to which John writes were under terrible and extensive persecution by the Romans, and so the need for a sort of coded, or covert writing, was essential. Hence the extremely descriptive imagery and numerous literary devices throughout the Book of Revelation, used so as to be able to present a message of Christian discipleship and hope to these communities, while keeping that meaning hidden from the authorities.

This reality, this world in which these Churches are trying to grow and stand firm in their faith, is the very one Christ foresees in today's Gospel reading. The fall of Jerusalem took place in 70 A.D., and the suffering brought about by the Roman siege of the city can hardly be exaggerated. The city and its temple were destroyed; the Jewish priesthood and sacrifices came to an end; and Christians suffered persecution and martyrdom. The tender heart of Jesus grieves at this ghastly vision.

Yet in the midst of all of this lies the promise of salvation that we, today, and those seven churches at the time, know arises from Christ's paschal mystery. In his suffering and death – as the Lamb who was slain, and was the only one worthy of unsealing the scroll – he has redeemed us. Where both John and Jesus wept over the tribulations they envisioned, the enduring message of the Gospel is one of hope and consolation.

Our psalm and response today say it well: *Sing to the Lord a new song of praise in the assembly of the faithful, for the Lamb has made us a kingdom of priests to serve our God.*

\* \* \*

Friday, November 20, 2020  
(Lec. 501)  
1) Revelation 10:8-11  
2) Luke 19:45-48

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

FOCUS: Someday we will rest easy in the sweetness and light of the Glory of God.

Can the word of God be both sweet and sour, as Saint John experienced in the first reading? Absolutely. For while redemption is sweet, the suffering we undergo as Christians is the sour that accompanies it. God's word promises both.

This dichotomy is realized in a single scene, as told by Luke in today's Gospel. As Jesus is driving out the sellers of wares, he says, *It is written, "My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves."* The sweetness of God's dwelling place has been made sour by the profaning of its holiness and glory.

The word of God draws us unto himself. We are sheep who hear and know his voice; we, like the people in the Gospel, hang onto his words. Sweet to our taste are the Lord's promises and decrees; *the joy of [our] heart they are*. Yet we know our own human history of falling from grace, disobedience, exile, and the execution of God's Son. Sour in our stomach are the words that remind us of our sin, and that foretell of the difficulty of picking up our cross and following the One who has made the way for us.

That John is told that he must prophesy again after consuming the scroll seems pertinent to us today as well. The Kingdom, while established by Christ, has not reached its fullness. We, too, who have consumed the Word in our hearing and with our bodies, are to prophesy: to evangelize for the sake of the salvation of the world. And then, when the fullness of time has passed, all that is sour will slip away and we will rest easy in the sweetness and light of the Glory of God.

Saturday, November 21, 2020  
(Lec. 502)

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

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

Gospel related: CCC 330, 575

FOCUS: God is the God of the living, and promises eternal life to us.

In the Gospel, the Sadducees (who deny bodily resurrection) ask Jesus a question about the law, and how it relates to resurrection. Jesus answers: Those who are worthy, and who are *the children of God ... are the ones who will rise*. Then he says, *our God is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive*.

That statement of truth ought to shake us out of any earthly vision of a fullness of life to remind us that we are *eternal* creatures. We are living now at a moment in human history, but we were created for eternity: life with God in happiness and glory.

This is not just a comforting, spiritual exercise to ponder. As beings created for eternity, we begin that life now – in the way we conduct ourselves as children of God. Eternal life comes after human death, of course, but its beginnings start with our baptism: Grafted onto the vine of Christ, we live and die with him, and therefore rise with him, in faith. While the Sadducees could not comprehend being raised from the dead, we profess, and partake in, the reality of resurrection here at Mass. He is our God now, and forever.

So it seems our lives ought to reflect that, no? Not just in our presence here, but in our service to one another; in our love of neighbor; in our care for those most in need. This is how we prepare ourselves to live fully and completely in God's presence when the time comes. Just as no elite athlete would dare expect to be invited to, let alone succeed in, a tournament final without conditioning him or herself to all that is required for perfection in that sport, so no Christian will find him- or herself prepared for a life of perfection if we've not been cultivating it here. For God will raise *us* – and we have the privilege of making ourselves ready with his help.

\* \* \*

## SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2020

(Lec. 160)

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

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

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

FOCUS: The feast of Christ the King allows us to honor Jesus in his glory and take heed of his example in caring for others.

Today is the Solemnity of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. This is a grand and mighty title given to our Lord, as we acknowledge that he is King of Heaven and Earth. Jesus, however, does not call on us to treat him like royalty. Instead, he commands that we pay homage to him by caring for his people. The Gospel is clear: Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, care for the sick, visit the imprisoned, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger. Jesus plainly tells us that by doing for others, we are doing for Jesus himself. Conversely, when we *fail* to care for another and his or her needs, we fail to care for Jesus. All who have answered Christ's call of discipleship, and who love and care for others, will inherit the Kingdom he has prepared for us.

There is an abundance of wisdom in the readings the Church has chosen for this special day. Surely, it is no accident that on the same day that we honor Jesus as King, he is also referred to as shepherd. One title appears grand and mighty. The other seems humble and unassuming, but both are integrally tied to the meaning of this feast. For in coming to inaugurate and reign over the Kingdom, Christ also came in perfect humility. It is a humility that demands the same of us, in a holistic attitude that serves as an antidote to secularism (Cf., Pope Pius XI, *Quas primas* [Encyclical], promulgated Dec. 11, 1925, which introduced the feast).

It is a powerful image in today's Gospel as Jesus sits on his *glorious throne* surrounded by his angels, with the nations assembled before him waiting to be judged. It is clear that those sheep who have listened to his voice will be welcomed fully into the Kingdom, for they will have been living in the Kingdom on earth. The goats, however, will be left aside, having not heeded the simple commands of their shepherd.

If we are gathered here today, it means that we, however well or imperfectly, hear and are listening to our Shepherd's voice. By the way we cooperate with God's grace, we can continue what we are doing, we can begin again, or we can do more to listen and obey his word, and help to bring about the Kingdom here and now.

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Monday, November 23, 2020

(Lec. 503)

1) Revelation 14:1-3, 4b-5

2) Luke 21:1-4

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

(Opt. Mem.

Saint Clement I,

Pope and Martyr;

Saint Columban,

Abbot;

USA: Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro,

Priest and Martyr)

Gospel related: CCC 2544

FOCUS: Give God your whole livelihood.

In the Gospel, we see an example of entrusting one's life to God in the most simple of fashions: A poor widow offers two small coins, *her whole livelihood*, to the treasury. This, Jesus says, is worth more in the eyes of God than large sums of money that are of little consequence to the wealthy people giving it. Consider that she is trusting God to provide for her needs. For *from her poverty*, she gives the two coins. So now, how will she buy food? How will she pay for anything at all?

This short observation by Jesus gives us two things to think about: Are we aware of our own poverty? And are we willing to embrace it by giving to God what we, seemingly, cannot afford to give?

Poverty is usually associated with money – and the lack thereof. But it also means insufficiency. The poverty we experience as humans, no matter our economic status, is our insufficiency ... without God. This is, of course, the relationship between any creator and created being, but it is made all the more so through the Fall and our sinfulness. We are wholly, completely, and necessarily dependent upon God for our existence. Thus, in recognizing our poverty, we recognize our need to be made sufficient – to increase, through the grace of God. The more we recognize the need for, and the immense room we have for, God to work, the easier it is to allow him to do so.

The paradox of giving God what we seemingly cannot afford to give is that everything we have, and are, comes from him anyway. Thus, we are simply returning to him, hopefully with some kind of bountiful interest, that which we have already been given. In doing so, we pledge to him our lives, and give him our whole livelihood.

\* \* \*



Tuesday, November 24, 2020  
(Lec. 504)  
1) Revelation 14:14-19  
2) Luke 21:5-11

TUESDAY OF  
34<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Andrew Dũng-Lạc,  
Priest,  
and Companions,  
Martyrs)

FOCUS: The grace and mercy of God are available for us when we repent and reconcile to him.

In today's Gospel, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. He then goes on to talk about the end times and how false prophets will come along claiming to be him. In the midst of all this dire news, Jesus tells the people not to be afraid.

In our reading from the Book of Revelation, we are presented with the great harvest that will take place at the time of the Final Judgment. The good harvest of the elect will be gathered up and the grapes, those who are ungodly, will be introduced to the *wine press of God's fury*.

Each year, as we come to the conclusion of another Church year and make ready to enter into Advent, our Scripture texts remind us to be prepared for what is coming. We have no idea if we are going to experience the end of the world in our lifetime. Perhaps given all that has happened in 2020, it has certainly seemed more apparent that we might! But the stark reality is that some of us here today may not be here this time next year. It will not be because we moved to a new town or neighborhood. It will be because we have moved on to our face-to-face encounter with the Lord.

This should not be something that frightens us. Remember, Jesus reassures, and commands us to not be afraid. We are most likely good people and we most likely live good lives. Of course, we sin and fall short, but the grace and mercy of God are available for us when we repent and reconcile to him. Could we be more engaged? Perhaps. Is there a bad habit we might change? Sure. So now is the time to make whatever change we need to make in our lives to be ever ready to meet the Lord, when at last the moment is here.

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Wednesday, November 25, 2020  
(Lec. 505)

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

WEDNESDAY OF  
34<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.)

Saint Catherine of Alexandria,  
Virgin and Martyr)

Gospel related: CCC 675

**FOCUS:** *By your perseverance you will secure your lives.*

Persecution. It is something of which we don't want any part. By definition, persecution involves cruelty or ill treatment, especially because of race, religion, or political belief. We don't want to persecute, or to be persecuted. Yet Jesus tells his followers, in today's Gospel from Luke, that they will be persecuted if they proclaim his Word.

If we push through the persecution, whether it's blatant or subtle, then we will be rewarded – as the concluding lines of the Gospel, and the first reading from the Book of Revelation, indicate. Right after Jesus warns his followers that they may be hated and even put to death, he says *not a hair on your head will be destroyed*. It may sound contradictory, but what Jesus is referring to is our spiritual, not physical bodies. It's by denying the Lord that we can be destroyed physically. However, as the Gospel concludes regarding our faith, *By your perseverance you will secure your lives*.

Our hope is manifested in the end-times vision we get from Saint John in Revelation. Here we have martyrs celebrating victory over *the beast*, singing an adaptation of the Song of Moses – a victory song the Israelites sang after crossing the Red Sea marking freedom from slavery.

Together, today's readings give us two reminders: that we will be tested in life due to our proclamation of the Gospel, and that we will be rewarded by the Lord if we remain true to his name. Let us carry these reminders with us as we enter the Church's new liturgical year this weekend.

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

Thursday, November 26, 2020  
(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  
34<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(USA: Thanksgiving Day)

**FOCUS:** We prepare for the greatest gift: God's own self.

Today's readings describe the dramatic times that will precede Jesus' second coming. The readings from the Book of Revelation and Luke's Gospel depict the fall of the great cities of Babylon (which is code for Rome, in Revelation) and Jerusalem, respectively. Before the Lord's return, these flourishing cities will fall to ruin, and all music and merriment, commerce, and prosperity will cease. Yet these readings also contain a prophetic promise: While the mighty will be thrown down, those who belong to God will see their redemption. The time of calamity in the eyes of the world will become a time of rejoicing for those who are called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

So what do these dramatic prophecies mean for us on a national day of thanksgiving – of feasting in a prosperous nation? Of course, there is much to be grateful for – health, faith, family and friends, and the blessings of living in a free country. We thank God for these things! At the same time, our readings teach us that God promises us more than simply earthly blessings. God promises us life with him forever, where his truth and beauty and goodness will reign supreme. God invites us to this feast.

As the readings today describe, our admittance to the wedding feast will be preceded by the loss of many things. The preparations for the feast are not without sacrifice and renunciation. Our hands must be emptied to be able to receive all that the Lord would give. And in the time of judgment, all who prefer the splendor of the earthly Babylon or Jerusalem to the kingdom of God will be cast down.

In addition to the good things in our life, our hardships and crosses can show us where our true home is, even after earthly blessings fade away. On this day of Thanksgiving, let us remember to thank God for these as well – for although he does not will them for us, he allows them and he redeems us in our suffering from them. All that surrounds us reminds us that we are made first and foremost for God, and that our true happiness is in him. Let us thank the Giver of all Gifts for himself, even more than the gifts he gives. And may this robust gratitude ready us for the real feast, the wedding feast of the Lamb.

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Friday, November 27, 2020

(Lec. 507)

1) Revelation 20:1-4, 11—21:2

2) Luke 21:29-33

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

FOCUS: Even when all of creation passes away, the words of our Lord will remain.

We hear in today's reading from Revelation a vision of a former heaven and earth giving way to a new heaven. In the Gospel, Jesus echoes this imagery, but adds that unlike everything else, his *words will not pass away*. After all, the Good News that Jesus gives us is Truth and Light, and cannot be dispelled by darkness. So we must ask ourselves, are we living authentically according to Christ's word? Those who are doing so are living in the Kingdom that is close at hand. They are anchored in the Truth.

Sometimes our goals, even seemingly worthy goals, can be short-sighted or miss the mark. We make decisions rooted in things that are fleeting. We sacrifice things that have long-term importance for things that seem urgent or important now, but really have little long-term value. It can be hard to turn down increased status, accolades, or flattery.

Well-living in Truth – anchoring ourselves to the words of Christ – is kind of a two-step process. We must first immerse ourselves in his words, and then we must accept his commission to live those words and help build his Kingdom.

No matter how we fulfill this commission, let us strive to do so with Jesus' words as the bedrock of our hearts and minds. For if we do, we will surely experience the challenge and conviction of his words that spur us on to the holy actions that lead to everlasting freedom, peace, and love.

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Saturday, November 28, 2020  
(Lec. 508)

- 1) Revelation 22:1-7
- 2) Luke 21:34-36

Gospel related: CCC 2612

SATURDAY OF  
34<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Saturday in honor  
of BVM)

FOCUS: *Be vigilant at all times.*

“Happy New Year’s Eve everyone.” I’m sure there are a few of us here saying: How do we go from Thanksgiving to New Year’s Eve in two days? Well, the answer is that it happens when we switch from the secular calendar to the Church’s liturgical calendar. Tomorrow is the first day of Advent – the beginning of the Church’s liturgical year.

Today, we have very appropriate readings for the dawn of a new year, a time when we often take stock of where we are, while also looking forward to our desired future. Today’s Gospel from Luke comes at the end of Jesus’ ministry, just before his passion narrative. Jesus warns us to be ready, because our judgment may come at any time. To that point, he uses phrases such as, *be vigilant at all times*, and *stand before the Son of Man*. So today is a good day to ask ourselves what our judgment before God might be, if today were our judgment day.

Of course, we all hope that our Lord’s assessment would land us in his heavenly kingdom. We get a glimpse of what that might look like in today’s first reading from Revelation. This book is a recounting of visions given by an angel to John, and today we hear of his final vision that evokes thoughts expressed earlier in Scripture. None is as vivid and memorable as the river of life. We immediately think of the Garden of Eden in the Book of Genesis, but we should also remember Ezekiel’s vision of water flowing from under the threshold of the temple down to the Dead Sea, bringing life to whatever it touched.

God gave humankind everything it needed in Eden, and we threw it away by sinning. The vision in Revelation today shows us a restored Eden that cannot be tainted by sin. We don’t know for sure what heaven will be like, but we know those in heaven will be living in harmony with the Lord, and will be able to see God’s face. We heard the angel say today: *These words are trustworthy and true.*

We know Christ has come, and we know Christ will come again. May the grace available to us in this Advent season help us *be vigilant at all times.*

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**YEAR B  
WEEKDAYS I**

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2020**

(Lec. 2)

1) Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7

2) 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

3) Mark 13:33-37

Gospel related: CCC 672, 2849

**FIRST SUNDAY  
OF ADVENT**

**FOCUS:** We are called to be mindful of God and alert to his ways.

Today we begin Advent, a hopeful and holy season in which we are called to be alert and watchful. This season anticipates the great celebration of Jesus' birth and his Incarnation in human history. While Advent prepares our hearts for Christmas, we are also called in a special way during Advent and throughout our lives not only to "anticipate" something that already happened – Jesus' birth – but to be alert for signs of God's presence in our lives.

It is easy for us to be distracted by the details of what we feel we must do for the celebration of Christmas. We can wander from the ways of God and instead focus on the more secular aspects of the celebration. Like Isaiah, we long to be watchful and alert, as Jesus commands us, and can even beg God to send down a dramatic sign – mountains quaking before us – so that we can remember him in this time of busyness and its many distractions.

In our struggle to be watchful and alert, to walk the ways of God, we can take heart in Paul's words to the Corinthians today. As he did for those early Christians, God bestows countless graces on us and enriches us *in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge ... so that [we] are not lacking in any spiritual gift*. As baptized children of God, we can rely upon the Holy Spirit to keep us alert and watchful for the small ways that God reveals himself to us in our lives. We do not need to ask for spectacular signs of God's presence, but can find them every day of our lives, in countless moments. We are called to watch for those moments when Jesus might come to us – *in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning*.

One way to train ourselves in watchfulness is to adopt, at least during Advent, the nightly practice of the *Examen*. This reflection, from Saint Ignatius Loyola, involves reviewing the past day – not only remembering times when we might have displeased God or missed out on his message to us, but perhaps especially to remember times that God might have been gifting us with a grace. Did a child or a colleague pay us a compliment? Did we gain a sudden insight when dealing with a challenging problem? Were we impressed by the sunrise or by the call or sight of a bird? These can be seen as gifts from God, signs of God's love. Participating in a practice such as this could help us be more alert and watchful throughout the day of the many ways God is present to us.

As we begin to prepare the Eucharistic table on this first day of the Advent season, let us try to be more cognizant of the many ways God uplifts us each day as his sons and daughters.

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Monday, November 30, 2020  
(Lec. 684)  
1) Romans 10:9-18  
2) Matthew 4:18-22  
Gospel related: CCC 878

**SAINT ANDREW,  
APOSTLE  
- FEAST**

**FOCUS:** Called, empowered, and sent – the hallmarks of the Christian disciple.

Saint Andrew, whose feast we celebrate today, is often referred to as the “first called” – a title that derives from the Gospel of John as it recalls that it was he who first encountered Jesus before Simon Peter, his more famous brother. Indeed, as John tells us, it was Andrew who, having first recognized Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah of Israel, introduced his brother to the Lord (John 1:40-42).

The call of Andrew is one of those interesting moments in the Gospels where there are conflicting accounts. In Matthew’s Gospel, which we heard today, Andrew is with his older brother when they are both invited to leave their fishing business and follow Jesus. John, on the other hand, depicts Andrew as a disciple of John the Baptist – sent by the prophet to follow the one described as the Lamb of God. At first glance, these Gospel accounts seem to be in direct contradiction. But although the details may vary, the heart of the encounter remains the same.

Whatever the circumstances of Andrew’s call and first encounter with Jesus, something life-changing and extraordinary happened here. As we hear today’s Gospel, we have to ask ourselves what was it about Jesus that caused this simple fisherman to walk away from his family business and to follow an itinerant preacher who offered so little, and yet promised so much? What was it in the witness, actions, and words of Jesus that caused Andrew to respond so immediately to the invitation and then to spend his life in service of the Gospel message?

As we celebrate Saint Andrew, we, too, are reminded of our invitation and our initial encounter with Christ. We are reminded that in the waters of baptism we have not only encountered Christ and been reborn with him into the promise of new life, but have been entrusted with a sacred mission and vocation of sharing that good news with others. Scripture doesn’t tell us if Andrew and Paul ever met, but we can be assured that they shared the same conviction – that faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes from what is preached in the name of Christ. That was the key to Andrew’s life and his willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice in martyrdom. May Andrew’s example and witness inspire us in our lives of faith.