



Bringing Home the Word

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
November 3, 2024

Take to Heart These Words

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

“**H**ear, O Israel!” (Deuteronomy 6:4) are the first words of the most important declaration of faith for Jewish people, a declaration that is the centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services. It is a kind of “pledge of allegiance” that observant Jews say even today, reminding themselves of the uniqueness of their God and the covenantal relationship they have with this God. In it, they confess that the Lord is their God—their only God. Out of reverence, they do not pronounce God’s personal name. In its

place, they substitute the word Lord. Behind this act of faith is the covenantal promise of God: “I will be your God and you shall be my people” (Jeremiah 7:23).

This covenant carries mutual responsibilities. God will be their God and will be faithful to all that this blessing entails. As God’s people, they will live according to the standards established by God, witnessing to the world the holiness in life lived for and with God. They are to love God with all their hearts, souls, and strength.

Jesus did not change this declaration in any way. It is at the heart of the Christian way of life as well. What Jesus did was throw light on the meaning of living for and with God, of loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength. He insists that to love God is to love others, and to love them as we love ourselves. “Hear, O Israel!...

Take to heart these words” (Deuteronomy 6:4, 6). †



God’s people will live according to the standards established by God, witnessing to the world the holiness in life lived for and with God.

Sunday Readings

Deuteronomy 6:2–6

Hear then, Israel, and be careful to observe [the commandments,] that you may grow and prosper the more.

Hebrews 7:23–28

Jesus, because he remains forever, has a priesthood that does not pass away.

Mark 12:28b–34

[The scribe said to Jesus,] “‘To love your neighbor as yourself’ is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

A Word from Pope Francis

God, who is Love, created us to love and so that we can love others while remaining united with him. It would be misleading to claim to love our neighbor without loving God; it would also be deceptive to claim to love God without loving our neighbor. The two dimensions of love, for God and for neighbor, in their unity characterize the disciple of Christ.

ANGELUS, ROME, NOVEMBER 4, 2018



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do you believe that God wants you to love everyone you meet?
- How can you love those you find difficult?



Love the Baby, Love the Man

Mitch and Kathy Finley

Advent, (which begins in four weeks) is, in part, about waiting and preparing for a baby. Christians love the stories and the images of this baby, born in a place for animals, lying in a manger, the sweet hay breath of cattle and sheep filling the air—not to mention some less pleasant aromas, courtesy of the same bovine and woolly creatures. But the expected baby will not remain a rosy-cheeked plastic figure in a manger scene. Babies become toddlers with opinions, teenagers with even more opinions, young adults who move on with their lives...or not. When we love a baby, we love all that the baby will become, even that which is not so easy to love.

This baby, who will be known as the Son of God, will grow to be the wise and gentle teacher of the gospel. He will beckon us to pay attention to his example. He is poor; he relies on God alone. His message is for all the earth, not just “the chosen.” A cross will be involved. And, with that cross, the promise of resurrection.

The wood of the manger is the wood of the cross. To love this baby is to love his people—all of them—and sometimes to accept the suffering that loving others brings. Saint John defines God as Love and writes about him: “No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us” (1 John 4:12). Jesus’ commandment to love God and love our neighbor echoes in our hearts. If we can obey this most important commandment, then we are promised “peace...like a river” (Isaiah 48:18). †

This reflection is an excerpt from *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Advent and Christmas* by Mitch and Kathy Finley, published by Liguori Publications (828607). Advent begins in four weeks. Visit Liguori.org for *Daybreaks* and other spiritual reading for the season.

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From “In the Words of Henri Nouwen: How to Live a Happier, More Fulfilled Life”

If you are lonely or grieving, live in compassionate community. To follow Christ means to relate to each other with the mind of Christ; that is, to relate to each other as Christ did to us—in servanthood and humility. Jesus didn’t live alone. There were the Twelve and the other disciples. They formed circles of intimacy around Jesus. Where are you getting your affection? Who’s touching you? Who’s holding you? Who makes you feel alive? Who says, “You are a beautiful person, you are the beloved of God, don’t forget it”?

Catholic Update—a subscription newsletter published eleven times a year—explores Church tradition and teaching on contemporary topics. To learn more, visit Liguori.org or call 800-325-9521.



Loving God, help me to do my part in making this world a gentler, kinder, safer place for everyone I meet. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

November 4–9

Monday, St. Charles Borromeo:

Phil 2:1–4 / Lk 14:12–14

Tuesday, Weekday:

Phil 2:5–11 / Lk 14:15–24

Wednesday, Weekday:

Phil 2:12–18 / Lk 14:25–33

Thursday, Weekday:

Phil 3:3–8a / Lk 15:1–10

Friday, Weekday:

Phil 3:17–4:1 / Lk 16:1–8

Saturday, Dedication of the Lateran Basilica:

Ez 47:1–2, 8–9, 12 / 1 Cor 3:9c–11, 16–17 / Jn 2:13–22



Bringing Home the Word †

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
November 10, 2024

Ouch!

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

That's the sound of someone giving until it hurts. Most of us probably will never be in such a situation. It's not that we don't give, but we are seldom asked to give until it really hurts. The women in today's readings were in desperate straits. They hurt even before they opened their hands to give. Both belonged to one of the groups of vulnerable people often identified in the Bible—namely, the resident alien, the orphan, and the widow. Because the

social structure of a patriarchal society is usually built on male kinship, those with no male patron were extraordinarily vulnerable. Consequently, Jewish law made special provision for them. (See Deuteronomy 24:17, 19–21; 26:12–13; 27:19.)

The women in these stories were disadvantaged because they were women, they were widows, and they were poor. How these deprivations interacted with each other isn't specifically mentioned.

It's not their state of deprivation that makes them models for us to emulate. It's their generosity despite their deprivation. The widows featured in today's readings gave from their hearts, not from their abundance. They recognized need in another and did what they could to address that need. That is the virtue set before us today. It is, indeed, heroic!

Do we do what we can—as little as that might be—to help others in need? Or do we cling to what we have, to what we say we are entitled to because we worked for it? Are we that uncaring? Ouch! That hurts! †

Sunday Readings

1 Kings 17:10–16

[Elijah said,] "The Lord, the God of Israel, says, 'The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry...'"

Hebrews 9:24–28

Christ...will appear a second time, not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.

Mark 12:38–44 or 12:41–44

[Jesus said,] "They have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had..."

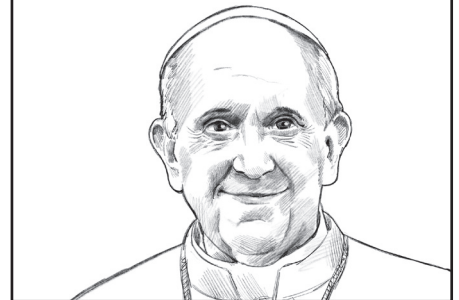


The widows featured in today's readings gave from their hearts, not from their abundance.

A Word from Pope Francis

Brothers and sisters, the Lord's scales are different from ours. He weighs people and their actions differently: God does not measure quantity but quality; he examines the heart; he looks at the purity of intentions. This means that our "giving" to God in prayer and to others in charity...must be an expression of gratuity, as Jesus did with us: he saved us freely.

ANGELUS, ROME, NOVEMBER 11, 2018



REFLECTION
QUESTIONS
QUESTIONS
REFLECTION

- Can you list all those who have been generous to you?
- Do you find generosity difficult or easy?



Turning Our Daydreams Into Prayer

Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

We daydream a lot, though few will admit it. We're all pathological daydreamers, and that isn't necessarily bad. Our hearts and minds, chronically frustrated by the limits of our lives, naturally seek solace in daydreaming. It's an irresistible temptation. Hence the escape into daydreams. And what are the contents of those daydreams?

In our daydreams, we create fantasy lives for ourselves that we play over and over again in our minds as we might play and replay a favorite movie. But there's something important to note here.

In our daydreams, we're never petty or small. We're always noble and grand, the hero/ heroine, generous, bighearted, immune from faults, drawing perfect respect, and making perfect love. In our daydreams, we, in fact, intuit the vision of Isaiah where he foresees a perfect world, the lamb and the lion lying down together, the sick being healed, the hungry being fed, all restlessness being brought to calm, and God drying every tear. Isaiah also fantasied about perfect consummation. His fantasy was a prophecy. In our earthly fantasies, we intuit the kingdom of God.

Of course, this has a downside: [because] in our daydreams we're always the center of attention and admiration, our daydreams can easily stoke our natural narcissism. But, as Henri Nouwen suggests, one of the important struggles in our lives is to turn our fantasies into prayer. That's the task of Advent. †

This reflection is an excerpt from *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Advent and Christmas* by Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI. Advent begins in three weeks. Visit Liguori.org for *Daybreaks* and other spiritual reading for the season.

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "Dorothy Day, Servant of God: Challenged by the Gospel, She Challenges Us"

Dorothy struggled with her conversion to Catholicism, a faith that she had at first associated with wealth and power. But with the coming of the Great Depression, Dorothy experienced a deepening of her commitment. Strengthened by daily Mass, Dorothy transformed her political radicalism into radical Christianity as she devoted her attention and energy to the suffering of the poor. The exemplary life that servant of God Dorothy Day lived every day after deciding to become Catholic challenges us today. Her convictions that there could be a better way to live and that there is enough for everyone to be fed, housed, and cared for were affirmed as she discovered the liturgy and teachings of the Catholic Church and studied the gospels. Challenged by the truths of Jesus Christ and the Church, Dorothy challenges us to live the faith we profess and embrace the teachings of our Lord, especially those that seem impossible to follow.

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*God of abundance,
release me from the
fear of not having
enough so that I may
generously share all
the blessings you have
given me. Amen.*

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

November 11–16

Monday, St. Martin of Tours:

Ti 1:1–9 / Lk 17:1–6

Tuesday, St. Josaphat:

Ti 2:1–8, 11–14 / Lk 17:7–10

Wednesday, St. Francis Xavier Cabrini:

Ti 3:1–7 / Lk 17:11–19

Thursday, Weekday:

Phmn 7–20 / Lk 17:20–25

Friday, Weekday:

2 Jn 4–9 / Lk 17:26–37

Saturday, Weekday:

3 Jn 5–8 / Lk 18:1–8



November 10, 2024

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Bringing Home the Word

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
November 17, 2024

“In Those Days...”

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

This phrase is frequently found in the writings of the prophets. While it sometimes points to a future time of peace and happiness, it often portends imminent fear and trembling, as it does in today’s readings. Both Daniel and Jesus speak of the suffering that will precede the end of the world. This suffering is often called the “birth pangs of the Messiah” (Matthew 24:8; Mark 13:8; John 16:21). This apt metaphor includes both life-threatening distress and wondrous joy over new birth. Pain and subsequent happiness are both described in today’s readings.

The author of Daniel may be

referring to the end of the whole world but is probably also presenting the end of his own world, which would have included the suffering and death of Jews who remained faithful under persecution. Some interpreters suggest Jesus is speaking similarly. That is, he is using a familiar figure of speech that characterizes suffering as birth pangs. According to this metaphor, there might be terrible suffering, but at the end, there is utter happiness.

Both Daniel and Jesus seek to encourage their hearers to remain faithful even in the face of torment, for new life can come out of such suffering. This is a message we all need to hear. Suffering is a reality in every life. How do we endure it? Does it sour us, break us down? Or do we emerge as new people, more sensitive and understanding? It is up to us. †

Sunday Readings

Daniel 12:1-3

[The Lord said,] “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.”

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

But this one offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of God.

Mark 13:24-32

[Jesus said,] “And then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in the clouds’ with great power and glory.”

There might be terrible suffering, but at the end, there is utter happiness.



A Word from Pope Francis

Here then is some advice for making important choices.... Before deciding, let us imagine that we are standing in front of Jesus.... And imagining ourselves there, in his presence, at the threshold of eternity, we make the decision for today. We must decide in this way: always looking to eternity, looking at Jesus.

ANGELUS, ROME, NOVEMBER 14, 2021



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Can you remember a time when joy followed suffering?
- In the midst of suffering, what helps you believe that all will be well?



Alert for God's Love

Patricia Livingston

The liturgical year closes with weeks of apocalyptic end-time Scriptures. Then, moving into Advent, more warnings. The Advent gospels in all cycles have an ominous tone, admonishing us, "Be alert! Stay awake! For you do not know when the time will come" (e.g., Mark 13:33, Matthew 24:42). We are challenged to be vigilant lest a thief break in.

Recently, I have argued with these Scripture choices. The fear response seems like the wrong way to prepare for the Lord's coming. These days, we are surrounded by constant warnings of all kinds, incessant exhortations to beware of enemies sneaking in from every direction. I find I need to be challenged to awaken not for danger, but for joy. For beauty, for kindness, for God's humor in unexpected turns of events. "Wake up for the inbreaking of grace," I need someone to call out to me. "At an hour you do not expect, the Son of God is coming in an amazing moment of love." Christmas is about God coming in an amazing moment of love. I want to spend Advent on the lookout for love.

Last year, one of my grandsons played an angel in the Christmas pageant. He had one line: "Hark! I bring you glad tidings of great joy." Long after the play was over, he kept using the word hark. ("Hark, Grandma is on the phone!" "Hark, the pizza man is at the door!") I am imagining a voice this Advent telling me to hark! In some form, there will be glad tidings of great joy. I was in a crowded mall in early December, surrounded by a cross-section of shopping humanity. Over the din, I heard a classic song in the unmistakable voice of the young Bing Crosby—a song about home and Christmas. For the interlude of an indrawn breath, it seemed all the people paused.

In Advent, we pause to remember that God is calling us home for Christmas. Home, the place deep inside us where God is at home in us. Home, where we never have to be afraid. †

This reflection is an excerpt from *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Advent and Christmas* by Patricia Livingston, Liguori Publications (817380). Advent begins in two weeks. Visit Liguori.org for *Daybreaks* and other spiritual reading for the season.

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "Fulton J. Sheen: Seven Pearls of Wisdom"

No story in all the gospel so much reveals the power of a single passion to enwrap, enchain, possess, and degrade a person's character as the tragedy of the traitor apostle. It is we, then, who know Christ, who possess his truth and his life, who can injure him more than those who know him not. We may never act the traitor's part in a big way, but through insignificant signs: like the kiss of Judas, by a silence when we should defend, by fear of ridicule when we should proclaim, by a criticism when we ought to witness, or by a shrug of the shoulders when we ought to fold our hands in prayer. Well, indeed, may the Savior then ask us, "Friend, will you betray me with a kiss?"

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Faithful God, help me to live today and tomorrow so that on my last day on this earth, I may greet you without regret for the good I failed to do. Amen.

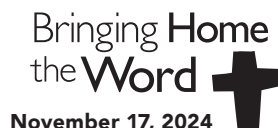
The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

November 18–23

Monday, Weekday:
Rv 1:1–4; 2:1–5 / Lk 18:35–43
Tuesday, Weekday:
Rv 3:1–6, 14–22 / Lk 19:1–10
Wednesday, Weekday:
Rv 4:1–11 / Lk 19:11–28

Thursday, Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary:
Rv 5:1–10 / Lk 19:41–44
Friday, St. Cecilia:
Rv 10:8–11 / Lk 19:45–48
Saturday, Weekday:
Rv 11:4–12 / Lk 20:27–40



November 17, 2024

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Bringing Home the Word

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (B)

November 24, 2024

Your Majesty

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

This an interesting form of address. It is not really a title, like Queen or Lord. Nor does it identify a function ascribed to royalty, such as “ruler.” It refers to a status of excellence. It belongs to the position of royalty itself rather than the person in that position. Just what is majesty, and why do we attribute it to some people?

Originally, people believed that royal individuals were descendants of the gods. This probably explains the notion of royal majesty. The readings for today’s feast

Sunday Readings

Daniel 7:13–14

His dominion is an everlasting dominion / that shall not be taken away.

Revelation 1:5–8

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty.”

John 18:33b–37

Jesus answered [Pilate], “For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

show that Jesus turned upside down the ideas of kingship and royal majesty.

The son of man in Daniel was a heavenly being upon whom “dominion, splendor, and kingship” (7:14) were bestowed by God. The kingship of this figure is universal and everlasting. In the gospels, Jesus frequently identifies with this title. When he does so, he is making a claim about his identity. The passage from Revelation depicts Jesus like this son of man: a heavenly being who comes “amid the clouds” (1:7) as “ruler of the kings of the earth” (1:5).

In the gospel scene, Jesus is interrogated about his identity. He insists that his kingship springs from love and service, not power and force. It’s clear that his royal majesty flows from who he is, not from any political position he might hold. To call him king, as we do with today’s responsorial psalm, was a very dangerous political statement for his early followers, for it claimed that Jesus, not Caesar, is Lord. †



Jesus turned upside down the ideas of kingship and royal majesty.

A Word from Pope Francis

Many of your dreams are the same as those of the gospel. Fraternity, solidarity, justice, peace: these are Jesus’ own dreams for humanity. Don’t be afraid to encounter Jesus: he loves your dreams and helps you to make them come true. Cardinal Martini used to say that the Church and society need “dreamers who remain ever open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.”

HOMILY, ROME, NOVEMBER 21, 2021



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- What does the idea of “servant leadership” mean to you?
- How can we imitate Jesus and be servant leaders in our homes and communities?



The Right Choice

By Paige Byrne Shortal

It was an advertisement in the Sunday paper. One of those glitzy, full-color ads from a major department store. The kind of ad that usually wouldn't register for me. In one corner, the copy read, "Hot Street Savvy." (Definitely not my kind of product!) Down below, in smaller print, it read, "The Right Choice." Pictured were three necklaces—beaded with crosses. At first, I thought they were rosaries, but upon closer examination, I counted the wrong number of beads.

The right choice. It's what the Solemnity of Christ the King is about: making a choice. St. Ignatius Loyola, the father of the Jesuits, wrote a book called *The Spiritual Exercises*. These exercises are still used as the basis for many retreats.

One of the exercises is called The Two Standards, and the retreatant is encouraged to meditate on the standard of Christ and the standard of the Evil One. The kings of old were preceded by their standard-bearers, carrying the flag ("standard") announcing their presence. The soldiers followed the standard and made their choice for their king. The flag inspired the soldiers in battle, and the men sacrificed to keep the standard flying high. When the standard fell, the battle was lost. The standard was the symbol of the king, the kingdom, and all that the king stood for. In the great battle between good and evil, we are called to follow the standard of Christ the King—called to make the right choice.

The battleground changes from season to season. Sometimes it's hard to know who or what is good and who or what is evil. And one of the battle plans of the Tempter is to convince us that there is no battle at all. When we can place the cross next to the words "Hot Street Savvy" and not blink an eye, when our holiest symbol has become a marketing ploy, then our faith is in danger. And yet, I don't want to live in a society so repressive that such things are outlawed. Rather, I want to live in a Christian community that is so aware of the dangers of evil that we are able to see clearly the true path, the true standard flown by the True King. We Christians need a community to help us make the right choice, over and over again. †

This reflection is an excerpt from a Liguori Publications bulletin, November 23, 2003.

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "Liturgical Music: Sing Well, Pray Twice" by Orin Johnson

Music has always been part of what it means to be a person of faith. Look to Psalm 104, which tells of singing praise to God. See Paul's letters to the Colossians (3:16) and the Ephesians (5:19–20), where he urges those communities to sing to God with gratitude in their hearts. Psalm 130 is a lament. Psalm 19's petition and prayer is boldly beautiful. Christ and the apostles sang a hymn after the Last Supper before journeying to the Mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30). Because music is integral to the human experience and to our expressions of our faith, music is then integral to our liturgies, where humanity and faith come together in harmony as a corporate act of worship before God.

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PRAYER

Majestic God, when I am given authority, inspire me to put others first, to serve rather than to be served, to lead without expecting honor or reward. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

November 25–30

Monday, Weekday:
Rv 14:1–3, 4b–5 / Lk 21:1–4

Tuesday, Weekday:
Rv 14:14–19 / Lk 21:5–11

Wednesday, Weekday:
Rv 15:1–4 / Lk 21:12–19

Thursday, Weekday:
Rv 18:1–2, 21–23; 19:1–3, 9a / Lk 21:20–28

Friday, Weekday:
Rv 20:1–4, 11–21:2 / Lk 21:29–33

Saturday, St. Andrew:
Rom 10:9–18 / Mt 4:18–22