



# Bringing Home the Word

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

## Take to Heart These Words

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

**“Hear, 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

**A**dvent, (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](http://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](http://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:**

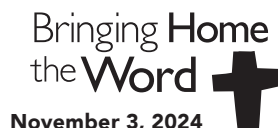
Phil 3:3–8a / Lk 15:1–10

**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



November 3, 2024

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# Alert for God's Love

Patricia Livingston

**T**he 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](http://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



# 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



- 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

**I**t 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