

Weekend Readings & Reflections

November 13-14, 2021 – Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection: *In this, the second-to-last week of the Church year, Jesus has finally made it to Jerusalem. Near to His passion and death, He gives us a teaching of hope—telling us how it will be when He returns again in glory. Today’s Gospel is taken from the end of a long discourse in which He describes tribulations the likes of which haven’t been seen “since the beginning of God’s creation” (see [Mark 13:9](#)). He describes what amounts to a dissolution of God’s creation, a “devolution” of the world to its original state of formlessness and void. First, human community—nations and kingdoms—will break down (see [Mark 13:7–8](#)). Then the earth will stop yielding food and begin to shake apart (13:8). Next, the family will be torn apart from within and the last faithful individuals will be persecuted (13:9–13). Finally, the Temple will be desecrated, the earth emptied of God’s presence (13:14). In today’s reading, God is described putting out the lights that He established in the sky in the very beginning—the sun, the moon and the stars (see also [Isaiah 13:10](#); [34:4](#)). Into this “uncreated” darkness, the Son of Man, in whom all things were made, will come. Jesus has already told us that the Son of Man must be humiliated and killed (see [Mark 8:31](#)). Here He describes His ultimate victory, using royal-divine images drawn from the Old Testament—clouds, glory, and angels (see [Daniel 7:13](#)). He shows Himself to be the fulfillment of all God’s promises to save “the elect,” the faithful remnant (see [Isaiah 43:6](#); [Jeremiah 32:37](#)). As today’s First Reading tells us, this salvation will include the bodily resurrection of those who sleep in the dust. We are to watch for this day, when His enemies are finally made His footstool, as today’s Epistle envisions. We can wait in confidence knowing, as we pray in today’s Psalm, that we will one day delight at His right hand forever.*

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Welcome to our study for the Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time. Let’s begin in Prayer:

All: O my God! Source of all mercy! I acknowledge Your sovereign power. While recalling the wasted years that are past, I believe that You, Lord, can in an instant turn this loss to gain. Miserable as I am, yet I firmly believe that You can do all things. Please restore to me the time lost, give me Your grace, both now and in the future, that I may appear before You in wedding garments. Amen *(A Prayer to Redeem Lost Time – St. Teresa of Avila)*

Leader: *The Scriptures are rarely making a literal prediction of what the end of the world will be like or when it will occur in using imagery of the last days. Rather, it is usually metaphorical imagery used as a prophecy for that specific time, warning people of impending destruction and calling them to deeper conversion. Knowing the exact time of the last day won’t be of much use to us if we aren’t spending our time preparing our hearts, surrendering ourselves to him so that he can transform us to be able to rejoice in eternal glory. It’s difficult for us to think about our death, but considering it and actively preparing to die is critical for the Christian life. In fact, life can be seen as one long preparation for death. Growth in holiness and virtue is simply preparing us to be able to die well with the Lord. As you watch this short video, consider your death. Ask the Lord for the grace to die well and enter into everlasting joy with him. We don’t usually like to think about our mortality on any given day, but let’s try to think more about it with God’s grace. Ponder the following questions as we watch Dr. Edward Sri.*

- *What are your thoughts about death and eternal life? Do you actively try to live every day as though it were your last, or have another way to continually bring this heavenly perspective into your daily life?*

Studiosness vs Curiosity

There are many ways that we try to “divorce” ourselves from reality and distract ourselves from the deeper things in life. One such means particularly strong in our time is the vice of curiosity, an inordinate desire to know something we do not need to know. Temperance is the virtue of moderating the movement of our appetites. Studiosness is a sub-virtue of temperance and moderates the movement of our reason to seek to know. Curiosity is the opposite of studiosness, in that it seeks to know in a disordered way, which doesn’t lead to deeper communion with God, but instead distracts us from that intimacy. This curiosity happens in gossiping, our activity on social media, current events and politics, self-help books that focus our attention to other avenues of healing outside of pursuing an intimate prayer life with God, obsessing over some kind of pop culture, etc.

FIRST READING ~ 1 Daniel 12:1-3 ~

In those days, I Daniel, heard this word of the Lord: "At that time there shall arise Michael, the great prince, guardian of your people; it shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began until that time. At that time your people shall escape, everyone who is found written in the book. "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace. "But the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever."

In the context of the Church's liturgy, the 33rd Sunday is only one week away from the end of the year. Next week is Christ the King. Liturgically we enter an atmosphere of reaching the end of time. Because of this pattern today's readings have an apocalyptic atmosphere of end time struggle and judgement.

Daniel means 'My judge is God'. The Book of Daniel is written during a time of great persecution when Antiochus Epiphanes is forcing Jews to convert to pagan gods. Here is the first time in Hebrew scriptures that a resurrection of the faithful is mentioned. God is the master of history. All those in the book who shine brightly and lead people on the way to justice will be like stars living forever.

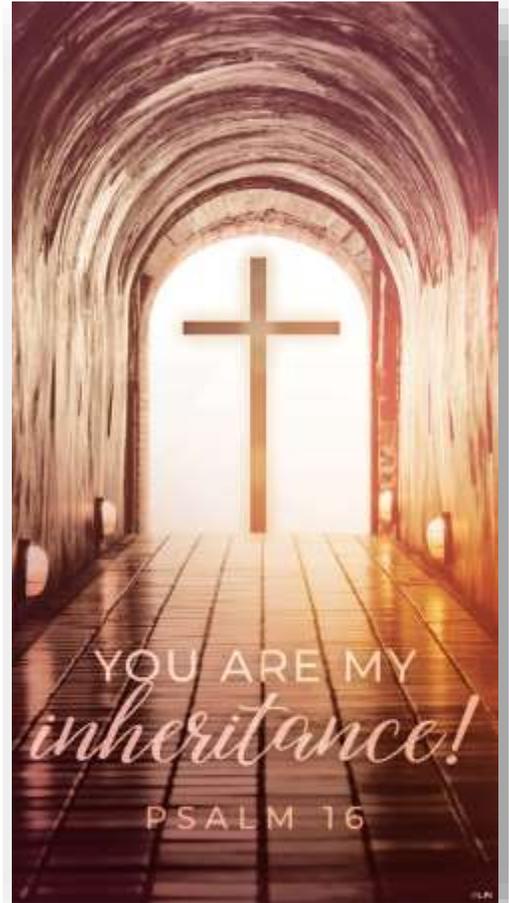
- *Examine your own life How would the statement 'my judge is God' shape your life? Antiochus may not be forcing you to eat pigs flesh (abhorrent and unclean to Jews) but what idols or practices are you subtly invited to 'eat'?*

SECOND READING ~ 2 Hebrews 10:11-14, 18 ~

Brothers and sisters: Every priest stands daily at his ministry, offering frequently those same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But this one offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of God; now he waits until his enemies are made his footstool. For by one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated. Where there is forgiveness of sin, there is no longer offering for sin.

The Letter to the Hebrews concludes. We are taught about the sacrifice of Jesus fulfilling and finishing the Old Testament sacrifices. Notice the image of the Old Testament Priest 'standing' and working each day. Jesus, after the sacrifice of the cross, now being 'seated' and waiting for the time of gathering. Consider the victory and offer of forgiveness that has taken place on the cross. Imagine a winning sports team lifting the captain high onto their shoulders with winning trophy held high! This sacrifice of the cross - like a trophy - is held by the priest in the consecration of the bread and wine into the sacrifice and body and blood of Jesus. We stand together rejoicing. And we receive this sacrifice as a sacred forgiveness and communion meal bringing us into a total physical and spiritual union with God and each other.

- *Do you see the depth and great celebration taking place at Mass? What would you like to learn more about? Who could you ask?*

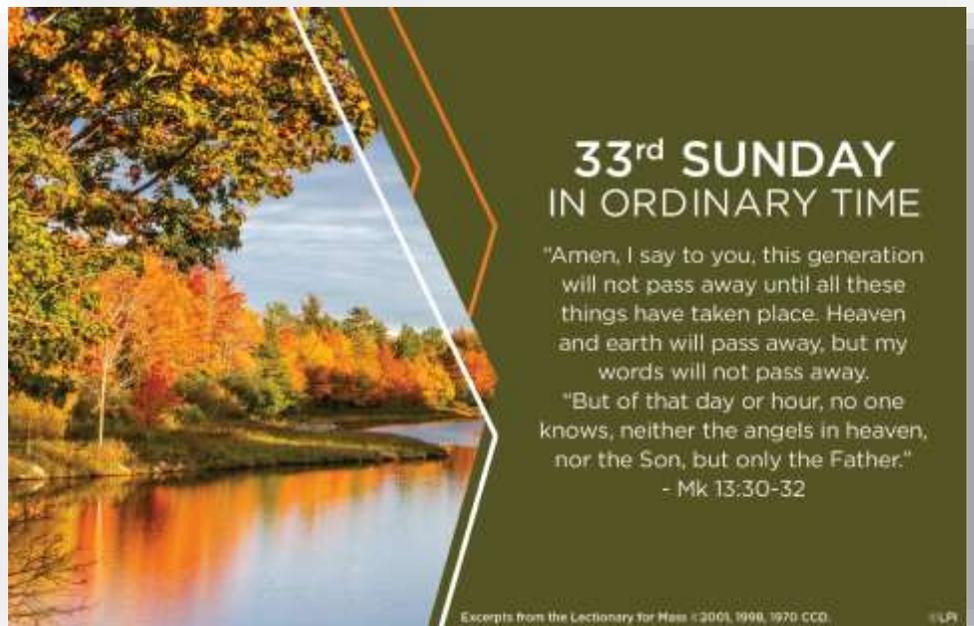


GOSPEL ~ Mark 13:24-32 ~

Jesus said to his disciples: "In those days after that tribulation the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. "And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in the clouds' with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky. "Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, at the gates. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. "But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

The Book of Daniel and The Book of Revelation are apocalyptic writings unveiling a vision of what will take place at the end of time. Each Gospel inserts some apocalyptic passages pointing toward that final day. The images of the sun darkened, stars falling, heavenly struggle, share a cosmic event affecting all of creation.

- *Have you noticed that at the crucifixion of Jesus these images appear? Could this mean that the final event and struggle and victory has taken place on the cross? Could this be why the early disciples were so expectant of Jesus' return before this generation passed away?*
- *Why the delay in the second coming is a question asked by Christians? Why is Jesus sitting waiting in heaven as portrayed in Hebrews? The Gospel points to a gathering of the elect from the four corners of the earth. Will this require all the earth to hear the message of Jesus? Is Jesus lazy on a heavenly chair or waiting urgently to work in the Church, in the sacraments, in each disciple, winning the world heart by heart?*
- *How do you understand Christian waiting for the second coming?*
- *That day or hour is unknown. That it will happen is certain, when it will happen is uncertain. Consider a spiritual practice of imagination prayer. Present yourself to Jesus at the end of time. What does he say? What do you say?*



MEDITATION

Do you recognize the signs of God's kingdom - signs that point to his power and action in our lives and in the world around us? The Lord Jesus came to bring us the kingdom of God and to set us free from bondage to sin, death, and destruction and from the powers of the evil one who tempts us through lies and deception. Jesus told his first

disciples that it was for their benefit that He return to His Father in heaven in order for the Holy Spirit to come (John 16:7) and fill the earth with the fire of God's love, truth, and glory. The Lord Jesus in every age fills His people with the power of the Holy Spirit so that each one of us can hear His voice, understand His truth, and sow the seeds of His word - the good news of the Gospel - wherever He sends us. The Lord Jesus is preparing His people for His return - for the day of "tribulation" and "shaking" when He will appear "coming in clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13:25-26).

The day of the Lord's return will be unlike any other moment in time, history, and destiny for the human race and our place in God's creation. Then the "stars of heaven will fall and all will be shaken" before the presence of the Lord when He comes. Then the peoples of the earth and their rulers will know who is the true King and Ruler over all.

Jesus' first coming was a rescue mission - to free the human race from slavery to sin and Satan - the father of lies. His second coming will be the final completion of His mission when He will "make all things new" - a new heavens and a new earth - after He has put down the last enemy which is death and restores our lowly bodies to immortality when death will be no more (Daniel 12:2-3).

The first coming of the Lord Jesus is inseparably linked with His second coming at the end of this present age. We do not know the day or hour when the Lord will return again in glory. But now in this present age we can experience the first-fruits of the kingdom of God - the abundant new life in the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, and the fruits of the Spirit - love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23) and so many other qualities which the Spirit works within us - thus enabling us to love and serve others with tenderhearted mercy, patience, and goodness.

- *Do you know and experience in your life the first-fruits of the kingdom of God?*
- *How do you react to claims that the world is going to end soon?*
- *What helps you during difficult times?*

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: In closing, let us pray ...

ALL: Lord Jesus, fill me with your Holy Spirit that I may radiate the joy of your kingdom and the fire of your love to all I meet and serve. Direct my life to the glory of your name and to the coming of your kingdom. Amen.

Leader: (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

[Discussion questions created by Fr Frank Bird sm, Marist Priest, and distributed by www.maristlitynz.org, were shared with permission from www.livingtheword.org.nz.]

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