



Bringing Home the Word

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
November 6, 2022

The Fallacy of Reincarnation

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead or the immortality of the soul. But in Maccabees, one of the last books written in the Old Testament, one can see how the Jewish sons find strength to resist their torturers in the belief that they will live forever. They firmly believe that God will raise them up if they remain faithful to him.

Jesus makes it even clearer that our souls will live forever and that our bodies will rise up one day with him

after death. The faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was faith in a living God; even if they had died hundreds of years before, they were alive in God.

We pray together in the Nicene Creed, "I look forward to the resurrection of the dead." Thus, belief in reincarnation is contrary to Christian faith; Jesus taught a different doctrine. We live life on this earth once, die once, and are judged once.

Jesus is the "resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). We hope that one day we will rise with him, even if on earth our lives are "hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). To be a witness to Jesus is to be like the first apostles, a witness to his resurrection.

The living God who called Abraham, Isaac, and Moses is the same God who sent his Son, raised him from the dead, and who calls us to follow him and rise up to be with him forever. +

To be a witness to Jesus is to be like the first apostles, a witness to his resurrection.

A Word from Pope Francis

Christian faith is not a way of exorcising the fear of death; rather, it helps us to face it. Sooner or later, we will all pass through that door....The true light that illuminates the mystery of death comes from the Resurrection of Christ....And this is the light that awaits us behind that dark door of death.

GENERAL AUDIENCE, ROME,
FEBRUARY 9, 2022



Sunday Readings

2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14

"You accursed fiend, you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to live again forever..."

2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father...encourage your hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word.

Luke 20:27-38 or 20:27, 34-38

Jesus said, "God is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When my final days come, will I have any regrets?
- What change can I make today to avoid remorse tomorrow?

Holiday Expectations

By Mitch and Kathy Finley

The happy time of Thanksgiving and then Christmas is coming. But wait. Think back on these celebrations of the last few years. What were they really like for you? Sometimes we look forward to Thanksgiving and Christmas gatherings and they turn out to be disappointing or stressful. Maybe we try too hard to make our celebrations resemble a Norman Rockwell painting, and when it turns out to be a Maurice Sendak kind of day, full of “wild things” that give us a throbbing headache, the day ends unhappily.

If past Thanksgivings or Christmases were not peaceful, now is the time to talk to those with whom you usually spend these days. Schedule a time to listen to each other, even if it’s a conference call. This might be the time to calmly share your hopes and expectations and listen to theirs. What do they love about the family’s Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations? What do they find difficult?

The pandemic forced many people to celebrate differently and for some it was an eye-opener. Some discovered how much they missed everyone gathering together, and when it was taken away, previous irritations seemed minor. Others found they were happier with the forced



simplicity and have decided to forego crowded get-togethers and celebrate on a smaller scale.

The Thanksgiving and Christmas photos we post on social media often don’t represent the entire experience of the holiday. We omit the grumpy parts. For most of us, our holiday gatherings are neither all Norman Rockwell nor Maurice Sendak.

We cannot change others, but we can often change ourselves. As we prepare to gather for these festive occasions, let’s try to remember the voices of the prophets who encourage us to look to ourselves and make straight the parts that are crooked, address traits that keep us from being

the person we are meant to be, the person we long to be. To do this we need a bit of quiet, a time to pray, both alone and with our community of faith. We might need a guide—a confessor or some wise person who seems further down the road than we are, someone who knows the way of the Lord.

If we can remember that we are each flawed, we are more likely to be patient with or even overlook the flaws of our loved ones and enjoy our time together. None of our families is the Holy Family. However, we can try to be just a bit holier and invite Mary, Joseph, and the Baby Jesus to join us around our holiday tables. +

This article is an excerpt from Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Advent and Christmas by Mitch and Kathy Finley, available now from Liguori Publications. Visit Liguori.org to learn more and review our complete list of Daybreaks authors, including Fr. Ron Rolheiser, Sr. Dianne Bergant, Fr. Daniel Horan, and others.



Gracious God, help us to love others so that, in our final days, we feel no remorse about how we lived our lives. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

November 7–12

Monday, Weekday:

Ti 1:1–9 / Lk 17:1–6

Tuesday, Weekday:

Ti 2:1–8, 11–14 / Lk 17:7–10

Wednesday, Dedication of the Lateran

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

Thursday, St. Leo the Great:

Phlm 7–20 / Lk 17:20–25

Friday, St. Martin of Tours:

2 Jn 4–9 / Lk 17:26–37

Saturday, St. Josaphat:

3 Jn 5–8 / Lk 18:1–8

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Bringing Home the Word

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
November 13, 2022

Keeping the End in Mind

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

As we approach the end of the liturgical year, the readings prepare us for the conclusion of our earthly pilgrimage. Jesus describes the end times in today's Gospel. He warns us not to follow false prophets who will arise and claim to come in his name. He prophesies a time of war, natural disasters, famines, and plagues. Persecution will fall upon his followers, allowing them the chance to give testimony—*martyrion* in Greek.

Jesus' monitions for that time are simple: do not follow false prophets

or prepare a defense, but persevere instead. In the section "I Believe in Life Everlasting," the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also speaks to us about the last times (1020–1029). We believe in heaven, hell, and a personal, universal judgment. These last things await us all, and Jesus doesn't keep us in the dark about these realities.

We don't know when the end times may come. But regardless, our call is to live prepared by fulfilling God's will and trusting in him. Jesus clearly wants us to be aware of the coming of the end of the world and the eventual end of our lives on this earth, but he doesn't want us to be overly anxious. If we are in Christ, we are already a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold the new has come. Be not afraid! +

Sunday Readings

Malachi 3:19–20a

For you who fear my name, the sun of justice will arise with healing in its wings.

2 Thessalonians 3:7–12

We wanted to present ourselves as a model for you, so that you might imitate us.

Luke 21:5–19

[Jesus] said, "All that you see here—the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone...."

We don't know when the end times may come. But regardless, our call is to live prepared by fulfilling God's will and trusting in him.

A Word from Pope Francis

Here is the meaning of being wise and prudent: it is a matter of not waiting until the last minute of our lives to cooperate with the grace of God....It would be good to consider for a moment: one day will be the last. If it were today, how prepared am I?

ANGELUS, ROME,
NOVEMBER 12, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I live out each day aware that I will someday meet God face to face?
- Is there anything I should adjust in my life to be better prepared for that day?

Knowing When Our Prayers Are Answered

By Mitch and Kathy Finley

When Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, were very old, the angel Gabriel appeared and announced that their prayers had finally been answered: they are going to have a baby. This elderly couple had yearned for a child all their married lives. This baby is the fulfillment of their hopes and dreams, the end of their lifelong unhappiness. But Zechariah questioned the angel.

Sometimes it is difficult to recognize when our prayers have been answered. In some instances, we can imagine one, and only one, solution to our problem. The lonely don't recognize the opportunities for companionship. The envious don't appreciate their many blessings. The bored don't perceive their prospects for meaningful work, or potential to learn something new, or the possibility of an adventure. With our eyes fixed on some "prize," we miss the blessing offered us, or worse, we turn that blessing into a burden.

Zechariah and Elizabeth's baby grows up to be John the Baptist, the one who announces that the long-awaited Messiah is here, and that it's his cousin, Jesus. But even John doubted. After he was arrested, John sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"



Imagine John in jail—mistreated, hungry, scared, and wondering if he could have made a mistake. If Jesus is the Messiah, why isn't he busting John out of prison? Why is he letting him suffer? Jesus knows exactly what John needs to hear. He reminds John of the prophecies and what kind of Messiah he is—one who will manifest his mission in humble acts of service.

The blind regain their sight. Not only those physically blind but the spiritually blind who had been unable to see the good.

The lame walk. Not just the weak or disabled but those who are emotionally stuck, unable to make a change, to leave behind what is holding them back from being the people they were meant to be.

Lepers are cleansed. Not only those who ache with physical ailments but those who are rejected by society, those thought to be unclean and therefore unwelcome.

The deaf hear. Not only those physically deaf but those unable to hear the truth of God's love.

The dead are raised. All who know Jesus are invited to emerge from tombs where they live a half-life and walk into the light of the gospel.

And the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. This as much as any miracle is what drew the masses to Jesus. To hear the Good News, to be given a reason to hope—this is the One they have been waiting for. They believed! +

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**PRAYER**

Faithful God, help us to believe in your promises and, when doubt assails us, be with us and show us the way. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

November 14–19

Monday, Weekday:
Rev 1:1–4; 2:1–5 / Lk 18:35–43

Tuesday, Weekday:
Rev 3:1–6, 14–22 / Lk 19:1–10

Wednesday, Weekday:
Rev 4:1–11 / Lk 19:11–28

Thursday, St. Elizabeth of Hungary:
Rev 5:1–10 / Lk 19:41–44

Friday, Weekday:
Rev 10:8–11 / Lk 19:45–48

Saturday, Weekday:
Rev 11:4–12 / Lk 20:27–40

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Bringing Home the Word

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (C)
November 20, 2022

The Cross: Altar and Throne

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

In his Gospel, St. Luke, the good doctor, often brings in kingly themes related to Christ’s crucifixion. He does this to highlight that Jesus fulfilled the Jewish belief that the Messiah would unite the three important leadership roles—priest, prophet, and king. The inscription the Romans nailed to the cross above Jesus’ head inadvertently supports the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy—he was indeed the King of the Jews.

He was also the priest who offered his body as a sacrifice for the Chosen People: “It was Caiaphas who had counseled the Jews that it was better that one man should die rather than

the people” (John 18:14). He is both the priest offering obedience to the Father, and he is also the victim who is offered on the altar of the cross. The cross is altar and throne because, as well as priest and victim, Jesus is also the king reuniting his kingdom under God the Father. In so doing, he undoes the sin of Adam, which had been the cause of this division.

Jesus’ prophetic words, “It is finished,” means he has fulfilled his mission as priest, prophet, and king from the throne of the cross. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1047) sums it up when it says that as king and high priest, his sacrifice is total, universal, and definitive. Now all of God’s creatures, man and beast, both natural and in the heavens, can return to the one from whom they came forth and who declared each one good. +

Sunday Readings

2 Sm 5:1–3

You shall shepherd my people Israel; you shall be ruler over Israel.

Col 1:12–20

Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Lk 23:35–43

“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

The cross is altar and throne because, as well as priest and victim, Jesus is also the king reuniting his kingdom under God the Father.

A Word from Pope Francis

Jesus’ promise to the good thief gives us great hope: it tells us that God’s grace is always greater than the prayer which sought it. The Lord...is so generous, he always gives more than what he has been asked: you ask him to remember you, and he brings you into his kingdom!

HOMILY, ROME, NOVEMBER 24, 2013



REFLECTION
QUESTIONS



- Do I trust Jesus to forgive all who sincerely seek forgiveness?
- Do I try to forgive others as Jesus forgives?

Ministers and Priests of God

By Mitch and Kathy Finley

Remember the old TV sitcom *Maude*? That saucy character, portrayed by Bea Arthur, had a standard reply whenever someone insulted her or revealed an unpleasant truth about her. “God’ll get you for that,” she’d snap (cue audience laughter).

As hilarious as that comeback is, it reveals how we sometimes think of God: as a transcendent disciplinarian who watches people closely and punishes them when they do not toe the line. This is not the God Jesus came to reveal, this is not the God Jesus called “Abba.” When he was crucified, did Jesus say to his executioners, “God will get you for this”? On the contrary, from the cross Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Advent, which begins next Sunday, presents us with an opportunity to grow in a spirit of compassion and forgiveness, to remember God’s mercy. If we stop to remember how we have been forgiven, we may find it easier to forgive others. If we remember the undeserved gifts we have received, we may find it easier to be generous. If we remember our failures to love, we might more easily forgive those who don’t love us as we long for them to do. These shifts can culminate in a grace-filled Christmas and a grace-filled life—one where we extend hospitality



to those we find difficult to welcome, embrace those we struggle to love, and open ourselves to the embrace of others.

And isn’t this how believers are called to live? Saint Peter writes to the Christian communities—and to us: “You are ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own...’” (1 Peter 2:9).

Saint Peter doesn’t ask us to change our station in life to be God’s priests and ministers. We are to live out this calling within our families and communities, at school or at work, while shopping or waiting in line.

Just as we prepare what we hope will be the right gift for someone we love, so too, as priests and ministers of the Lord, we prepare to give the gift

of our faith in the way it is needed. Exercising this ministry might mean something as simple as pausing to acknowledge the other person, listening, encouraging, calming, affirming. Whatever we do during our day, we can do it ministerially and in a way that makes people feel attended to when they are with us. As priests and ministers, we are always and everywhere witnesses to the Good News of a merciful and loving God, revealed to the world by Jesus, who was and is “God-with-us.” +

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PRAYER

Merciful God, we are humbly grateful for your forgiveness and we ask for the grace to forgive those who have hurt us. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

November 21–26

Monday, Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary:
Rev 14:1–3, 4b–5 / Lk 21:1–4

Tuesday, St. Cecilia:
Rev 14:14–19 / Lk 21:5–11

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

Thursday, Thanksgiving Day:
Sir 50:22–24 / 1 Cor 1:3–9 / Lk 17:11–19

or St. Andrew Dũng-Lạc and Companions:
Rev 18:1–2, 21–23; 19:1–3, 9a / Lk 21:20–28

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

Saturday, Weekday: Rev 22:1–7 / Lk 21:34–36

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November 20, 2022

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Bringing Home the Word

First Sunday of Advent (A)
November 27, 2022

God Is Near

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

“Be prepared!” But for what? Since we’re entering the season of Advent, we might think that we’re called to prepare for the birth of Jesus. Advent is certainly the time to prepare for Christmas, but it’s much more than that, for God comes into our lives in many different ways, even today. We see evidence of this when, working together, we rebuild not only cities, as Isaiah describes in the first reading, but relationships in families, parishes, and countries.

Remarkable changes take place in our lives when, as Paul bids us, we

“throw off the works of darkness” (Romans 13:12). God comes to us every day with the power we need to improve ourselves and our world. God often comes quietly in ways so ordinary we might miss them. That is the point of Jesus’ insistence to “stay awake” and “be prepared” (Matthew 24:42, 44).

God certainly came long ago as a human being. That was a one-time-only event. We believe that God will come again at the end. That, too, will happen only once. But God comes every day to help us be our better selves. This is what the Advent readings tell us.

What can we do? How are we to prepare for God’s coming? Today’s readings tell us. We must work for the peace that Isaiah describes; we must throw off the works of darkness as Paul instructs; and we must do as Jesus tells us: stay awake, and be prepared. +

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 2:1-5

In days to come,... / One nation shall not raise the sword against another, / nor shall they train for war again.

Romans 13:11-14

Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Matthew 24:37-44

[Jesus said,] “So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.”

*God comes every day
to help us be
our better selves.*

A Word from Pope Francis

Keeping watch does not mean to have one’s eyes physically open but to have one’s heart free and facing the right direction, ready to give and to serve...in a concrete sense, being attentive to our neighbors in difficulty, allowing oneself to be called upon by their needs, without waiting for them to ask us for help.

ANGELUS, ROME, DECEMBER 1, 2019



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Have you experienced God’s presence in the goodness of others?
- Have you been a sign of God’s presence to those around you?

The Days Are Coming

By John F. Kavanaugh, SJ

As a child, once the celebration of Thanksgiving was over, I would go to the windows almost every morning, looking for snow. It is one of my earliest memories, a tissue of images held together by feelings that always had something to do with expectancy.

For children of other countries or climates, the prod might not have been Thanksgiving or the thought of snow, but I wouldn't be surprised if the early days of Advent were, for most Christian boys and girls, eager ones. Some children had Advent calendars; others had wreaths decked with candles. Many observed the strangely prophetic feast of St. Nicholas, with its long stockings bulging with many small promises of greater gifts to come.

Songs changed with December. Worldly anxiety combined with hope in "You better watch out...Santa Claus is coming to town." The "March of the Toy Soldiers" made the spine tingle. And church hymns deepened everything: "O come, O come..." "Wake, awake, the night is dying."

Advent reminds us not only of our great need for God but also of the brokenness of the world, mirrored by the brokenness in our hearts. In order for God to more fully enter our lives, let us more fully enter our own.



Consider it a way of extending the great feast of Thanksgiving. Advent can so easily be co-opted by the mania of consumerism, sparked by that greatest shopping spree of the year on the Friday after Thanksgiving, fueled by our deepest spiritual hungers that we suspect could be eased by some magical gift of grace.

If we try to make Thanksgiving stretch all the way through Advent and to the end of the year, we might find that Emmanuel will be "with us" in unexpected ways. Just as Mary's Advent was one of gratitude spoken in the Magnificat, let ours be a time of naming how God has done "great things" in us.

This exercise might help. Starting with the first of December take a

lined eight-by-eleven sheet of paper. They usually have thirty lines. Each day, for each line, write down two items: something in your world you give thanks for and someone in your life you give thanks for. Your Christmas will be different if you do this. Having become more present to your passing days, you may see how God is with you. By the last day of the year, you will have a page of gifts. And as the new year starts, you might, with Mary, "treasure these things" in your heart. +

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*Lord Jesus, so that the world
may know of your presence
among us, we pray—
be born in us,
be born in our world.*

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

November 28–
December 3

Monday, Advent Weekday:
Is 4:2–6 / Mt 8:5–11

Tuesday, Advent Weekday:
Is 11:1–10 / Lk 10:21–24

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

Thursday, Advent Weekday:
Is 26:1–6 / Mt 7:21, 24–27

Friday, Advent Weekday:
Is 29:17–24 / Mt 9:27–31

Saturday, St. Francis Xavier:
Is 30:19–21, 23–26 / Mt 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6–8

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