

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.
- Luke 21

Thirty-Fourth Week of Ordinary Time: Nov. 23-29, 2008

The Thirty-Fourth Week of Ordinary Time

Sunday is the **Thirty-Fourth or Last Sunday in Ordinary Time** and the **Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King**. Jesus tells the marvelous parable about how we will all be judged - as a shepherd separates sheep from goats, based upon our care for the poor: "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me."

Monday is the **Memorial of Saint Andrew Dung-Lac, priest and martyr, and his companions, martyrs**. Thursday is **Thanksgiving Day** in the United States, with its own special readings about gratitude.

The first reading all week is continues from the mystical **Book of Revelation**.

In this last week of Ordinary Time, we have readings from **Luke's Gospel**, which grow more explicit about the end time as Jesus and his disciples draw closer to Jerusalem. Jesus watches rich people make donations at the Temple but when a poor widow drops in two small coins he notes that her donation is far larger for "she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood." He speaks of the end time, and cautions that many will claim to come in Jesus' name. "Do not follow them!" He says that the cost of following him may be high, and may lead to trials and divisions in families. But, he says, "By your perseverance you will secure your lives." Just as we know what the signs in nature tell us - fig trees in bloom announce the coming of summer - Jesus want us to be aware of the signs of the coming of the Kingdom: "when you see these things happening, know that the Kingdom of God is near." Finally, he tells us not to let our "hearts be drowsy" from drunkenness or anxiety but to be vigilant at all times and to pray for the strength we will need for the "tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man."

Sunday is the beginning of a new liturgical year with the **First Sunday of Advent**. The first reading from the **Prophet Isaiah** as the

Daily Prayer This Week

This week we might be inspired by the gospels to ask God to help us be attentive for the signs of God's presence in our lives each day.

We can ask Jesus to help us open our hearts and be more generous in our daily lives. Inspired by the poor widow, we can ask ourselves, in faith, "How willing am I to share? Do I give from my surplus or is it a real sacrifice?" Are we generous with our time and talents? Perhaps we spend too much time at the computer or at work or in various other projects, neglecting our family or other relationships. Are there places where we could give more of ourselves to people who need us?

When Jesus speaks of the "tribulations" that are ahead for all Christians, this might prompt me to ask myself how willing I am to live my faith courageously. Caring for the poor, seeking justice and self-giving love are basic elements of following Jesus, but they are not valued by our culture. Am I willing to face the objections of family and friends for being so "counter-cultural" in following the gospel?

Perhaps we are distracted by the pressures of daily life, or as Jesus says so aptly, we allow our hearts to grow drowsy from "carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise...." What is it in our lives that keeps us from recognizing God's Kingdom here on earth? Maybe we abuse alcohol, are greedy or know deep inside there is a basic selfishness we don't even want to recognize in ourselves. We can only rely on Jesus for an "awakeness" that will help us to see ourselves as Jesus sees us, with love and forgiveness. It is in that moment, when we recognize that we are "loved sinners" that we can ask for the strength to make changes in our lives.

As we awake each morning and sit by the side of the bed before we begin our day, we can ask Jesus for the grace to see his

people repent before God: "Would that you might meet us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways!" **Mark's gospel** offers the image of the master who leaves his servants in charge while he is away. Be watchful! Be alert!

presence in our lives in this day, and beg him for the help that we need. And in all of the smallest moments of the day, we can ask him from the deepest part of our hearts for the mercy and grace that will keep our eyes and hearts open this day. Then we can say, from our hearts, Thank you.