

I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood.”

Luke 21

Thirty-Fourth Week of Ordinary Time: Nov. 22-28, 2009

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Thirty-Fourth Week of Ordinary Time

On the Thirty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time, we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King. In the first reading from the Book of Daniel, we read of a vision he has of “one like a Son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven.” In John’s Gospel Jesus tells Pilate, “You say I am a king. 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.”

Tuesday is the Memorial of Saint Andrew Dung-Lac, priest and martyr, and his companions, martyrs. Thursday in U.S. is Thanksgiving. Among the many choices for the special Thanksgiving readings is the Gospel of Luke, which reminds us of gratitude as one of the ten lepers who has been healed returns to thank Jesus. “Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”

The first reading this last week of the liturgical year is from the Book of Daniel. These apocalyptic and mystical readings were written to give encouragement to the Jewish people in the face of persecution.

The stories in the Gospel of Luke this week offer a look at the meaning of generosity as the poor widow offers her two small coins. Jesus cautions against those who will come in his name promising salvation: “Do not follow them!” The cost of following his teaching is made clear, “You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed.” In a dramatic look at the end time,

Daily Prayer This Week

It is wonderful how the end of the liturgical year and the beginning of the new year overlap here. We begin this week still reflecting that Jesus is our Savior and King and how this means we are called to help build up the kingdom by loving Jesus in our poorest brothers and sisters. We will encounter readings about the generosity of a poor widow and the warning of the approaching end of time. This is meant to help us begin our preparations for Advent. The actual end of the world may not be at hand, but the Kingdom of God is always at hand for us. It takes focus and paying attention to notice the signs, the ways the Lord makes himself available to us in the midst of our busy days.

We prepare for Advent this week when we can begin a small, but honest prayer, “Come, Lord, Jesus. Come into this place and into that conflict. Let me be attentive and open to see the places where I am restless, distracted and too busy. Come into my real situation - not the way I present myself to others. Come to me - the real me that needs you.” We need this kind of preparation. These are challenging times. Holidays stretch us and test us. Sometimes, under the stress of it all, we regress into behaviors that are bad and destructive, because they are familiar and what so many others are doing. Relationships get strained. Alcohol rarely brings cheer without at times risking bad patterns. So, praying these days - while very busy - praying out of our needs and even our pain - roots us in relationship with the One who always comes to save us.

echoing the Daniel readings, Jesus says, “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” Jesus continues the “end time” message saying, “know that the Kingdom of God is near. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.” He cautions, “Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap.”

Sunday is the beginning of a new liturgical year with the First Sunday of Advent. The first reading from the Book of Jeremiah offers a comforting promise of safety to beleaguered Israel: “those days Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure.” Luke's gospel offers us a repeat of several of the daily gospels, advising us to be alert and vigilant, watching for signs. “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

For those of us in the U.S., we shouldn't miss reflecting on the meaning of Thanksgiving Day. It is an important time to be grateful for what we have received and to accept our responsibility for being good stewards of what we have, sharing God's gifts to us in loving service to others.

For all of us, this is a week to be grateful and to experience the beginning of Advent on Sunday. We can prepare to walk into Church more alert, more ready to explore our longing. We can take advantage of the many resources offered on the ["Praying Advent"](#) pages.

As we grow in our practice of connecting with our Lord and friend in brief moments throughout each day, we can develop the habit of giving thanks each night for what we have received.

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