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## The Thirty-Fourth Week of Ordinary Time

This Sunday is the **Thirty-Fourth or Last Sunday in Ordinary Time** and **The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King**. The readings are filled with wonderful images of the shepherd, caring gently for his flock. In the **Gospel of Matthew** we hear the beatitudes and the powerful image of the last judgment and the sheep being separated from the goats - those who have cared for "the least of my brothers" separated from those who have not.

Monday is the **Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**. Tuesday is the **Memorial of Saint Cecilia**. In the United States Thursday is **Thanksgiving Day** and in the rest of the world, the **Memorial of Saint Andrew Dung-Lac and his companions, 117 martyrs of Vietnam**.

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, echoing the Daniel readings, Jesus says, "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

The special Thanksgiving readings in the U.S. from the **Gospel of Luke** remind 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 week ends with stories of the fig tree buds being an obvious sign of spring just as Jesus' presence is an obvious sign of the Kingdom of God at hand and a caution not to let our hearts be sidetracked by the pleasures and anxieties of daily life. "Be vigilant at all times."

Sunday begins the **First Sunday of Advent** with the image of the master who leaves his servants in charge

## 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.

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 at: [www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Advent](http://www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Advent).

As we grow in our practice of connecting with our

while he is away. Be watchful! Be alert!

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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