**November 17, 2024 – 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Embracing the Eternal

*In our scripture today, pay attention to how many times you see the words “forever, and eternal.” As we near the end of the liturgical year, the Church has given us these messages of hope that remind us to keep our eyes and hearts on God’s steadfast love, mercy and forgiveness.*

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**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, help us to focus on your Word, rather than the things of this world, which will all pass away. Help us to take comfort and solace in your Eternal Power and Glory. Amen

**Reading I** [**Dn 12:1-3**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/daniel/12?1)

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."

**Responsorial Psalm** [**Ps 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/16?5)

**R. (1) You are my inheritance, O Lord!**O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup, you it is who hold fast my lot.  
I set the LORD ever before me;  
    with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.  
R**. You are my inheritance, O Lord!**Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices,  
    my body, too, abides in confidence;  
because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld,  
    nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption.  
R**. You are my inheritance, O Lord!**  
You will show me the path to life, fullness of joys in your presence,  
    the delights at your right hand forever.  
**R. You are my inheritance, O Lord!**

Reading II [**Heb 10:11-14, 18**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/hebrews/10?11)

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 these, there is no longer offering for sin.

**Gospel** [**Mk 13:24-32**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/mark/13?24)

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."

Related Reflections

Yes, it is true. Heaven as it is now, and Earth as it is now will pass away. Our scripture readings speak to this truth. As we draw close to the end of this liturgical year, we are reminded that Jesus will return in splendour and glory and will make all things new. The world as we know it will be made anew and Heaven will be joined to this new Earth and all will be one. Jesus will reign in this new world as the glorious King of all.

One thing this tells us is that we should not become overly attached to the things of this passing world. True, earthly wealth and possessions may offer a temporary satisfaction, but never a permanent one. In time, the things of this world will all disappear. So, if we work to build up only earthly wealth and possessions, we should know that all those things will eventually pass away and we would be left with nothing.

So what is it that is eternal? The answer is given in the passage above. Jesus says that His “words will not pass away.” Namely, all that is true and revealed by God as true is eternal and worth holding on to. This reveals to us that Jesus’ words are the true riches that we must seek.

By embracing His Word, clinging to it, entering into it, believing it and letting it change us, we are embracing the eternal. We are embracing that which we will have for all eternity. This is an important truth to understand and live.

Reflect, today, upon the simple fact that everything in life is passing away except the words of our Lord. All that He has spoken and revealed to us will remain for all time and these truths are the only thing in life worth working for. Turn your eyes to the Word of God and try to grasp its meaning more deeply so that you can begin to build up treasure in Heaven here and now!

**Prayer**: Lord, I do believe all that You have spoken and revealed. Help me to listen to You all the more and to cling to Your every word. Jesus, I trust in You. **Amen --** *(Catholicreadings.org)*

**Confident Hope**

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ enables us to live in confident hope, knowing that we have a future that includes a renewed body living on a renewed earth within a renewed cosmos. The world around us often tempts us to despair. To be a follower of the risen Christ is to take confident hope into places of despair, especially where people are suffering from illness or challenges, so that life may be transformed and have meaning.

Christian hope recognizes and acknowledges pain and suffering – the perceived absence of God – but believes in a future that is permeated with the presence of God. When our present is filled with pain and suffering, we become insecure and preoccupied with self-preservation. Such insecurity causes us to be fearful, anxious and greedy – all qualities that force us to operate out of a narrow space instead of recognizing that we are in a thin space – a thin moment – in which God is present.

Christian hope, on the other hand, embraces the promise of security, which in turn expands the souls and breeds selfless love – the kind of love that reveals the face of God. Christian hope is buoyed by the seeds of a new world already taking shape in this life. It energizes us to live differently and compels us to spread the word that life is indeed worth living.

* Joe Paprocki*, Living the Sacraments,* Loyola Press

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**Attentive Hope**

The words of Jesus [in the Gospel] include frightful and mysterious images of stars falling out of the sky and the sun and moon no longer giving the earth light and warmth. Apocalyptic literature is fraught with such imagery. Usually written for a people who have been, or are going through times of persecution, the message is intended to give hope by encouraging believers to trust in the power and might of God. So it is in Mark’s gospel. The writer is attempting to cool the fears of followers of Jesus who are experiencing persecution for their beliefs and practice.

To contemporary readers, these words may seem far from comforting – or even mundane. After all, we can usually take our pick in the media of stories that feature terrifying footage of war, earthquakes, accidents and fires. Reality shows regularly use crime and disasters to entertain us. We live in an age when we are not only likely to misinterpret signs of the Second Coming, we’re liable to be dulled to the magnitude of them while we sit gazing blankly at a screen.

Tucked in the middle of the gospel is a gentle, homely reference to a fig tree going through its yearly cycle of growth. Attentiveness to the signs around us that are most immediate and ordinary may yield the greatest insights into what lies ahead. The voice of the prophet constantly warns us to see beyond what is placed squarely in front of us. In our media-saturated age, it may be a greater challenge than ever to spot the signs that Christ is coming again and new, to bring peace, to shake up heaven and earth.

As Christians, our lives are rooted in the hope of better days to come. Attentiveness is mixed with anticipation of the day, unknown by all except the Father, when the reign of God is fully realized in our midst. We cannot even begin to grasp what that will look like. We can, however, try to stay alert and aware, grounded in the faith that whatever tribulations may come our way, there are greater days ahead. Then we will join with all creation in “shouting for joy.”

* Prayer Time, Cycle B, Renew International

**The End Times:** Our summer is over, the harvest is upon us, and God is near now, at the door. We envisage Mark’s portrayal of the end times to be about the end of the world, the trials, the omens, the shaking of the heavens, the Son of Man coming in clouds with power and glory upon the winds. And yet, if we take it all so literally, the text has lost its meaning. Jesus said, “I assure you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” How many generations have now passed?  
  
The trick is not reducing the word to a historical period. We must let it speak to every historical generation, including our own. After all, the end times happen to us all, not only to each of us in facing our own sundering death, but to all of us together as a generation that will pass into the mist of disappearing ages.  
  
Conceivably, the text is not so much a warning about the end of the world as it is a commentary on living in it. This day, this moment, this life, is the time to bear the fruit. Another year hurtles by. Seize the day.  
  
As our projects and pretenses mount, as our labors and tasks surround us, as our entertainment and doodling while away the time, we may forget the upshot of our lives. It is to love and evoke love, no matter where we may be, from nursing home to classroom. It is to receive with full heart the gift of Christ’s once-and-for-all redemptive act. It is to sing, with the psalmist: “For you are my God, you alone are my joy. Defend me, O Lord.” It is to welcome the opportunity of each moment, each breath.  
  
Since we do not know the hour or the day, let this be the hour, let this be the day, let this be the time that we live and die. Let us cherish the past, envision the future, and be always in the present.

* John Kavanaugh, S.J. - Published on <https://liturgy.slu.edu/33OrdB111421/theword_kavanaugh.html>

***Related scripture – Psalm 73: 23-26***

Nevertheless I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterwards you will receive me with honor. Whom have I heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion is forever.

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Discussion Questions

Jesus tells us that “Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” Take a few minutes to think of what you know about Jesus, or maybe some favorite quotes or scripture scenes. What images or words of Jesus have staying power in your heart?

Can you think of some “worldly” things that you thought were very important and valuable, but now seem obsolete, or insignificant?

Can you name some things that have felt more lasting in your life? Pay attention to your feelings as you think and talk about these things.

What do you think Jesus is trying to say about the things that we value? What has he been showing us (by his words and behavior throughout the Gospels) about the things he values?

Look at the line in the Gospel about Jesus (our Triune God) coming with great “power and glory.” Talk a little about that image. How does it make you feel?

**Closing Prayer:**

Oh God, we praise you for your Word, and for the gift that it is to us. We thank you for revealing yourself to us in your Word, for showing us the loving, glorious God that you are for us.

Help us to desire your ways and your Word, like the eternal rock that we build our lives on. Help us to love your Word, and plant it deep within our hearts. To hunger for it, to feast on it as our daily bread. To meditate on it, to study it, to understand it, so that we may grow in unity with you.

Oh God, help us not just to be hearers of the Word but to be doers of the Word. And to know that in your Word and in relationship with you, we are living our lives for what matters forever. Amen.

***Our Weekly Focus Thought (adapted from Pope Francis)***

“To enter into the Kingdom of Heaven we must allow ourselves to be astonished.”

*How was I astonished this week?*

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***Other thoughts for the coming week***

*Take some time to reflect on the following thoughts.*

Fr. Richard Rohr lists several “evocative names for God” to invoke the Holy Spirit. (From his book, *The Divine Dance,* Whitaker House, 2016)

Think about how these names tie in with our Gospel theme of “The Eternal God.”

*Inner Breath, Indwelling Presence, Divine DNA, Implanted Hope, Fire of Life and Love, Eternal Praise, Always Already Awareness, Space Between Everything, Flowing Stream, Magnetic Center, The One Eternal Flow.*

Pray over these names in the next few days (like a litany prayer, invoking the Holy Spirit to be with you), and pay attention to how these names make you feel as you pray with them. What do you see and imagine as you think of these images? Which ones resonate with you the most? Why?

Close with this prayer:

“Eternal One, be with us. Fire of Life and Love, show us the way to be light and warmth and love for others.”

***Note: As we close out our SCC sessions, you may want to consider breaking open the weekly readings on your own. The Sunday Website at St. Louis University has weekly reflections. https://liturgy.slu.edu/***

Also, we move into the season of Thanksgiving consider asking for the grace of greater gratitude and a willingness to share our abundance with others. Here’s one more prayer:

*Thank you, Jesus, for showing me there is always room to be more inclusive.  When I am feeling overwhelmed, meet me in prayer.  Stretch my heart.  Expand my ability to love, especially those who are outside my normal circle.  Deepen my desire to share the love you have so generously shared with me with others.  Amen.*

*—Jenéne Francis, published on Jesuitprayer.org*