

Readings for November 18, 2018 -- 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Shining Like the Stars

Jesus tells us, "My words will not pass away." God's love is eternal, and God's great plan includes eternal life for each of us.

Opening Prayer: (Or See back pages)

*God of eternity, God beyond time,
Our refuge and hope from one generation to another:
Before the mountains rose from the sea,
Before the rivers carved the valleys,
Before time itself began,
You are God, eternal.
May your grace be upon us:
Fill us with the Spirit of love. Amen. (Jim Cotter, based on Psalm 90)*

Reading 1 Daniel 12:1-3

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

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 2 HEB 10:11-14, 18

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

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:

Jesus and the prophet Daniel speak of a time when the world, as we know it, will end. We will have to look to God for new directions. Daniel says it will be a time of distress, but the Lord has promised a different kind of light to lead us then. The wise (those who are close to God) shall shine brightly and those who lead others to justice shall be like bright stars. It sounds scary, but the promises are all about hope. The second reading continues to remind us that in times of stress and upheaval we have a spokesman at the right hand of God who loves us and died for us.

From a Catechumen's Lectionary, edited by Robert H. Hamma, Paulist Press, 1988

The Priority of Christ

Things that are eternal – by definition – cannot pass away. Everything else does, as Jesus reminds us. In the opening lines of John's Gospel, we are reminded that "In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was made flesh". The Word Made Flesh is none other than Christ, the eternal one. All things that were created were created through the Word. Put differently, all things were created *through Christ*. Heaven and earth were created through Christ; yet, they too will pass away. Why? Because God's creation can never be God – the Creator. If we believe otherwise – that the created order is the same as God – we would be considered pagans. Instead, we are Christians, and the priority of Christ is front and center because Christ (the Word of God) will not pass away. Without this truth, we are lost in the dark – left to our faltering senses.

How do we acknowledge the humbling truth that heaven and earth will pass away? The appropriate response is to focus, to practice, and to live into the eternal – those eternal things that will not pass away.

Re-Order Your Life around the Priority of Christ: As we approach the season of Advent, it's the time to re-order our lives – not around ourselves – but around the eternal Word of God, that is, Jesus Christ. Doing anything else in this season deprives us of re-cognizing, or thinking again on the things that are eternal. Doing anything else puts to sleep those eternal longings that are tangibly felt and experienced during the mystery of Advent.

Sure, things can sometimes seem dark – but the light of Christ is eternal. Sure, things are changing – but what about the changelessness of God? Sure things are scary – but fear not, for Christ is with us. These are the teachings of Advent. These are the teachings of the Church that pour forth from the Divine Word of God – Jesus Christ.

This Advent, challenge yourself to re-organize your life around the priority of Christ coming into the world, then think on the things that are eternal. Think on, and then practice love, forgiveness, humility, patience, hope, joy, gratefulness, and compassion.

From Bishop Robert Barron (Word on Fire Ministries)

Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world.

(Philippians 2: 14-15)

Discussion Questions:

As you continue to say yes to following Jesus more closely, reflect on those areas in your life where you see that the old way of doing things (life as you know it) is no longer working. In what ways have you experienced this?

Ask Jesus for the courage to make the necessary changes, and to stay on this path in alignment with God's will.

Reflect on how you might survive the loss (or passing away) of things from this world -- a job, death, accident or illness?

These readings make it clear that God's ways are not the world's ways. The good news is that God's ways will survive eternally. How does this affect the way we determine our priorities in life?

Closing Prayer:

A prayer by St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

Let nothing disturb you,
Nothing frighten you;
All things are passing; God never changes;
Patient endurance attains all things;
Whoever possesses God is wanting in nothing;
God alone suffices.

Suggested Music:

Some Final Reflections for the Weeks Ahead

What difference would it make in my outlook if I rolled out of bed and the first thing I did was remind myself that I am a beloved child of God? What would my day look like if I first rooted myself in my identity as a disciple? *(from Lauren Gaffney, ignatianspirituality.org)*

*We will never win the Olympics of humanity
racing for perfection,
but we can walk together in hope,
celebrating that we are loved in our brokenness:
helping each other,
growing in trust,
living in thanksgiving,
learning to forgive,
opening up to others and welcoming them,
and striving to bring peace and hope to the world. -- Jean Vanier (founder of L'Arche)*

Reminder:

Please fill out an evaluation of your SCC experience (either on-line, or the paper copy from your group leader). If you take an evaluation home, please drop it in the mailbox of Rita Zyber in the main church office.