

November 14, 2021 – 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Embracing the Eternal

In our readings today, pay attention to how many times you see the word “forever.” As we near the end of the liturgical year, the Church has given us these readings, which remind us to keep our eyes and hearts on God’s love, mercy and forgiveness, which is eternal.

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

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 II **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

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 to our lives, but never a permanent satisfaction. 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)*

Life Moves Pretty Fast - Kevin Kuehl *(Published by Campus Ministry at Creighton University, 2015)*

Life moves pretty fast. As I read over today's gospel, I find myself surprised that we are already nearing the end of another liturgical year. Next thing you know it will be Thanksgiving and then exams and then another semester will have passed by in an instant. What a blur! Did I even accomplish anything? Have I learned anything? Have I grown in holiness?

As Jesus reminds us today, it can be so easy to forget that our time on earth is finite. We speed past the signs so that we won't see them. Not only do I put off turning in my essays until 11:59 PM, but I also tell myself that I'll try growing in holiness tomorrow...then tomorrow never comes while many perfectly good today's have slipped away. It's easier to dream of a perfect tomorrow than to attempt to live well in the present moment of today. I prefer to wait to be a better person when my "real life" begins. Jesus' advice to me today: "Don't wait! Be holier today than you were yesterday!" I won't be perfect today, but the decisions I make to prepare myself in each moment can lead more towards that final goal.

Hearing that no one knows when our final day might come makes today's gospel reading especially unsettling and could even lead us to despair. Instead, Jesus wants to give us hope because although all other things will disappear, he tells us, "my words will not pass away." In this present moment know that Jesus calls to each of us with words that will not pass away, but will remain faithful and true.

In this world where sin and suffering so often seem to have their way, let us keep our eyes on Jesus. In him, we are already forgiven. In him, we already live in the promise of eternal life. In him, though we lose everything, we receive all we need for this world and the next. In Christ, let us find our voice, speaking comfort and hope to those who grieve, and peace and goodwill to those who continue to believe that violence is the solution. Jesus gave himself up to violence and death, but God raised him from the dead, vindicating the way of a peace that surpasses, the way of a love that bears and believes, hopes and endures all things. Live in this love and work for this peace. Let us take up the cross as our rudder, getting out of Jesus' way as he leads how and where we need to go, knowing we have nothing to fear. And now may that peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, this day and forever. Amen. *(From a sermon by Pastor David Lyles, published on <https://coastallutheran.com/>)*

Discussion Questions

Jesus tells us that “Heaven and Earth will pass away.” 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?

Fr. Richard Rohr (see below) lists several “evocative names for God” to invoke the Holy Spirit. Talk about how these names tie in with our Gospel theme of “the Eternal.”

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?

“Eternal One, be with us.”

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

Meditation Suggestion:

Take 5-10 minutes to silently reflect on the following thoughts. Then, share any thoughts that came up for you with the group, if you are willing.

Close your eyes and consider this question: If there is something you imagine that God wants you to know or learn, what would that be?

If there were some piece of wisdom or insight that God was inviting you to discover through your current circumstances, what would that be?

If God were to speak to you and offer you a single sentence – one that you most need to hear in your life right now – what might God say?

Examples of things that people sometimes feel God is saying to them:

I have always loved you, and I always will.

You are home

You are loved.

I created you in my image; you are perfect as you are.

You are whole.

Life is an opportunity to love and be loved.

You deserve to be here.

You are exactly where you need to be in your life right now.

- From Fr. Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance*, Whitaker House, 2016

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.

Focus on Justice

Catherine LaCugna ends her giant theological tome with this one simple sentence. Its simplicity might overwhelm you: “The very nature of God, therefore is to seek out the deepest possible communion and friendship with every last creature on this earth.” (*God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life, Harper San Francisco, 1993*).

That’s the job description of God. That’s what it’s all about. And the only thing that can keep you out of this divine dance is fear and doubt, or any self-hatred. What would happen in your life – right now – if you accepted what God has created and even allowed?

Suddenly, this is a very safe universe.

You have nothing to be afraid of.

God is for you.

God is leaping toward you!

God is on your side, honestly more than you are on your own.

(Fr. Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance*, Whitaker House, 2016)

Question: If God is simply love, and totally on our side, how can we respond to this eternal love? Why is it so hard for us to love and be in friendship with “every last creature on this earth?”

What keeps me from loving as Jesus loves?

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