THE THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME - C

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE
November 23 – 29, 2025

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Sun. Nov.23 — The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES IN HIS GLORY

From an Angelus Message of His Holiness Pope Francis

Mon. 24 — Memorial of St. Andrew Dung-Lac & Companions

LET US GIVE THANKS EVEN FOR THE CROSS

A Letter from one of a group of 117 Vietnamese martyrs

Tues. 25 — Tuesday of the 34th Week in Ordinary Time

BECOMING GOD'S KINGDOM

A Reflection from a sermon by St. Bernard

Wed. 26 — Wednesday of the 34th Week in Ordinary Time

THE VIEW FROM THE BOTTOM

From Scripture as Liberation by Fr Richard Rohr OFM

THANKSGIVING DAY

Thurs. 27 — Thursday of the 34th Week in Ordinary Time

GRATITUDE AND INGRATITUDE

A Reflection from a sermon by St. Bernard

MONASTIC DESERT DAY

Fri. 28 — Friday of the 34th Week in Ordinary Time

PREPARING FOR THE LAST THINGS

A Reflection from Christ & Us by Fr. Jean Danielou

Sat. 29 — Memorial of Our Lady

MARY'S GIFT OF NEW LIFE

A Reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

Sunday

WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES IN HIS GLORY

From an Angelus Message of His Holiness Pope Francis

On this last Sunday of the liturgical year, we are celebrating the Solemnity of Christ, King of the Universe. His is a kingship of guidance, of service, and also a kingship which at the end of time will be fulfilled as judgment. Today, we have Christ before us as King, shepherd, and judge, who reveals the criteria for belonging to the Kingdom of God. Here are the requirements.

The Gospel passage opens with a grandiose vision. Jesus, addressing his disciples in Matthew 25, says: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne" (Mt 25:31). It is a solemn introduction to the narrative of the Last Judgment. After having lived his earthly existence in humility and poverty, Jesus now shows himself in the divine glory that pertains to him, surrounded by hosts of angels. All of humanity is summoned before him and he exercises his authority, separating one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

To those whom he has placed at his right, he says: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me" (vv. 34-36). The righteous are taken aback, because they do not recall ever having met Jesus, much less having helped him in that way, but he declares: "as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (v. 40). These words never cease to move us, because they reveal the extent to which God's love goes: up to the point of taking flesh, but not when we are well, when we are healthy and happy, no; but when we are in need. And in this hidden way, he allows himself to be encountered; he reaches out his hand to us as a mendicant. In this way, Jesus reveals the decisive criterion of his judgment, namely, concrete love for a neighbor in difficulty. And in this way, the power of love, the kingship of God is revealed: in solidarity with those who suffer to engender everywhere compassion and works of mercy.

The Parable of the Judgment continues, presenting the King who shuns those who, during their lives, did not concern themselves with the needs of their brethren. Those in this case, too, are surprised and ask: "Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?" (v. 44). Implying: "Had we seen you, surely we would have helped you!". But the King will respond: "as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (v. 45). At the end of our life, we will be judged on love, that is, on our concrete commitment to love and serve Jesus in our littlest and neediest brothers and sisters. That mendicant, that needy person who reaches out his hand is Jesus; that sick person whom I must visit is Jesus; that inmate is Jesus, that hungry person is Jesus. Let us consider this.

Jesus will come at the end of time to judge all nations, but he comes to us each day, in many ways, and asks us to welcome him. May the Virgin Mary help us to encounter him and receive him in his Word and in the Eucharist, and at the same time in brothers and sisters who suffer from hunger, disease, oppression, and injustice. May our hearts welcome him in the present moments of our life, so that we may be welcomed by him into the eternity of his Kingdom of light and peace.

Monday

LET US THANK GOD EVEN FOR THE CROSS
A Letter from one of a group of 117 Vietnamese Martyrs

St. Paul wrote from prison and chains to praise the name of Christ. How can we do less? We want only that you, too, be inflamed with love for God and join us in praise. God's mercy is forever! God is with us in tribulation and has even made tribulations sweet, for God's mercy is forever!

In the midst of torments which usually terrify people, we are filled with joy and gladness. We are not alone! Christ is with us! Our Master bears the entire weight of the Cross and leaves us only a tiny share. He isn't a mere onlooker but a contestant in the struggle, and a champion and victor. On his head be the crown!

Beloved brethren, as you hear many horrible things, give endless thanks in joy. From God, every good comes. Bless the Lord with us! "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my savior, for he has looked on me with favor".

O praise the Lord, all you nations, acclaim God all your peoples! God chose what is weak in this world to confound the strong and the philosophers, disciples of the wise of this world, and not of God. For God's mercy endures forever!

I write these things so that our faith and yours may be one. In the midst of the storm, let us cast our anchors toward the throne of God. What is that anchor? It is living hope in the hearts of all who suffer and yet look to God and God's Christ in trust.

Beloved, for your part, run so that you may attain the crown. Put on the breastplate of faith and take up the weapons of Christ for the right hand and the left. This is what St. Paul has taught us. Isn't it better to enter life with one eye or crippled, than with all members intact to be cast away? Come to me with your prayers. Grant us the strength to fight the spiritual fight according to the Gospel law, and so fight a "good fight". Let us finish our race with victory.

It may be that we shall not see one another again in this life. We will have the great happiness of seeing each other again in the world to come. Then, standing in triumph and at the throne of the spotless Lamb, we will together join in singing God's praises and exulting forever in joy.

Tuesday

BECOMING GOD'S KINGDOM

A Reflection from a sermon by St. Bernard

When Jesus was conceived, the angel promised that he would receive the throne of his father, David. You have heard that often enough, but have you asked yourself how that promise is to be fulfilled? After all, Jesus never reigned in Jerusalem and refused to let himself be made king over Israel. Standing before Pilate, Jesus even protested that his kingdom isn't of this world.

Part of the answer lies in the fact that there will be a new and heavenly Jerusalem and a heavenly Zion, and that in heaven the only throne is not merely symbolic and earthly but eternal and fully real.

Now think of the rest of the angel's promise, "He will reign over the House of Jacob forever". Once again, if we understand this in an earthly and time-bound way, it doesn't make sense. But if we understand it as meaning he will reign in the hearts of those who give themselves to God and supplant the devil as giver of hope, then it can be literally true.

Supplanting the devil means struggling against vices and evil desires. We want God and God's will to fill our hearts and guide our use of our bodily members. Jesus reigns now only in grace, but soon he will reign in glory. He will reign in the hearts of all those who believe and follow him and will reign there forever. Yes, God's Kingdom is the heart of each believer and faithful follower. God's Kingdom is my heart and yours.

How glorious that Kingdom will be where all are united contemplating God's splendor and shining like the sun with God's power and glory. God grant that Jesus, out of his love, may remember me on that day and deliver me from all that blocks his reign in my heart!

Come, Lord Jesus! Take away every stumbling block to the realization of your Kingdom in my heart and soul. You ought to reign in me, so let it happen fully. Greed for this or that often came and claimed the throne in me; arrogance frequently sought to dominate me; pride sought to be my king. Comfort and pleasure have said, 'We shall reign in you!' Ambition, detraction, envy, and anger have competed for supremacy in my heart. At times, they seemed to have me entirely in their power. But I have resisted, insofar as I could.

I struggled against them, and I won insofar as I have God's help and that of Jesus. Lord Jesus, I acknowledge your right to reign in me. You are God. You are my Lord. I keep myself for you! I declare to all: I will have no King but the Lord Jesus! Come, then, my Lord, and drive away all that would claim me, and let your own power alone prevail in me. You are my king and my God, and you grant victory to Jacob. Establish that victory in my heart and my life so that I may always be yours.

Wednesday

THE VIEW FROM THE BOTTOM

From Scripture as Liberation by Fr Richard Rohr OFM

In almost all of history, the vast majority of people understood the view from the bottom due to their life circumstances. Most of the people who have ever lived on this planet have been oppressed and poor. But their history was seldom written except in the bible. Only in modern times and wealthy countries do we find the strange phenomenon of masses of people having an established identity.

Only by solidarity with the sufferings of other people can comfortable people be converted. Otherwise, we are disconnected from the cross of the world, of others, of Jesus, and finally of our own necessary participation in the great mystery of dying and rising. In the early Christian Scriptures, the New Testament, we clearly see that it is mostly the lame, the poor, the blind, the prostitutes, the drunkards, the tax collectors, the sinners-that really hear the teaching of Jesus and get the point and respond to him. It is the leaders and insiders, the priests, scribes, Pharisees, the teachers of the law, and the Roman leaders who crucify him.

We often miss the core point about how power coalesces and corrupts. Once Christians became the empowered group, we kept this obvious point from hitting home by blaming the Jews, the heretics, and then the sinners. But arrogant power is always the problem, not the Jews or any group we scapegoat. When any racial, gender, or economic group has all the power, it does the same thing. Catholics would probably have crucified Jesus if he had critiqued the Catholic Church the way he critiqued his own religion.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, the first Christians went underground. They were the persecuted ones, meeting in secrecy in the catacombs. The Church of that time was largely of the poor and for the poor.

The turning point, at which the Church moved from being at the bottom to the top, was the year 313AD, when Emperor Constantine supposedly did the Church a great favor by beginning to make Christianity the established religion of the Holy Roman Empire. That's how the Apostolic Church became the established church. As the Church's interests became linked with imperial world views, our perspective changed from the view from the bottom, the persecuted and the outsiders, to the view from the top, where we now were the ultimate insiders with power, money, status, and control. Emperors convened and controlled most of the early church councils. So, in the creeds that emerged, the words used were highly abstract, and there was no mention of love, justice, and peacemaking. These creeds were a far cry from the creeds spoken by Jesus 3 centuries before. That is what happens when we lose the view from the bottom.

Thursday

GRATITUDE AND INGRATITUDE

A Reflection from a sermon by St. Bernard

We know many persons who ask insistently for what they know they lack, but we know exceedingly few who give proper thanks for all they have been given. It is right to pray insistently, but if we are ungrateful, the effect of the prayer is, so to speak, negated. It may actually be kindness to refuse ungrateful sinners what they ask lest they be judged more harshly for lack of gratitude.

How many monks do we see, and weep over, because they suppose that all is well for them so long as they persevere in monastic life? A worm of ingratitude is eating away at their inner self, but is careful not to let itself be seen lest they correct themselves out of shame. It isn't always beneficial to be cleansed of the leprosy that is a worldly life, as when an ulcer of ingratitude is destroying one. Only one out of nine lepers that the Lord healed returned to give thanks. The grateful Samaritan knew that he possessed nothing that he had not received. By the act of thanksgiving, he gave all he had received to God. Happy are those who return each gift of grace to the One who is the fullness of all grace!

It is ingratitude that gets in the way of progress in the life of grace. A gift is, in a sense, lost when it is received ungratefully. The one who considers self-undeserving responds even to small kindnesses with large gratitude. Such a one neither doubts nor ignores the free gift bestowed.

In our own beginnings, we came to count ourselves as strangers to God's kingdom. We acknowledged this and so found the humility and reverence that made us devout enough to be accepted by God as his own. How easy it is, and how soon we forget how much we have received. Whatever we have is a gift. It is wrong to take it for granted. This is especially so where our very friendship with God is in question. The Lord's enemies, Scripture tells us, belong to the Lord's own household. If we receive too lightly all we are given, we can only expect to be judged more gravely.

I ask you all to humble yourselves more and more under the mighty but loving hand of God most high. Let us strive to keep far away from the most wicked vice of ingratitude. If we turn with all our devotion to giving thanks, we gain the grace of our God, and this alone can save us. Not only "by word or tongue, but by deed and truth," we need to show ourselves most grateful. God asks of us not only lip service but genuine acts of thanksgiving. What is more grateful than following our Lord in the deeds of love by which he drew us to God and to salvation. We gather around the altar as at the Lord's Last Supper and listen to his loving words, and begin to see the loving deeds by which he loved us even to the very end. That is the love by which a friend gives life itself to others. Our lives are gratitude when they are the very love with which Jesus loves the Heavenly Father and gives himself for us.

Friday

PREPARING FOR THE LAST THINGS

A Reflection from Christ & Us by Fr. Jean Danielou

The coming of Christ has as its purpose a set of divine works. Those to come won't be less mighty than those already completed, but they will be more glorious. These take place in the sequence of God's mighty works throughout salvation history.

The first of these works is Judgment. It is the work by which righteousness, which is God's faithfulness to himself, is brought about fully. This righteousness is entirely positive. It is the fulfillment of the promises made by God. Judgment is that fulfillment and its manifestation. In other words, it brings to completion the order of present things. Now, true values are hidden, but false values are everywhere put forth. Judgment exposes the nothingness of all that which is not founded upon God. It necessarily condemns that which is not founded on God. It reveals, on the other hand, that what is truly founded upon God has been established forever. Thus, judgment is the manifestation of truth. It manifests the fact that the truth is Christ. It bears witness that those who have believed in Christ have lived in the truth. That is why it will "prove the world wrong about sin and about the rightness of heart; for I am going back to my Father".

The second divine work is the Gathering. "The Son of Man will send out his angels with a loud blast of the trumpet, to gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other". This gathering, as presented in the Hebrew Scriptures, was one of the essential promises made by God through the prophets to a scattered people. Christ has already gathered together in Himself not only the scattered children of Israel but all the groups into which mankind has divided itself. These are made one in a single Church. The ancient liturgy provides a description of the day of the Final Gathering of those who are united in Christ but seem separate: "Gather, O Lord, your Church, from the towns and cities and markets, from the four corners of the universe". This is to be the fulfillment of the priestly prayer "that they should all be one, as we are one". Unity is a divine work. It is the distinguishing mark of Trinitarian life. The unity of the Church is its visible epiphany.

The final work is the resurrection. This is the repercussion in bodies and the entire cosmos of that which was already accomplished in the Person of Christ. Resurrection isn't merely the bringing back to life of bodies for judgment. The general resurrection is of the just and the unjust; it is the divine act that bestows incorruptibility upon the bodies of the saints and delivers them from the slavery of spiritual death. The action of God reaches out to the utmost bounds of creation. God the Redeemer is also God the Creator. He intends to lose nothing of the creation insofar as it is his. Thus, the cosmic meaning of the "parousia" is revealed in its entirety. Beyond humanity, God reaches out to the whole cosmos and raises up a new heaven and a new earth. We are part of that new creation forever.

Saturday

MARY'S GIFT OF NEW LIFE

A Reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

There is a person who, under the cross, fully lives the reality of our redemption. That person is Mary. She represents an immense treasure that Jesus wishes to share with us. Jesus makes her the custodian of this gift, a saving gift, and shows in her and through her a fully human response to unlimited divine love. As we seek to contemplate Mary at the foot of the cross, we need to try to grasp what happened to her at that moment.

Mary is surrendering her son to God's will, and she does it for the sake of all humanity. In that deed, she receives all humanity as a gift; i.e., she loves all, and so she receives the gift of being the mother of all. She has followed God's plan completely and made it her own; it is her way of reaching the total giving in faith to which all are called in the footsteps of Abraham. She has placed her entire self into God's hands and abandoned herself entirely, together with all that she could ever think of as her own. That includes her own dear son. She receives from God what is most dear to God; i.e., the Church as the Body of the Son. This Son will live in the Church born from the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Mary is given to us as the one who more than any other understood the personal meaning—for her—of Jesus' sacrificial offering, of Jesus' love for humanity, and of the fullness of dedication to God's plan that this offering implies. More than anyone else, she can thus receive the gift of a new humanity and a new way of being fully human.

Human history is moving towards an ideal unity and harmony with God, but is shot through with conflict. Progress is made only through a clear determination of history's goal, by a constant effort for good against all adversity and misunderstandings, and by recognizing all the disguises of evil and rejecting them. What part does the woman play in this vision of history? She represents all humanity because she is the one who receives the Word of God and from whom the Son of God is born in Jesus. In her, we see our point of departure and our arrival in reconciliation and eternal life. We are all called to share these with Mary. She is the living symbol of humanity on the move. She is a woman reconciled with herself and her mission. She is the sign of renewed humanity, one in which woman regains her place and role and leads all to universal reconciliation—with God and with one another. We are to learn how to do this in our own lives and mission. She is a living model for us to follow as we journey toward our goal, the goal that we share with her and all humanity.