

Reflections on Gospel Readings for Sundays and Feast Days

November Archive

All Saints Day - 1 st November 2019 (Year C)

Today is All Saints Day where we recall those saints who are at rest now following their labour here on earth. It is interesting that All Souls Day is tomorrow and fitting as we pray to the Saints and our loved ones who have died and are closer to God to intercede on our behalf.

As a child I remember reading books on the saints many of whom in the early church were martyred for the faith like Saint Stephen regarded as the first martyr in Christianity. It led me to daydream and think what I could do so that I can be elevated to sainthood. The thoughts of a child eh?

I never imagined in my adult years that I would be reading about Saints in my own lifetime, Saint Pope John Paul II and Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta who were canonised recently following a rigorous process of investigation after two miracles were attributed to them.

We pray to the Saints based on our need and we may be named after a Saint or a person from scripture. My name is Thomas and although

I was named after a family member I smile when I read the gospel where Thomas doubts that Jesus appeared to the apostles during Thomas's absence. Saint Thomas is the patron Saint of architects, politicians and land surveyors, and who knew?!

When I reflect on All Saints Day I remember those who in this current age have died for their Christian beliefs who have not been marked as martyrs.

Of those who stand up for equality and diversity, my heart is with those who despite the odds continue to stand for what is right and just as this is the Christ like thing to do and who have died for it.

My reflection is what have I done for Christ, what am I doing for Christ and what will I do for Christ? Do I live the gospel despite the cost? I live in a country where freedom of speech exists, and where I am protected by the equality act. Some are not that fortunate.

Fr Tosh Lynch

Saint Mungo's Mission, Glasgow

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time - Luke 19, 1-10

Dearly beloved In today's Gospel, Jesus focuses on the person of Zacchaeus. This Gospel is 'happening' today and we are fully participating in it. Saint Luke tells about an event where a man really wants to see Jesus who is walking near to his place of residence. At the end of that passage there comes an excellent sentiment, which is the essence of the message.

It was Jesus who was looking for Zacchaeus. This is evidenced by the words, "For the Son of Man

came to seek and save what was lost.” Jesus is looking for Zacchaeus; the Saviour cares about this meeting. The Lord tells him to leave the sycamore quickly, because today He must stay at his house. Jesus longs for this meeting. However, we do not know the true reasons that motivated Zacchaeus; perhaps it was only out of curiosity that he wanted to see Jesus. But Jesus says: “I MUST.” Jesus cares more than Zacchaeus; more than all of us. Jesus is looking for us, just as he was looking for Zacchaeus.

Jesus recognises Abraham’s son in Zacchaeus. If he is the son of Abraham, he is also God’s child! Jesus recognises this with all his might. Beloved, in the same way, the Lord Jesus notices this great dignity of the child of God. Jesus discerns this mystery in us; He discerns it in each of us! God’s love will enable us too to discern this mystery in us. Amen.

Fr. Michał Żarkowski CFMD

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time - Luke 20, 27-38

In today’s Gospel reading, we hear an interesting stupid question from the Sadducees who had the majority of the seats on the Sanhedrin or Jewish ruling council. They were more secular in their thinking and practice and were prone towards consorting with the enemy, the Romans. But what is most important to this story is that they denied that the Scriptures taught the bodily resurrection from the dead. They wanted to know only about what was important for this life and didn’t really care what happened after death – that sounds a lot like our secular culture today!

The Sadducees come to Jesus in order to try to trick him – they are intent on asking him a stupid question in order to demonstrate just how ludicrous in their minds the idea of the resurrection really is. What they are suggesting is the fulfillment of the law in Deuteronomy that commanded the brother of a deceased man to marry the widow, his sister-in-law, and have a child with her so that his dead brother’s name would not cease, so they suggest this crazy, one-off situation where seven brothers all marry the same woman and none of them have any children with her. If any one of them had children with her then, in their minds, she would have been the rightful wife of that brother. However, not one of them is bound to her through the procreation of children so which one is her husband?

It is a quandary, or at least, in their minds, it would be if the situation really existed. But instead of a stupid answer which a stupid question deserves, Jesus explains that no one will be married to her or anybody else in the life to come; we will be like angels. Does that mean that we won’t maintain our identity in heaven? Well, I imagine that we will since there would be little point in the resurrection were our resurrected state not to include the elements that go to making us unique individuals. If we do not carry with us our personal identity; our thoughts, our memories, our feelings; then we may as well be dead for all eternity. But on the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples were able to distinguish Moses and Elijah. In addition, the disciples (though not immediately) were able to discern who Jesus was after he rose from the dead, and he is our prototype.

That is what Jesus demonstrates in the last portion of our text. He demonstrates from the Torah or Pentateuch that people are raised to life eternal. When God met Moses at the burning bush at Mount Horeb, God introduced himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, yet God cannot be God of dead people but only of living people.

How do you know that you've answered a question well? One indication is that you don't get any more questions on the matter. The verse after our text ends says, "Then some of the scribes answered, 'Teacher, you have spoken well', for they no longer dared to ask him another question." Thereby, even some of Jesus's other enemies praised him for his wise answer

Our promise of life beyond this one gives to life a certain dimension that makes for a paradox in living. On the one hand, the trivia of this life loses its importance, but values, the important things, take on added meaning. We are assured of heaven and, because of that assurance, we live differently, we live for God, we respond to God, we rejoice in this life and we celebrate eternity.

Fr Julian Kent CFMD

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time - Luke 21, 5-19

Are we ready for that? To be betrayed by our relatives, to be killed and all of that because of our strong faith in Jesus's promise?

Or are we sitting comfortably on our sofas, watching and commenting, sometimes posting but all from a safe and cosy sedentary position with zero risk?

We need to offer our lives to Jesus not in 50%, not even in 95% leaving a small percentage to ourselves. It must be radical, it must be complete and it must hurt. If you are comfortable with your life, there is a risk that when the time comes, you will hear "Verily I say to you, I have not known you.". What then? Does it not scare you? If it does, as it does scare me - please, there is still time for us to bravely follow Christ even if it leads us to martyrdom.

Fr. Chris CFMD

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe - Luke 23, 35-43

On the last Sunday of the Church's year, we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King. What does it mean for us to say that Christ is our King? When we look back over the last Century how should we characterise it? It was certainly an age of technology, one in which our abilities to harness the powers of nature grew at an exponential rate. But with this incredible explosion of scientific and technological knowledge goes an extra responsibility to use it wisely. In other words, it requires good leadership.

Bad leaders are as old as humanity, but in the last century we knew some of the most brutal dictators in all history: Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Idi Amin, Ayotollah Khomeini, Saddam Hussein. In this day our trust of government and politicians seems to be at an all time low. In the church, too, there is a lot of talk about leadership. We crave good leadership, but do we even know what it is anymore? Or maybe we think we know what it is and long for the "good old days", but did we ever really know good leadership?

On the Solemnity of Christ the King, we focus on the claim that Jesus of Nazareth, who as a criminal was executed on a cross, is the leader we look to with our lives. In fact, the Solemnity of Christ the King was added very late to our church calendar in response to the crisis of leadership earlier in that last century. Unlike most other Christian festival days which were established centuries ago, Christ the King was instituted by Pope Pius IX in 1925. Mussolini had been dictator in Italy for three years, Stalin was coming to power in Russia, and Hitler's popularity in Germany was just beginning to take hold. Despite the rising to power of these dictators, this Solemnity asserted that nevertheless Jesus Christ is King of Kings, and that "he shall reign for ever and ever".

This day stands as a critique to every form of earthly power. It stands as a sign of hope in the face of any crisis of leadership.

Fr Julian Kent CFMD

Also on that day Fr Tosh Lynch from our Saint Mungo's Mission, Glasgow writes:

A number of references in scripture from the New Testament refer to Jesus as Christ the King (Mark 15:32, Luke 23:2 and Revelation 1:5).

Pope Paul XI in his encyclical, *Quas Primas* (in the first), addressed Christ's Kingship and in instituting the feast of Christ the King reminded Christians that their allegiance was to their spiritual ruler in heaven rather than an earthly one. This encyclical was written in 1925 after World War 1. In the encyclical Jesus' kingship was given to him by the Father and not obtained by violence.

Up until 1914 history is littered with war and strife, the hunger of power and land. Would it surprise you if I was to say, what has changed?

Jewish tradition would have the name of Jesus alongside either the place he was brought up or as the son of, Jesus the Nazarene, Jesus of Nazareth or Jesus, son of Joseph. The combination of Jesus and Christ are intended to remind the reader that he is the chosen one (Christ in Greek, anointed one and in Hebrew, Messiah).

Our gospel reading (Luke 23:35-43) sees Jesus being mocked and revered. The mockers challenge him to save himself but a robber crucified asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus comes into his kingdom.

Here is a King who humbled himself even to death on a cross. It is a reminder to those in positions of power that there is a greater authority than them, it is to God that we give our reverence first and for most.