



GOD'S WORD THIS MONTH

NOVEMBER

01

SOLEMNITY OF
ALL SAINTS

CALLED TO BE SAINTS

Like the good teacher he is, St Matthew takes great care in arranging the teaching of Jesus in his Gospel. He gathers it into five great sermons. The first sermon opens with the list of nine beatitudes or blessings we read today. The last one closes with another list of seven deeds (feeding the hungry, clothing the naked etc), on which people will be judged at the end of the age. Beatitudes are common in the bible. They are used as short expressions of praise for an individual ("blessed are those who fear the Lord...") and usually mention the reward such persons can expect. All nine of Matthew's beatitudes mention the reward, e.g.

"for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... for they shall obtain mercy.' Someone said that "beatitudes" means "happy attitudes," since they represent the attitudes the follower of Christ should strive to attain. They include, for example, attitudes to worldly wealth, to gentleness in our dealings with others, to making the search for justice so central to our lives that we seem to hunger and thirst for it. Happy attitudes are what make saints. Today, we remember not just the great saints whose names are familiar to us. It may be more important to remember the little saints – the elderly, often fragile, people whose faith never wavered, the strong men and women who carried whole communities on their back, young smiling people who brought goodness with them wherever they went.

A little girl was asked by the priest to explain what a saint was. She thought for a moment, and then remembering the saints in the windows of her local church, she said 'A saint is someone the light shines through!' It is a perfect answer for today's feast. The saints we honour today include the kindly neighbour, the gentle grandmother who encouraged us when we needed it most, the young man who died of a terminal illness, but who never complained. When we celebrate the Feast of All Saints, we are proclaiming our confidence in human nature. There are men and women who whose 'happy attitudes' soften a world that, left to itself, can grow cynical and hard.

TODAY'S READINGS

REV 7:2-4, 9-14 PS 23 1 JN 3:1-3
MATTHEW 5:1-12

44

NOVEMBER

08

32ND SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME

FROM THE LITTLE SHE HAD, SHE PUT IN EVERYTHING SHE OWNED

Today's story of the poor widow is one of the most attractive in the gospels. All ancient temples had treasuries to receive the donations of the visitors. In the Jerusalem temple, there were thirteen bronze offering vessels into which the faithful could place their offerings. The clinking of the large amounts of coinage donated by the wealthy would probably have drawn admiring glances. The poor widow's two small coins fell almost silently, unnoticed by any save Jesus. He points that she has made the greatest offering of all. While the wealthy gave from their surplus and would probably never miss it, her offering, small and all as it was, probably meant that she had to cut back on some of the essentials for herself and her family.

Our widow is not a symbol of powerless poverty but of generosity. God measures the generosity of the heart not by the amount that is given, but by the spirit in which it is given. Giving spontaneously and generously is a Christian virtue. Writing to his new converts, Paul asks them to set aside something each week for the relief of the poor:



"each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2Cor 9:7). Generous giving remains a hall mark of the Catholic community at its best. Each Lent Irish Catholic school children and their families contribute about € 7 or 8 million to overseas relief through the Trocaire collection. The beautiful church where you attended Mass this morning was

possibly built, quite literally, from 'the pennies of the poor.' As we remember the story of the widow, we recall her sisters and brothers and their children throughout history, who gave, not just from their surplus, but from what they had to live on.

TODAY'S READINGS

1 KGS 17: 10-16 PS 145 HEB 9:24-28
MARK 12:38-44

NOVEMBER

15

33RD SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME

**HEAVEN AND EARTH WILL
PASS AWAY**

From the Mount of Olives, the great Temple of Jerusalem could be seen clearly. The disciples, poor country boys, were impressed by the imposing building. Despite its marvellous construction, Jesus tells them, it will eventually be flattened into the earth.

Talk of such a catastrophe inevitably leads on to other things. When will it happen? Will there be any warning? Will this be a sign for the end of the world? Some Jewish groups had a sense that the world was so full of evil

that the only thing God could do was destroy it and replace it with a whole new world. That is not Jesus' view. He knows that world will indeed end, but it will not be 'great disaster' but the final act of salvation history, when he returns as the Son of Man, in his glory and the gathers of the nations before him.

Predicting the end of the world has become an occupation for two sorts of people – would-be religious leaders and scientists. The first often predict the end time by identifying signs or events in the bible. Beyond their immediate followers, they are seldom taken very seriously. Scientists might appear more persuasive since they use evidence such as dramatic climate change that could extinguish human and animal

life, collision of the earth with an asteroid, the sun's loss of power to give heat and light. Their predictions often work on a time-scale of centuries or thousands of years, so there is less immediate panic. In every Mass, we pray that we will be kept safe from all distress, as we await the coming of our saviour, Jesus Christ. The thought this distant future is especially common in the final Sundays of the year and at the beginning of Advent

TODAY'S READINGS

DAN 12:1-3 PS 10:11-14, 18 HEB 10:11-14, 18 MARK 13: 24-32

NOVEMBER

22

SOLEMNITY OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST,
KING OF THE UNIVERSE

**ALL WHO ARE ON THE SIDE
OF TRUTH LISTEN TO MY
VOICE**

Today's Gospel is taken from St John's account of the trial of Jesus. Pilate's opening question introduces the theme of kingship which dominates the trial scene. The kingdom of Jesus, however, is not a kingdom of the type known to Pilate and his political masters: "mine is not a kingdom of this world." If it were, his supporters, like those of anyone who claims a throne, would have fought to save him from being arrested by the Jews.

Jesus is speaking a language his enemies are incapable of understanding. They know only one meaning of kingship, that of political and military power. Jesus' kingship is not of this type. Jesus is a king who has come to bear witness to the truth. His kingdom, founded on truth, justice and love, will stand in judgment over all earthly kingdoms and his witness to truth will win him the support of all who are on the side of truth.

As great feasts go, Christ the King is a very young one indeed. It was introduced



into the calendar by Pope Pius XI in 1925. The pope's intention was to invite us to consider prayerfully the meaning of the 'earthly kingdom' of Christ the King. For the previous ten years, the world had been rocked by one crisis after another. World War I had torn Europe apart from 1914 to 1918. While that war was still raging, the Russian revolution in 1917 had changed the face of that country and installed the first communist government in history, pledged to eradicate religion as 'the opium of the people'. Discontent elsewhere found expression in political movements such as fascism or the Nazi party that threatened to control civil society by violence. Today's feast invites us to think about our civil society, our duties to it and the place that people of faith, claiming allegiance to Christ the King can play in it.

TODAY'S READINGS

DAN 7:13-14 PS 92 REV 1:5-8
JOHN 18:33-37

GOD'S WORD THIS MONTH

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NOVEMBER

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FIRST SUNDAY
OF ADVENT

YOUR LIBERATION IS CLOSE AT HAND

Like last Sunday's Gospel, this is part of Jesus' final teaching to his disciples in Jerusalem. Used to small towns and villages, the disciples found the city exciting. As they looked around at the temple, the massive stones from which it was built made it look as though it would last forever. It would be totally destroyed about forty years later after a savage war with the

Romans which left little of the temple or of the city.

For both Jews and Christians who had lived through those terrible times, the destruction of the Temple was the end of the Jewish religious world as they knew it. Many probably wondered as well whether or not it might not be the first step towards the end of the world. Jesus assures them that the world will certainly come to an end one day, but not immediately. Instead of panicking, the disciples are to "stand erect, hold your heads high...because your liberation is near at hand."

Neither Jesus nor St Luke gives us a timetable for the "end of the ages." They do, however, tell us how to act until that time comes. "Watch yourselves or your hearts will be coarsened." It is easy to fall into the trap of buying into a false value-system where consumerism and pleasure can take the place of more substantial values.

With the first Sunday of Advent, we embark on a new church year. "Commercial Advent," or the pressure to buy for Christmas, begins earlier every year. You were advised to book your office party at the end of August. Christmas decorations began to fill the supermarket shelves the day after Halloween. In an atmosphere of such consumerism, it is easy to lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas. We might put "Christ back into Advent" by not beginning our Christmas shopping too early or by reading a short passage of scriptures each day with a little more care or by opting to send cards that remind those who receive them that 'Jesus is the reason for the season.'



TODAY'S READINGS

JER 33:14-16 PS 24 1THESS 3:12-4:2 LUKE 21: 25-28; 34-36